

Jesus and the Passover

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D.E.L.S.

Deacon & Elder Lecture Series

Interoffice Memo

Department

Date

To: Church Pastors

February 25, 1992

Department

Phone

From: Joseph Tkach Jr.

Church Administration USA

Subject: DELS VIDEO

Enclosed you will find the next DELS tape. This one is titled "Jesus and the Passover". Dr. Hoeh presented this lecture December 5th of last year to the ministers on the Refreshing Program.

Along with the tape you will find some printed material that will serve as a handout. Make as many copies as you need for the deacons and elders in your area. Please check with me, however, before making it available to anyone else.

This is getting to you a bit later than we had originally planned, but we hope that it will be in plenty of time for you to present before the Passover.

Materials:

PGR 5/1/90

PGR 3/20/91

PGR 4/24/91

Reviews You Can Use

May/June 1990

KJV/NKJV

JPS Translation

Background:

From Church of God 7th
Day
to WCG
Holy days to be
observed

Passover

14th or 15th?

**Christ's
Example
and
Intention**

The Historic Problem

OT Passover

14th or 15th?

- **The Unexamined Evidence**
- **The Unresolved Problem**

**Between the two
evenings:**

**Beginning of day and
observation of holy time
not the same.**

**Time to prepare for holy
days.**

A change in ceremony

- **OT Passover--Eating
of Passover after
death of lamb**
- **NT Passover--
Commemorating
Christ's ordeal and
sacrifice**

NT Passover

**Observed just before
ordeal begins**

OT Passover time has no
bearing on NT Passover
time!

Not same observance

Christ did not keep
Passover one day early

A new observance

Memorial

OT Deliverance from
Death Angel

NT Deliverance from sin

Definition of Evening

**Apply broader sense to
Jews' "between the two
evenings"**

**Holy day begins to be
hallowed at sunset
(Deut. 16:6)**

Christ died at same time
Passover lambs slain--
near end of 14th

Reviews You Can Use

May/June 1990

Day of choosing the lamb

**The time of night the
Israelites departed**

**Commemorate the Lord's
death on the
14th**

**"This Passover...before I
suffer"**

Passover not a meal

Meal separate from
symbols

- Christ was sacrificed
once for all
- Christian renews
covenant by
observing
commemoration of
Christ's sacrifice.

PGR 3/20/91

"The several meanings of
Passover"

PGR 4/24/91

15th started at dark

Observation started at
sunset


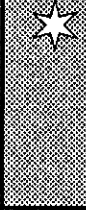
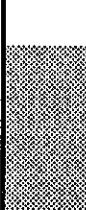
The Church's practice of
the 14th has always been
correct, though our
explanation has been
faulty

14th Christ's sacrifice
for our sin

15th Freedom from sin

WHEN SHOULD WE OBSERVE PASSOVER?

WHY THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH OF GOD DOESN'T KEEP PASSOVER ON THE FEAST DAY OF THE JEWS

13 th (Nisan)	14 th	15 th
<p> Day of Preparation</p>	<p> Passover [2]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Passover meal [3] eaten by Christ just before instituting the new Passover symbols <i>Mat. 26:18-19, 26-30</i> • Killing of Passover Lambs at the Temple on the 14th ("between the evenings") <i>Ex. 12:6</i> • New Testament Christian observance of Passover on 14th (same day Christ suffered and died) <i>Mat. 26:18-19, 26-30</i> • Death of Christ 	<p> First Day of Unleavened Bread</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jews' Passover Meal [1] • Death Angel passes over at midnight • New Testament Christians' Night to Be Much Observed • Israelites leave Egypt <i>Ex. 12:31-36, 51</i>
Tuesday (A.D. 31)	Wednesday	Thursday

[1] Jews' memorial of deliverance of the Israelites from the death angel (who passed over the houses smeared with blood of the slain lambs) and their departure from the physical and spiritual bondage of Egypt in the early morning hours (but still dark) of the 15th. Meal originally eaten by the Israelites in haste and with their shoes on their feet and staffs in their hands, prepared for travel (*Ex. 12:11*).

[2] "Passover" came to have various meanings by the time of Christ:

- Passover Lamb itself
- Ceremony of killing of the lamb on the 14th
- Meal at which the lamb was eaten on the 15th
- First Holy Day (Day of Unleavened Bread)
- Whole period - from the Day of Preparation (end of the 13th) in which the room for this meal was prepared to the last Holy Day (21st)

[3] A Passover meal (see [2]e.) but not the meal consisting of the Passover lamb. It was *a* Passover meal in that the Christ, the Lamb of God, was present. This service was to commemorate his *suffering* and his *death*. Jesus Christ died later on the same calendar day, the 14th, at the time which the Passover lambs were traditionally slain.

Pastor General's Report

Limited-Circulation Newspaper for the Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God



Vol. 12, No. 9

Pasadena, California

May 1, 1990

Dear Ministers,

Some few have wondered why the Church of God doesn't keep the Passover on the same day as the Jews, that is, on the evening of the 15th of Nisan.

The answer is really quite simple when we understand this fundamental principle: What Christians are instructed to keep is a memorial of the *death* of the Lord (I Corinthians 11:26). Jesus' death took place, like the killing of the Passover lambs, *on the 14th of Nisan*.

What the Jews eat on the 15th of Nisan is not a memorial of the death of the Lord, nor is it a memorial of the killing of the Passover lambs. It is a memorial of the Israelites' deliverance from the death angel (who passed over the houses smeared with the blood of the slain lambs) and their departure from the physical and spiritual bondage of Egypt in the early morning hours (but still dark) of the *15th*.

