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# Passover; Is it for Christians?

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BICOG Publication

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*Are Christians to keep the Passover? What does your Bible say? What about history? Is there any evidence in history outside the Bible to show that the New Testament Church observed the Passover?*

### **The Law of God**

Now Many people believe that God's law is done away and not binding on Christians. Is that true? What did Jesus say about the law?

***“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.***

***“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall *in no wise pass from the law*, till all be fulfilled.***

***“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever *shall do and teach them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19). Notice Jesus said “Think Not” that he came to destroy the law or the prophets but to “fulfill” them. To fulfill an obligation is to DO IT. And also he says that those who “teach” the law will be called “great” in God's kingdom. So Jesus did not come to destroy the law or prophets. He even went on to say that till heaven and earth pass away not one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law. We are still in that time today.***

What about Paul?

Many people believe that the Apostle Paul came and did away with the law. Is that true? How did Paul WORSHIP God?

***“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, *so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:*” (Acts 24:14).***

Paul system of worship was rooted in God's law and the prophets like Christ. Paul wrote that the law of God is “Holy, and Just and good” (Rom 7:12). And that the “doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom 2:13). So, no, Paul did NOT teach that the law was done away. The apostles even told Paul to go to the temple to show everyone that he “also walkest orderly, and keepest the law” (Acts 21:24). So God's law is NOT done away.

### **Passover in the NT**

So what about the Passover? Is there Biblical evidence to shows that the New Testament Church Taught and kept the Feast of the Passover? Absolutely!

In the letter to the Corinthians Paul wrote that the New Testament Church in Corinth should “keep the feast” for “Christ OUR PASSOVER [Lamb] was sacrificed for Us” (I Corinth 5:8, 7). I inserted “Lamb” due to the context of the verse. What is “sacrificed” during the Passover? A lamb! And Jesus is called the “Lamb of God” that takes away the sins of the world (see John 1:29; Rev 13:8). Jesus was our Passover LAMB slain for the sins of the world.

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In these passages he said that we should “Purge out, therefore the old LEAVEN...as YE ARE UNLEAVENED [Physically]” (v.7). Notice that they were unleavened *physically*. The obviously meaning of this scripture is that the New Testament Church who were primarily *gentile* were observing the days of Unleavened bread and the Passover.

### The Colossian Heresy

In the letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul was warning the church about false Teachers. The contents of this letter reveals that the church of God was observing the Holy Days of God. Paul warns of these “men” and says of them:

“And this I say, *lest any man* should beguile you with enticing words.” (v.4)

“Beware *lest any man* spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (v.8)

“*Let no man* therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.” (v.16)

“*Let no man* beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,” (v.18).

Who are these people Paul is speaking of?

In the letter to the Colossians, Paul had a problem with outside elements that were trying to infect the church with their doctrines. These doctrines consisted of Gnosticism.

“Gnosticism ‘was essentially a religio-philosophical attitude, not a well-defined system’ (Curtis Vaughan, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 11, p. 166). *As such, it wasn’t a competing religion, rather an approach to one’s existing beliefs, this is an important thing to remember!* The central theme of Gnosticism was that secret knowledge (“gnosis” is the Greek word for “knowledge,” hence the term Gnosticism) *could enhance or improve one’s religion.*

The Gnostics basically believe that the “spirit is entirely good, and matter [the physical] is entirely evil” (NIV Study Bible Intro to 1 John). Now “since the body was considered evil, it was to be treated harshly. This ascetic form of Gnosticism is the **background of part of the letter to the Colossians**” (Vaughan, p.167, emphasis added). This also included the “occult...astrology and magic,” “special knowledge,” and “mediating beings.” All these elements are seen to have been influencing the Colossian congregation. It is clear in the letter that Paul was combating some of these things.

Like the special knowledge of the Gnostics, Paul claimed he had a higher and saving knowledge of God and Jesus (Col 1:9, 25-29; 2:2-3). He said “*lest anyone* [Gnostics] should deceive you with persuasive words” (verse 4). He called this special knowledge “philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (verse 8). The

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most important knowledge was that of God and Christ, “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (verse 3).

Adherents to the heresy included people who advocated obeisance to Angels and other spiritual powers. Paul warned the Colossians of those who delight in the “worship of Angels” (Col 2:18). In the light of Christ’s atoning sacrifice, these supposed “principalities and powers were useless as a means of access to God,” he said in (verses 10, 15).