To be sure, these are important events, but they are not the same as the *killing* of the lambs that took place at dusk, or "between the evenings," on the *14th* (Exodus 12:6). The Passover *meal*, which the Jews still commemorate, although without the sacrificial lambs, was always eaten after the lambs were killed and the 14th had *ended*. The meal was eaten on the 15th, but the killing of the lambs was a few hours earlier on the 14th.

Christians, however, are told, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (I Corinthians 11:26, New International Version). That is why the Christian observance is held on the 14th, the same day as Jesus died. The Passover we eat is to commemorate Jesus' death that took place on the 14th. It is *not* the same observance as the Passover *meal* that the Jews commemorate on the 15th.

That meal was originally eaten by the Israelites in haste and with their shoes on their feet and their staffs in their hands, prepared for travel (Exodus 12:11). After the death angel passed over at midnight, and they had disposed of all the leftovers from the meal, they left Egypt (Exodus 12:31-36, 51) by night (after midnight, but still in the very early hours of the morning before dawn).

The meal the Jews eat today is called Passover, even though it is eaten without the sacrificial lamb. What we keep as a memorial of the death of Jesus is also rightly called Passover (Matthew 26:18-19). We should understand that the term *Passover* came to have various meanings by the

time of Jesus. The word could refer to the Passover lamb itself, to the ceremony of killing the lamb on the 14th, to the meal at which the lamb was eaten on the 15th, to the first Holy Day or to the whole period from the day of preparation in which the room for the meal was prepared to the last Holy Day (the 21st).

Jesus was the Lamb of God who was killed for our sins on the 14th of Nisan. Therefore, it is not accurate to say that Jesus kept the Passover a day early. What Jesus did with his disciples the night before he was crucified (the

WORD
GAME

WORD
GAME

night of the 14th) was not to eat a meal consisting of the Passover lamb. Nevertheless, it was indeed a Passover meal, because the Lamb of God was present. But the purpose of the service was to commemorate his *death*, which was to take place later on the same calendrical day, the 14th, on which the Passover lambs were traditionally slain.

Understand this point: The killing of the Passover lambs always took place on the 14th. The Passover Jesus kept with his disciples also took place on the 14th and, with new symbols, expresses the fulfillment of what the Passover lambs only served to represent.

To rehearse, the eating of the Passover *meal* always took place on the 15th, a few hours after the lambs were slain. What Christians observe, though, is a memorial of the death of the Lamb of God, who was killed on the 14th. What the Jews eat today is a memorial of the meal that always took place on the 15th. This meal serves as a memorial of the Israelites' deliverance from the death angel who killed the firstborn of the Egyptians, and of their deliverance from Egypt, which took place on the 15th (Exodus 13:8-10).

Someone might ask: Why do Matthew, Mark and Luke call the meal Jesus ate with his disciples on the 14th the Passover? And is there a discrepancy between their accounts and that of John, who clearly has the Jews eating the Passover on the night *after* Jesus died?

There is no discrepancy. What Jesus ate with the disciples was indeed the Passover (Luke 22:8, 11, 15), but it was not the meal consisting of a lamb slain on the 14th and eaten on the 15th by the Jews. It was the Passover because the Lamb of God was present and because the disciples, after their meal with Jesus, symbolically ate of his flesh and drank of his blood. It was designed to commemorate Jesus' death, which took place later on that same day, the 14th. By the time the 15th came, Jesus was already dead, and for the Christians, eating a slain lamb on that day had become quite irrelevant.

The supper Jesus ate with his disciples on the night he was betrayed was followed by his institution of a Christian observance intended to commemorate his death until his second coming.

But didn't the Israelites originally kill the Passover lambs "between the evenings" at the *beginning* of the 14th?

Part of the explanation lies in understanding the meaning of the term translated as *even, dusk* or *between the evenings*. This term denotes a period of time at the end of the day. It refers to the period from sunset to dark. But the Jews also, later, took it to refer to the period from noon to nightfall, with 3-5 p.m. as its midpoint.

Once the tabernacle was built and the slaying of the Passover lambs came to be done by the priests at the tabernacle, the priests had to begin the sacrifices earlier in the afternoon (before dusk) in order to finish before dark. (We always correctly understood dark to mark the end of "between the evenings.") The command was that the lambs must be killed on the 14th. Therefore, we now see that in order for all the lambs to be killed on the 14th, even during the tabernacle and temple periods, "between the evenings" can only be referring to the period toward the *end* of the 14th. That is the only way the priests could begin killing the lambs in the afternoon, finish before dark and yet have all the lambs killed on the 14th according to the command.

As we have seen above, the Passover instituted by Jesus pictured his *death*, which was foreshadowed by the slaying of the Passover lambs on the 14th. The Passover meal eaten by the Jews on the 15th was never designed to commemorate the *death* of the lambs; it was designed to commemorate the Israelites' deliverance and departure from Egypt — and these events both took place on the 15th.

This also points up the fact that the 24-hour day does not technically begin and end at sunset, but at dark. "Between the evenings" is, in its narrower definition, the period from sunset to dark at the *end* of the day. "Between the evenings" can also be expanded to include a period from early

afternoon to dark, as was done when the lambs had to be killed at the tabernacle and later at the temple. This period at the end of the day means that the natural day ends with nightfall, at the end of dusk, after sunset.

The Jews built a margin of safety around the Sabbath, however, by beginning its observance a few minutes before sunset and ending it a few minutes after dark. It has long been the practice — and still is — of the Church of God to observe the Sabbath beginning sunset, except in near polar regions. At one time in the last century, though, Adventists and the Church of God (Seventh Day) observed the Sabbath from 6 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The Passover of Jesus Christ is the most important event of the year for all true Christians. The Church keeps it on the correct day, the same day Jesus was betrayed, the day on which he instituted the symbols of his body and blood, the day on which he gave his life to take away our sins and reconcile us to God. Let's thank God for this priceless gift and for the guidance he continues to give to his Church. Let us make effort to be diligent in studying God's Word and in following all his instructions.

With deep love, in Jesus' name,

Joseph W. Tkach

1. The word *Passover* has several meanings.

The Church has frequently emphasized the importance of examining the context of a word or a verse in order to clarify its meaning. The inspired writers of Scripture used "Passover" in at least *seven* ways:

1. The Passover was killed (Exodus 12:21, II Chronicles 30:15, 35:1).
2. The Passover lamb was eaten (Exodus 12:43-46).
3. The Passover was celebrated in the first (Hebrew) month, Nisan (Abib), as a holy convocation, encompassing the slaying of the lamb "on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight" (Leviticus 23:5,



New Revised Standard Version unless noted; Numbers 9:2-5, Deuteronomy 16:1-3) and eating the associated meal "that same night" (Exodus 12:8, 1112).

4. The Passover was observed in Ziv, now called Iyar, the second Hebrew month (Numbers 9:10-11).

5. The Passover included both the Festival of Unleavened Bread and the Passover celebration (meal). As a popular term for the entire spring feast, it may also include the preparation day on which the Passover lambs were slain (Luke 22:1, John 6:4, 12:1, 13:1).

6. The Passover was the ceremony in which Jesus instituted the New Testament ordinances of eating bread and drinking wine (Luke 22:11-15 and parallels).

7. Our Passover, Christ, was sacrificed for us (I Corinthians 5:7, compare John 1:29, Acts 8:32, I Peter 1:19, Revelation 5:6).

Immediate context will usually indicate which usage applies in any given instance. One can recognize, however, that the sense that applies in one particular scripture cannot define or arbitrarily limit its significance in other passages. Passover is a multifaceted term; no single sense adequately explains its breadth and depth without potential distortion.

2. Did the apostle John suggest something negative or disparaging by expressions like "Passover of the Jews" (John 2:13) or "the Passover, the festival of the Jews" (John 6:4)?

This terminology reflects what John sought to emphasize — the particular *people* (Jews) who were observing the Passover festival. Leviticus emphasizes the relationship of Passover to its divine source — "a passover offering to the Lord" (Leviticus 23:5).

John uses the "Passover (or feasts) of the Jews" several times in connection with the ministry of Jesus (2:13, 5:1, 6:4, 7:2, 11:55, 19:42). These references served as significant chronological indicators, not John's attack on things pertaining to the Jews.

John recognizes the abuses of the Pharisees and Sadducees, but inferring that it is "anti-Jewish" is incorrect. Neither Jesus nor the leaders of the Jews regarded the Festivals of God as controversial.

Jesus acknowledged the authority of the scribes and Pharisees, who "sat on Moses' seat" (Matthew 23:2). Although these religious leaders accused Jesus of unlawful activity on the Sabbath (Mark 2:24), no biblical account records them making any complaint against Jesus for failure to keep the Festivals of God throughout his life.

3. Do Matthew, Mark and Luke refer to the

Passover observance of Jesus and the disciples about 24 hours prior to the Passover of the Jews?

Confusion arises from assuming that all four Gospels must refer to the same meaning of Passover.

The Gospel accounts of the Passover with Jesus that occurred "on the same night in which He was betrayed" (I Corinthians 11:23, NKJ; compare John 13:1) are not the same as the "Passover of the Jews," which the Jews observed the following night (John 18:28). Yet Jesus clearly described this event as the Passover, as distinct from the "Passover of the Jews."

"Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples."' So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal" (Matthew 26:17-19).

"His disciples said to him, 'Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?'... 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?... ' Make preparations for us there'... They prepared the Passover meal'" (Mark 14:12-16).

"So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it....' 'The teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"... Make preparations for us there... So they went... and they prepared the Passover meal.... I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:8, 11-13, 15).

Each of these accounts closely associate this Passover with Jesus Christ. During the final supper he gave the disciples (Judas had departed) words and symbols that united the disciples with his person. They underscore that the Passover describing Jesus and his disciples refers to the new covenant:

"While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is *my* body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is *my* blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28).

4. Did Jesus refer to a physical lamb present at the supper in which he instituted the symbols of bread and wine? What did Jesus mean by longing to "eat this Passover"? (Luke 22:15).

The Gospels (and Paul) describe the actions and words of Jesus at his Passover in more detail than what

they ate. Significantly, none of the accounts of the last supper of Jesus draws special attention to the food. Many traditional elements that the Jews used in celebrating their departure from Egypt — lettuce, bitter herbs, a fruit puree, grated fruits and a lamb — are either absent or incidental in relation to the new symbols that Jesus Christ instituted for his Passover. Even if lamb had been present at the meal, it could not have been the traditional Passover lamb because the lambs were not slain until the afternoon of the next day.