Based on the belief that the flesh was evil and the spirit is good, these teachers taught strict asceticism, denying the self any physical pleasure. Through “neglect of the body” (v.23), they hoped to attain increased spirituality. Paul described their rules as “do not touch, do not taste, do not handle” (v.21). These regulations concerned only “things which perish with the using,” he wrote, because they were based on “the commandments and the doctrines of men [NOT God]” (v.22).

These early Gnostics also combined Judaism with their gentile concepts such as circumcision (v.11). “It is likely therefore, that the Colossian heresy was a mixture of an extreme form of Judaism and an early stage of Gnosticism” (NIV Study Bible, Intro to Colossians).

Now that we understand the background of the letter, when Paul says “let no man,” we understand that he is speaking of the Gnostics and their teachings of the “commandments of men” and not the Commandments of God.

“*Let no man* therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:” (v.16). Who is he speaking of in this passage? *The Gnostics and their false teachings*.

“Let no man [Gnostics] therefore judge you” The word “judge” “Kriuo” (Strong’s # 2919) means, “to pronounce an opinion concerning right and wrong” (Thayer’s Lexicon). Samuele Bacchiocchi writes, “This statement, ‘Therefore let no one pass judgment on you’ has been interpreted as a Pauline condemnation of the observance of Old Testament Holy Days. In spite of its antiquity and popularity, *this interpretation is totally wrong*, because in the passage Paul is not warning the Colossians not against the observances of the five mentioned practices...but against ‘anyone’ (tis) who passes judgment on HOW TO OBSERVE THEM.

“Also, ‘Note should be taken of the fact that the judge who passes judgment IS NOT PAUL, but the Colossian false teachers...

“D.R. Lacey, writing in the symposium From Sabbath to the Lord’s Day, rightly comments: ‘The judge is likely to be a man of ascetic tendencies who objects to the Colossians’ eating and drinking. *The most natural way of taking the rest of the passage* is not that he also imposes a ritual of feast days, *but rather that he objects to certain elements of such observation...*” (God’s Festivals in Scripture and History, pp.89-90, emphasis added). The Gnostics were the JUDGES, NOT THE CHURCH! These men were expressing their opinion TO THE CHURCH OF GOD on HOW THEY WERE KEEPING THE HOLY DAYS AND THE SABBATH! **This**

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was **NOT** a question of “IF” but “How” they were keeping them. In this light, the scripture shows that the New Testament Gentile Church was KEEPING THE HOLY DAYS OF GOD!

The Gnostics wanted them to enhance and improve THEIR EXISTING BELIEFS! Why? What was it that the Gnostics didn't like about how the church celebrated the festivals of God? “...they [the church] observed those times, apparently in a joyous and festive manner. These days were, after all, given by God as festivals and celebrations. This approach was entirely *contrary to the Gnostic approach of stolid self-denial so evident in this chapter*...Paul addressed is that Christians *should not be criticized* for observing these days in a festive manner. Paul cautioned that members should not let others judge them *by those misguided ascetic standards* in what they ate or drank or how they observed the Sabbaths or festivals (verse 16)” (God's Sabbath Rest, p.46, emphasis added). But God taught us to “rejoice before YHWH your God” (Lev 23:40). ***This was entirely contrary to the Gnostic teaching of self denial so evident in this chapter.*** This is why Paul wrote, “Let no man [The Gnostics] therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an HOLYDAY, or of the new moon, or of the SABBATH DAYS:” (Col 2:16). *To improve their worship of God, the church, in the eyes of the Gnostics, had to do it their way, not God's way!*

### “Shadow of things to Come?”

Colossians 2:17 many believe that the feasts are but a “shadow” and the “substance” is Christ. Is that truly the right way to read this passage?

It says, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:  
“Which [Grk. “These”] are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.” (vv.16-17).  
What is he referring to? The Feasts, or as we have learned, HOW to celebrate these feasts?

Samuele Bacchiocchi deals with this scripture and he concludes, “To what does the relative pronoun ‘these’ (ha in Greek) refer? Does it refer to the five practices mentioned in the previous verse **or to the ‘regulations’ (dogmata) regarding these practices promoted by the false teachers?**...[I] agree with Eduard Lohse that the relative pronoun ‘these’ refers *not* to the five mentioned practices as such, *but rather to the ‘regulations’ regarding such practices promoted by the false teachers*...