The context of this passage shows that Jesus regarded his final farewell instructions and example as extremely important to share with his disciples. Verses 14-16 connect the eating of *this* Passover to the kingdom of God. Similarly, verses 17-18 also link the cup and fruit of the vine to God's kingdom. Even the structure of these four verses is remarkably parallel (See Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, page 232):

- 16a: "For I tell you,"
- 18a: "for I tell you that
- 16b: "I will not eat it [this Passover]"
- 18b: "from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine"
- 16c: "until it is fulfilled"
- 18c: "until
- 16d: "in the kingdom of God."
- 18d: "the kingdom of God comes."

The movement of thought throughout Luke 22:14-18 is *forward* to the kingdom of God. It is not limited to that night. The Passover that Jesus strongly desired to eat and share with the apostles, he would *again* eat with them *in God's kingdom*. The Passover of Jesus Christ is clearly the subject of verses 17, 18 and following. The context does not look back to Egypt and food essential for an Old Testament Passover celebration. The cup represented the blood of the new covenant (Matthew 26:28) that Christ would soon shed on the cross while the lambs were being slain.

"To eat this Passover with you" refers to the Passover that Jesus Christ instituted on the night he was betrayed. Participating in the Passover of Jesus unites Christians in intimate fellowship — communion (I Corinthians 10:16) — with their Savior and coming King.

5. Since Jesus' last meal with his disciples was the Passover, and the "official" Passover of the Jews agrees with Leviticus 23, could we not observe the ordinances of Christ on the evening of Nisan 15?

The earliest New Testament record of Christ's in-

structions for the bread and wine appears in I Corinthians. Paul wrote, "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, *on the night he was betrayed*, took bread" (I Corinthians 11:23, New International Version). The Gospel of John reveals that Jesus instituted ordinances for commemorating the new covenant one night prior to start of the first annual Holy Day in the month of Nisan (John 13:29, 18:28, 19:14, 31). The scriptural example for observing the Passover of Jesus Christ is contained in the instructions and example that he gave us *on the night he was betrayed*. The Passover ceremony of God's Church, which Christians observe in remembrance of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, follows the New Testament record of the commands that Jesus Christ gave.

Transferring the celebration of this ceremony to the following night would:

- Attempt to mark the death of Jesus on a different Hebrew day than his crucifixion.
- Emphasize the ceremony more than the significance to which it points — "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (I Corinthians 5:7, NIV).
- De-emphasize the forward-oriented significance of the wine and the bread and draw more attention to looking back to liberation from Egypt.

Joseph Tkach Jr.

On another topic, several have asked about the proper time to begin the observance of the Sabbath. The question naturally arises in reference to an article by Dr. Stavrinides in *Reviews You Can Use* on when the Passover was sacrificed and Mr. Tkach's clarification in the May 1, 1990, *PGR*.

The Passover lamb was sacrificed "between the two evenings," and it was demonstrated that this time period was at the close of the day, still a part of the 14th of Nisan. The conclusion is that Nisan 15 did not start at sunset — the 15th started at dark. Therefore, should we consider the weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days as starting at dark rather than sunset?

Some members have thought that the Bible says we are to keep the Sabbath from sunset to sunset. This assumption is based on a misunderstanding of Leviticus 23:32. Instead of sunset, the time specified is "even" or 'ereb in Hebrew. Even in English, the word "even" is not precise as to an exact minute, but includes the general period of time from sunset to dark. Sunset is within this time frame.

In regard to the material previously written about when the Passover lamb was sacrificed, the definition of the end of the day was necessary for a harmony of the Passover references in the Bible.

God told the Israelites that the Passover lamb should be sacrificed "between the two evenings" — in the narrow meaning of that term, from sunset to nightfall. This law was given when it was humanly possible to keep it in a narrow time frame. Remember, originally each head of household killed his own lamb.

When the sacrificial practices were transferred to the temple in Jerusalem, the number of lambs made it physically impossible to complete the ritual in the short period of about half an hour. The authorities, therefore, made an administrative decision that would enable the nation to apply a law (originally given under a different set of circumstances) to the circumstances involving a central sanctuary for all sacrifices.

The point of the above clarification is that changing circumstances may require administrative changes of this nature. It would not have been right for an Israelite to argue that he should not offer his Passover sacrifice as early as 3 p.m. when God had designated a later time. The reason should be clear from the fact that the first evening, which preceded the period of time designated as "between the two evenings," was officially declared to begin after midday rather than at sunset, as had originally been the case. So the expres-

sion "between the two evenings" included the time from after midday until dark.

In a similar way, the Church today must advise members regarding calendrical matters in all kinds of locations — from the regions near the poles to regions on the equator, which were not a part of the original circumstances. Administrative decisions are the responsibility of the Church, and their purpose is to ensure consistency and uniformity in applying biblical principles in a broader context than originally needed.

Judgments regarding the sacrifices do not change the way we observe the Sabbath today. The precise moment the Sabbath begins has always been a matter of judgment. There are times when nightfall may be up to 30 minutes after the published time of sunset. Darkness can come at varying times after sunset due to geographical considerations. The mistake that some make in their thinking is not understanding or recognizing the change from observation to calculation in calendrical matters.

As a general rule, the Church teaches that the published times for sunset are the most consistent to use for observing the Sabbath. Sabbath observance among the Jews extends traditionally to the end of the seventh day as darkness sets in — hence the Sabbath has regularly been observed by them for slightly more than 24 hours. The Church of God has not followed the example of Judaism in this respect.