“This conclusion is supported by two considerations. First, in verse 16, *Paul is not warning against the merits or demerits of the Mosaic law regarding food and festivals, but against the ‘regulations’ regarding these practices advocated by the false teachers. Thus, it is more plausible to take ‘the regulations’ rather than the actual practices as the antecedent of ‘these.’*

“Second, in the verses that immediately follow, Paul continues his warning against the deceptive teachings, saying, for example, ‘Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement . . .’ (Col 2:18); ‘Why do you submit to regulations’, ‘Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch?’ (Col 2:20-21). Since what precedes and what follows *that relative pronoun ‘these’ deals with the ‘regulations’ of the Colossian ‘philosophy,’ it is most likely that Paul describes the latter as ‘a shadow of what is to come’ (Col 2:17).*

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“In the light of the above indications, we conclude that what Paul calls a 'bygone shadow' is *not the Sabbath but the deceptive teachings of the Colossian 'philosophy' which promoted dietary practices and the observance of sacred times as auxiliary aids to salvation.*” (*The Sabbath Under Crossfire: A Biblical analysis of Recent Sabbath/Sunday Developments, Chpt.6., Paul and the Sabbath, emphasis added*).

Paul said these “are a shadow of things *to come*,” indicating they have a future fulfillment. The Greek word translated “to come” is “mello,” meaning “to be about to do or suffer something, to be at the point of, to be impending” (Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, p. 956). Vine’s as well says, “to be about (to do something), often implying the necessity and therefore the certainty of *what is to take place*” (W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, “Come,” p. 207).

Paul uses the same word construction in Ephesians 1:21, stating that Jesus Christ is “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also *in the one to come*” (NIV). He contrasts the present age with one “to come,” showing there is clearly a future fulfillment.

Paul in actual fact gave a prophecy of what is to come. A false Church not getting its wisdom from Christ, but by other means. Man made rules, touch not, taste not, worshipping angels, denial of the body etc...A perfect description of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches of the middle ages and modern era- a “shadow” of things to come.

“But the body *is* of Christ.” (v.17). First, “*is*” in this verse is italicized and not in the original Greek Text, but added by the translators, so it should read, “BUT THE BODY OF CHRIST”

Second, the word for body in the Greek is “soma.” (Strong’s #4983). It means “Body.” The reason why some translate it “substance” is for the simple reason of scholars trying to interpret the verse thinking the Feasts and Sabbath are a shadow and distinguish the shadow from the reality which is Christ. But as we have seen this is not the case. Page 72 in Vine’s shows the word is never used in that sense. There are three Greek words that Paul could of used for “substance,” like “ousia” (3776), “huparchonta” (5224), “huparxis” (5223) and especially “hupostasis” (5287).

The Bible says that the body of Christ is the church of God, which Jesus is the head (see 1Corinthians 12:27; Colossians 1:18). The point Paul is making here is not to let the false teachers tell you HOW to keep God’s holy days, but **true wisdom comes from Christ** and the true people of God, the CHURCH. Christ and the church determine doctrine by what is inspired by the holy word of God the Bible. How do we keep the feasts? Get the commandments from Jesus, the church and the Bible.

Truly, the two verses can read, in its proper context, “Let no man [False brethren, Gnostic teachings etc...] therefore judge you [give their opinion] in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of , the new moon, or of the sabbath days:...but the body of Christ [therefore judge you on how to observe these days and which things to eat].”

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So Colossians 2:16 proves that the New Testament Church was keeping the feast of God like Passover, and the dietary Laws of the Bible, and not the other way around as most Christians believe!

### Other Feast Days in the NT

The New Testament reveals that the Apostles kept the other feast days as well. Paul said that he by all means had to “keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem” (Acts 18:21). This was the Feast of Tabernacles.

What about Jesus? Did He keep the Feasts? Of course he did!

When he was 12 years of age we see him in Jerusalem for the Passover, see Luke 2:41-50.

Jesus also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, see John 7:1-14.

One further note. Have you ever wondered why, in the Gospel of John especially, we read of the “Jews Passover” and the “Jews Feast of Tabernacles” and the “Jews Preparation Day,”? see John 7:2; 11:55; 19:42. Why does John use this language?

“John’s concern [was] to inform the reader that he is referring to the Passover of the Jews suggests that, to use Joachim Jeremiah’s words ‘He obviously distinguishes the *Jewish Passover from the Christian*’” (God’s Festivals, Biacchiocchi, p.73, emphasis added). That’s all John was doing. He was *distinguishing between the Jews Passover and Feast of Tabernacles from the Christian Passover and Feast of Tabernacles*.

Christ was “*Our Passover,*” *Our* “First fruits,” *Our* “Atonement,” and he “Tabernacled” among Us, (see 1 Corinth 5:7; 15:20; 1 John 2:2; John 1:14). To the Jews because *they rejected Christ, He was none of those things*. So John had to *distinguish between the two*.