The problem that will arise from this administrative decision is whether a member is breaking the Sabbath by working 10 minutes beyond sunset. One can multiply questions about practical consideration (how dark is dark, are sunset times astronomically accurate, etc.). The Church merely adheres to a unified standard for beginning and ending the Sabbath. If specific problems arise in the practical application of this principle, Church Administration will be glad to help.

Joseph Tkach Jr.

The Passover of the Exodus

Was the lamb of the Exodus killed before the morning of the 14th of Nisan, or later that day? When was it eaten? Can the relevant passages be harmonized?

The question about the Passover of the Exodus stems from a particular interpretation of the Passover mentioned in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These three Gospels explicitly say that, on the night Christ was betrayed, the disciples inquired about preparations for the Passover (Mark 14:12) and prepared the Passover (Mark 14:16), and that Jesus acknowledged that this was indeed a Passover (Luke 22:15).

The above details pose a dilemma: Since God had commanded only one Passover, and the synoptic Gospels state that Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples, while John 18:28 presents the Passover as an event that occurs 24 hours later,¹ the question is: Who kept the right day, or who kept the Passover?

The theology of the New Testament (John 1:1-3) has been used to support the claims that Christ, as the God of the Old Testament, knew which was the right day, and that the Jewish custom was therefore in error. The attempt to reconcile the synoptics with John on this point was abandoned.

If one grants the accuracy of Jesus' Passover and the inaccuracy of the Jewish custom, he would have to maintain that the Passover of Exodus fell on the night chosen by Jesus. This line of thinking cannot possibly resolve the dilemma. As will be shown, the Jews had the right day, the celebration instituted by Christ was indeed the Passover, and the different accounts can be harmonized.

The root of the problem

The following presuppositions are generally held to be true, but they contain vague expressions which can be misleading when taken at face value:

1. In Judaism, the 24-hour day begins in the evening.
2. Jesus and his disciples kept the Passover one evening earlier than the Jews.

Even though these statements are generally granted, they are imprecise. The term *evening* is vague; it covers a period that extends from early afternoon till well after sunset. The expressions "*with the evening*" and "*in the evening*" do not tell us exactly when the 24-hour day begins.

Vague terms like "morning," "evening," "day," and "night" do not provide a clear understanding of the time of the Passover of Exodus. For example, the Bible speaks of a day as the daylight portion only (Isaiah 34:10). It also speaks of a day as the whole 24-hour period (Nehemiah 13:19).² A clearer way to understand the limits of the day is to examine the parts that the Bible classifies as portions of the day.

The dawn, for example, in Genesis 19:15,³ is a necessary part of the day — it is the time when daylight first appears. This is verified in Joshua 6:15 ("the dawning of the day").

Obviously, midday is a necessary part of the day. It is also referred to as "the heat of the day" (Genesis 18:1, I Samuel 11:11, II Samuel 4:5).

¹ According to John 13:4, Jesus merely ate the Last Supper with his disciples. He does not say that the Last Supper was the Passover (John 18:39, 19:14) — which would have left the reader with the task of harmonizing two Passovers in two days.

² The many meanings of the term *day* are of interest in studying the gradual transition from the early Egyptian reckoning (morning to morning), which left its traces on the Biblical texts, but such refinement is not necessary for the purposes at hand.

³ The Septuagint and Hebrew texts only. The King James rendering "morning," in this passage, is not correct. The Revised Standard Version rendering "when morning dawned" is closer to the Hebrew text, which, in a literal translation, says, "and when the dawn arose."

The afternoon is a part of the day, as indicated in such expressions as "the cool of the day" (Genesis 3:8).

The evening is a part of the day. One reads that David smote the Philistines "from the twilight even unto the evening⁴ of the next day" (I Samuel 30:17).

The period of time known in Hebrew as "between the two evenings" is a part of the day. Leviticus 23:5 explicitly states that "the fourteenth day of the first month at even⁵ is the Lord's passover." The Hebrew expression is used in Exodus 29:39. This scripture states that the sacrifices included the daily offering of two lambs: the first in the morning, and the second in the evening (Exodus 29:39)⁵ — yet both were sacrifices of that day (Exodus 29:38). The evening sacrifice took place at the time when Aaron lit the lamps (Exodus 30:8). This is the time between sunset and darkness, which is brief in the Middle East. The Passover lamb of the Exodus was sacrificed during this short space of time, between sunset and the complete disappearance of light.⁶

The above references show that the day comes to an end when the last trace of sunlight has completely disappeared from the horizon. The light of the sun determines the end of the calendrical day.⁷

The Passover sacrifice

Since the commanded time of sacrifice, known as "between the two evenings," came after sunset and before dark, it was at the *end* of the Passover day, not at the beginning. With this information at our disposal, it is easy to see the sequence of the Pass-

over events in context: The Passover lamb was selected on the 10th of Nisan, and it was killed as the 14th was drawing to a close. It is interesting to note, in this connection, that although Christ, the antitype of the Passover lamb, died at 3 p.m., darkness came over the whole land from midday until the ninth hour (Mark 15:33, 37).⁸

The cleaning and preparation of the lamb, followed by the slow roasting, would have brought the Passover meal close to midnight of the 15th of Nisan, about the time God smote the firstborn of the Egyptians (Exodus 12:12).⁹

Pharaoh rose up "in the night" (Exodus 12:30) and sent word to Moses to leave Egypt with his people and their belongings (Exodus 12:32). Towards dawn,¹⁰ while it was still night, on the 15th of Nisan, the Israelites took the dough they had prepared for the next day's bread — even though they had not yet leavened it — and began to march out of Egypt (Exodus 12:34-37).

The 15th of Nisan is therefore described as "a night to be much observed" (Exodus 12:42), because it marks the historical departure of the Israelites from the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:41).

Marching out on the holy day

"Remember this day, in which ye came out of Egypt, out of bondage" (Exodus 13:3). The day the Israelites came out of Egypt was to be remembered as a major landmark in history. Since they came out of Egypt in haste, with unleavened bread, they were told, "there shall no leavened bread be eaten" (Exo-

⁴ Hebrew *'ereb* (evening). The slaughter of the Philistines lasted two whole days.

⁵ Hebrew *beyn ha'arbayim* (between the two evenings).

⁶ This was also the Sadducean understanding of the expression "between the two evenings," and it concurs with Deuteronomy 16:6. The custom of killing the Passover lamb in the brief period that intervened between sunset and dark is preserved in the tradition of the Samaritans (*The Soncino Chumash*, 2nd ed., 1983).

⁷ This position is not new to the commentaries. Soncino, for example, in Exodus 12:6, states that "between the two darknesses" is the period of "approximately one and a third hours between sunset and the disappearance of the light which subsequently penetrates through the clouds."

⁸ This is not to limit the force or significance of this darkness. It also had a purpose as fulfilling prophecy: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down *at noon*, and I will darken the earth in the clear day" (Amos 8:9).

⁹ In the Samaritan celebration, the roasting of the Passover lamb begins at 10 p.m., and the meal begins at 1 a.m.

¹⁰ The command was for the Israelites to stay in their houses until the morning (Exodus 12:22, cf. Ruth 3:14).

dus 13:3). Therefore the question "Did the Israelites march out on a holy day?" overlooks the fact that it was their going out of Egypt (Exodus 12:11), on this day, that made it such a special occasion, worthy to be kept as an appointed feast.

One of the commands to the Israelites was that they should explain to their children that the night to be observed was a sign and a memorial (Exodus 13:8-9), that it pictured both the slaying of the firstborn of Egypt (verse 15) and the Israelites' march out of Egypt (verse 16). These events took place on the same calendrical day, during the night on which the death angel saw the blood of the lamb smeared on the doorposts of Israelite houses and spared their firstborn. It was the night in which the Israelites were eating the Passover lamb in haste, ready to depart — on the 15th of Nisan.

On account of the proximity of Passover and Unleavened Bread, not to mention the fact that the Passover lamb was eaten during the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th, *Passover* gradually became an ambiguous term. It came to mean the Passover lamb ("kill the Passover," Exodus 12:21), the day of the Passover itself ("the fourteenth of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover," Leviticus 23:5), the Passover meal (Matthew 26:17),¹¹ the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Luke 22:1), and Christ as our Passover (I Corinthians 5:7).

The above ambiguity shows that the often-asked question "Was the Passover to be kept on the 14th or on the 15th?" can receive various correct replies, depending on the way one takes the ambiguous term *Passover*.

Despite the ambiguity, the events of Exodus can be distinguished. The Passover lamb was sacrificed at the very end of the 14th of Nisan, and the Passover meal was eaten in haste on the 15th of Nisan.

Similarly, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb at the end of the 14th was a different event from the eating of the Passover lamb during the feast night of the 15th. In turn, what Christ instituted (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) was the ceremony that commemorated the fulfillment of the *sacrifice* of the 14th. As Paul explained to the Corinthians, the coming together of the Church was "not to eat the Lord's supper" (I Corinthians 11:20), but to commemorate something else — "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's *death* till he come" (I Corinthians 11:26). The Lord's death was

the fulfilment of the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, which, in Exodus 12, was offered on the 14th of Nisan.

The dilemma between the Judaic practice, evident in John's Gospel, and the Passover Jesus took with his disciples, evident in the Synoptic Gospels, is settled by the distinction between Passover as a sacrifice, and Passover as the eating of the lamb. The sacrificing of lambs came to an end with the destruction of the temple. Since then, the Jews have not kept this part of the Passover, but have continued to observe the Passover meal on the 15th, without the lamb.

When the time of the Passover and that of Unleavened Bread are distinguished in Exodus 12, the Passover lamb was killed just before the end of the 14th of Nisan. It was eaten a few hours later, on the night of the 15th. Christ instituted a ceremony that marks the fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice. What Christ kept with his disciples pointed to his death on the 14th of Nisan.

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¹¹ The full import of the disciples' question need not be discussed here, but compare John 13:1 with verse 29.

Christ and the Passover

Did Christ keep the Passover, or only a Last Supper? Exactly what did Christ institute before he died, and does it replace traditional Jewish practices?

The sequence of events in the Passover of Exodus 12:6-14 shows that the sacrificial lamb was kept until the 14th of Nisan, that it was killed in the latter part of the day, and that it was eaten during the night of the 15th.¹

In Mark 14:12, the disciples of Christ came to him one day earlier to ask where he wanted them to make preparations for *the Passover*. The disciples, we are told, "prepared *the Passover*" (Mark 14:16). Luke also adds the detail that when the hour had come (Luke 22:14), Christ said, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat *this Passover* with you *before I suffer*" (Luke 22:15).

Absence of a sacrificial lamb

The Passover lambs were sacrificed at the end of the 14th, and Christ met with his disciples prior to that time. This leads to the conclusion that Christ and the disciples merely had supper.

This position misses the all-important point that the Passover lamb, from Exodus on, was only a type of "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Had Christ given his disciples a piece of flesh from the sacrificial lamb, with the words "Take eat, this is my body," Christians, after that time, would need a sacrificial lamb in order to get to Christ. The perpetuation of the type, in turn, would need the perpetuation of the Levitical priest-

hood and the entire Judaic system, and the perpetuation of the sacrificial system would render Christ's sacrifice unnecessary.²

Even for Israel, the sacrificial system ceased with the destruction of the temple, when God could not be approached through a sacerdotal system. For Christ and the disciples, that time had come earlier. A sacrificial lamb would have been out of place.

Special circumstances

Some commentators propose that Christ kept the Passover one day early because of special circumstances. The special circumstances are said not to impact the appointed time for taking the Passover — the 15th of Nisan — but merely to excuse the earlier observance in Christ's case.

The flaw in this position is the confusion of what counts as an integral part of the Passover. If the commanded time for eating the sacrificial lamb is an inseparable part of the Passover³, the celebration cannot possibly take place at a different time, regardless of the circumstances. On the other hand, if the Passover can be kept at a different portion of the same day, as in Christ's case, the commanded time for eating the sacrificial lamb is not an inseparable part of the celebration, and Christ's circumstances are irrelevant.

¹ The discussion of the expression "between the two evenings" (Exodus 12:6) does not affect the choice of day. The debate between the Sadducees and the Pharisees is about hours, not days. The Sadducean time was half an hour before sunset, whereas the Pharisaic view expanded the time of the sacrifice by two or three hours, which brought the killing of the lambs to about 3 p.m.

² Indeed, if the typical Passover lamb continues to be required after Christ's death, Christ could not have been its antitype, and his sacrifice cannot be said to have any impact on man's salvation. Thus, if the typical Passover lamb continues to be required after Christ's death, Christ cannot be the Messiah.

³ In the Bible, the term *Passover* — in its Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek forms — is used for the festival of the 14th of Nisan (John 19:14), for the Pascal lamb (Exodus 12:21), for the Passover meal (Matthew 26:19), for the entire period from the 14th to the 21st of Nisan (Luke 22:1), and for Christ (I Corinthians 5:7). Since this paper is concerned with what Christ instituted, a distinction will be made only where necessary.

Christ's celebration

Christ was not keeping a Pharisaic Passover. That was not possible without a sacrificial lamb. There is no complete ceremony (a "seder")⁴, but there are enough elements present to prove the Passover character of Christ's ceremony. The following is a partial list of such elements:

1. Jesus was in Bethany (Mark 14:3), but sent his disciples to find a room in Jerusalem (Mark 11:11, 14:13). It was standard practice for such a room to be considered a Passover home. Jerusalem was the only place where lambs could be consecrated.
2. The disciples made preparations for the Passover (Mark 14:16). These were normally done by the Jews, beginning the night before the 15th. Such preparations included cleaning, the removal of leaven, etc.
3. The occasion was not an evening meal. The evening meal was eaten late in the afternoon. Christ's celebration was at night (I Corinthians 11:23, John 13:30).
4. The Passover included breaking bread after the entry of the bitter herbs (Mark 14:22). This breaking of bread was not the beginning of Christ's supper (Mark 14:18).
5. Reclining was the normal practice at Passover (Mark 14:18, John 13:23) — even for the poorest.
6. There was wine (Mark 14:23). We do not read of four cups, in line with contemporary Jewish practice, but of a communal cup, which may have been the standard practice (or an option) at Christ's time. That this was no ordinary meal is evident from the fact that, at ordinary meals, a rabbi and his disciples drank only water.
7. There are overtones of a sacrifice in the shedding of blood. As Paul explained to the Corinthians, "indeed, Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (I Corinthians 5:7).
8. A covenant is mentioned (Mark 14:24).
9. A dish is mentioned (Mark 14:20), which normally contained the sauce eaten with the lamb.
10. A Messianic feast is pictured (Mark 14:25).
11. A hallel (psalm of praise) is sung (Mark 14:26).
12. The whole scene is set in the period of unleav-

ened bread. The question of whether the bread was leavened or unleavened cannot be settled with textual or historical evidence. We can be certain that the Greek term *artos* (bread, Mark 14:22) does not have to mean leavened bread. After all, the same word is used for the shewbread (Mark 2:26), which was unleavened (Josephus, *Antiquities*, III, 142, vi, 6).

The above list makes it impossible for the reader to deny the Pascal character of Christ's celebration. Thus, the many statements in the synoptic Gospels about the Passover must be taken seriously.

Jesus kept this Passover in a private room with his disciples. The initial Passover of the Exodus also was observed at home. This has led to the conclusion that the Bible teaches a private celebration for each household rather than a church function.

An important element is missing from this proposition. In Egypt, the Passover was indeed a private occasion. In Deuteronomy 16:2, the command was that the Passover should no longer be sacrificed in each household, but "in the place where the Lord chooses to put his name." The Passover, in other words, was attached to the religion of the sanctuary.

In the diaspora, the Jews kept the Passover in their homes, but without the sacrificial lamb, and, after the destruction of the temple, the rabbis endorsed a home celebration for everyone — without a sacrificial lamb.

The point of difference between the Exodus and Deuteronomy accounts, the Passover of the temple and that of subsequent times, is that administrative decisions and changes have had to be made.

The Apostle Paul corrected the Corinthians for their inconsiderate conduct. When they came together, they presumed to be eating the Lord's Supper. One was still hungry, while another was getting drunk (I Corinthians 11:21, 34). Paul's advice was that they should satisfy their hunger and thirst at home so that, in their gatherings, they would not eat the bread and drink the wine unworthily (I Corinthians 11:27, 33). His advice was not against holding the church function but against a wrong conduct. Thus, in Corinth, too, an administrative decision had to be made.

Theologically speaking, the Christian church is the household of God. It consists of one spiritual family. Its members have one Father and share in one fellowship as brethren. It was natural for the family

⁴ There is no washing of the right hand, no recounting of the Passover story, no questions, no end benediction, etc.

of God in Corinth to meet as one group, and for the Apostle Paul to correct only the misconduct — leaving the gathering intact as the proper thing to do.

Passover in the New Testament theology

In writing to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul isolates the taking of bread and wine as a celebration that proclaims “the Lord’s death till he comes” (I Corinthians 11:23-26). Similarly, in an earlier chapter, he stresses that since Christ, our Passover, has been offered already, we should “keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:7-8).

The theology of the Apostle Paul distinguishes the offering of the Passover from the keeping of the Feast. These are two different events in God’s plan. The Passover is on the 14th, and the Feast begins on the 15th. The Passover lamb was a type of the Lamb of God, and both were offered on the 14th of Nisan.

The celebration Christ had with his disciples *isolated the sacrifice*. The bread and the wine are symbols of his own sacrifice. This is brought out in the use of the word *ekchynomenon* (which is being shed). The continuous tense “being shed” connotes the consecration of the sacrificial Lamb of God. The Lamb of God was being consecrated for the great sacrifice to come later that day. This was the prophesied day (Exodus 12:6), the specific evening (Mark 14:17), the specific hour (Luke 22:14), and it stood only moments away from the beginning of the grand fulfilment of everything that had been instituted. It is a mistake to think of Christ’s sacrifice as the moment at which he said, “It is finished” and gave up the spirit (John 19:30). The sacrifice of Christ included the crucifixion and all the events that led to it, from the moment he was arrested to be “led as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7).

The Passover that Jesus Christ instituted is the fulfilment of the entire Passover of Exodus and a memorial of the offering of the Lamb of God. By participating in this celebration, the Christian *proclaims the Lord’s death* until he comes (I Corinthians 11:26). The Christian does not crucify Jesus Christ annually. He merely commemorates the sacrifice that took place once for all time.

The belief that the Christian should be feasting physically on the Passover, or eating the Lord’s

Supper, is a neo-Corinthian blunder. It loses sight of the memorial of Christ’s *death*, which Paul so clearly enunciated. The Christians in Corinth should have been remembering Christ’s death until he comes — not feasting!⁵

Early church practice

It is often noted that the early church was “zealous for the law” (Acts 21:20), and that there are indications that the early Christians did not suddenly break ties with earlier tradition. Would the disciples of Christ, for example, also have kept Passover with the Jews in the year of the crucifixion, or would they have ignored it? Similarly, what would they have done a year later?

The answers to these questions seem easy. It is inconceivable that any of Christ’s disciples would have been rejoicing within three hours after their master’s crucifixion. If the teaching of the previous night meant anything to them, they would have understood that a new covenant had been introduced, sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. In this covenant, they had a special place as disciples of Jesus Christ. H/A

As for the following year, it must be understood that the New Testament presents the picture of a healthy apostolate imbued with the power of God’s Spirit on the first Pentecost and demonstrating it daily in a dynamic way that left their compatriots astonished. How could these disciples return to the belief that animal sacrifices were efficacious?

It is general knowledge that the earliest church was attached to the temple. Did the church feel it expedient to honor the temple as long as it stood? While the temple was still standing in Jerusalem, the Apostle Paul announced to his audience on Mars Hill that God “does not dwell in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24). Even so, he made use of the temple in an attempt to alleviate certain practical problems (Acts 21:23-26). Paul also had Timothy circumcised — for reasons of expediency, not for spiritual considerations (Acts 16:3).

The existence of the temple in Jerusalem must have made demands on the church. Some Christians seemed to have made vows, purified themselves, shaved their heads, etc. (Acts 21:23-24). The church had to grow in its understanding of such matters daily. For example, the New Testament is replete

⁵ A spiritual feast is not in question, neither the eating of the emblems. That was established as the way to commemorate Christ’s sacrifice.

with questions about the efficacy of physical circumcision. Church practice is of interest, of course, but ultimately it is the *theology* of the early church that is a deciding factor.

As the growing household of faith, the church had to learn how to put away childish things (I Corinthians 13:11). Today, the Christian is not called to rediscover the practices of the earliest Christian church and follow them.⁶ Neither did Christ point his disciples to an older or purer mode of keeping the Passover — as, for example, the Passover of Josiah, of the judges, or of the Exodus.

Christ's call was to a life guided by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was to guide the church "into all truth" (John 16:13). One of those truths is the theology of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: that the Christian is not called to kill the Passover on the 14th of Nisan, neither to engage in a physical feast using bread and wine on the 15th. By partaking of the bread and wine, the Christian renews the same covenant Jesus ratified on the 14th of Nisan with his blood, and proclaims the full meaning of Christ's sacrifice until He comes.

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⁶ For example, the earliest Christian church did not accept Gentiles into its ranks.