“The keeping of the festivals was taken for granted” (ibid, p.72). *These festivals were never up for discussion of being done away*. So this means that there was a “*Christian Preparation Day.*” A “*Christian Passover.*” A “*Christian Feast of Tabernacles*” etc...

This source agrees, “...the expression ‘Jews’ in the fourth Gospel generally conveys the **IDEA OF CONTRAST** to the disciples of Christ (for St. John vii.15)...” (Alfred Edersheim, Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, p.309, emphasis added).

### The Lord’s Supper

There is no question that the Lord’s Supper has to be observed. Jesus said, “This do in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). A remembrance is a memorial. The Apostle Paul wrote about the Last supper, “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death *till he comes*” (1 Corinth 11:26). Notice that the Lord’s Supper was observed long after the death of Christ by the Church and we keep it as a memorial of the death of Christ which happened on the *Passover*. The Lord’s Supper was to be observed once a year on the Passover.

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And what is the “Lord’s Supper”? None other than the PASSOVER MEAL! **And we are to observe it “till he comes,”** that’s the second coming, **so it continues today.** This passage in Corinthians also shows that the Corinthians Church was observing the festival of the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Many scriptures show that the Lord’s Supper is the Passover Meal. The synoptic Gospels consistently and repeatedly speak of the Last supper as the Passover. The disciples asked Jesus, “Where will you have us to go and prepare for you to eat the *Passover*?” (Mark 14:12; cf. Matt 26:17-18; Luke 22:7-9). In Luke 22:15, Jesus himself declares: “I have earnestly desired to eat this *Passover* with you before I suffer.” The term “eat the Passover” refers exclusively to the Passover meal which Jesus later gives instructions to his disciples (Mark 14:15; Matt 26:18; Luke 22:11).

### When was the Passover Meal to be Observed?

Many in the churches of God observe the Passover at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th of Nisan because that’s the way Christ observed it. They also point to 1 Corinthians 11 that says that in the “*same night in which he was betrayed*” (v.23). Because of this scripture they believe that the Lord’s Supper must be done on the beginning of the 14th end of the 13th of Nisan. But the reality is, the 14th of Nisan “in the evening” (Exodus 12:6), which really means “between the two evenings” which is between 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm is when the Lamb would be slain, and then “they shall eat the flesh in that night” (v.8). This is when the Passover took place and when Jesus death exactly took place. He was slain on the “9th hour” see Luke 23:44; Mark 15:33-34; Matt 27:46. This corresponds to our 3:00 pm which is “between the two evenings.”

**Between the two evenings:** God instructed the Israelites, “And ye shall keep it [the paschal lamb] up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening... and they shall eat the flesh in that night...” (Exodus 12:6-8).

*Kitto’s Encyclopedia of Biblical Literature* says “Tradition... interprets the phrase between the two evenings to mean from afternoon to the disappearing of the sun, the first evening being from the time when the sun begins to decline from its vertical or noontime point toward the west; and the second from its going down and vanishing out of sight which is the reason why the daily sacrifice might be killed at 12:30 p.m. on a Friday (*Mishna, Pesachim, v.1; Maimonides, Hilchoth, Korban, Pesach., 1.4*).

“But as the paschal lamb was slain after the daily sacrifice, it generally took place from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. We should have deemed it superfluous to add, that such faithful followers of Jewish tradition as Sandia, Rashi, Kimchi, Ralbag, etc., espoused this definition of the ancient Jewish canons, were it not for the assertion which is made in some of the best Christian commentaries and which is repeated in the excellent article Passover in *Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible*, that ‘Jarchi and Kimchi hold that the two evenings were the time immediately before and immediately after sunset so that the point of time at which the sun sets divides them.’ Now Rashi most distinctively declares, ‘From the sixth hour (12 o’clock) and upwards is called between the two evenings because the sun begins to set for the evening. Hence, it appears to me that the phrase between the two evenings denotes the hours between the evening of the day and the



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evening of the night. The evening of the day is from the beginning of the seventh hour (immediately after noontime), when the evening shadows begin to lengthen, whilst the evening of the night is the beginning of the night' (Commentary on Exodus 12:6). Kimchi says almost literally the same thing: 'Between the two evenings is from the time when the sun begins to incline towards the west, which is from the sixth hour (12 o'clock) and upwards. It is called between the two evenings because there are two evenings, for from the time that the sun begins to decline is one evening, and the other evening is after the sun has gone down, and it is the space between which is meant by between the two evenings' (Lexicon s. v.)...

"Eustathius, in a note on the seventeenth book of the *Odyssey*, shows that the Greeks too held that there were two evenings, one which they called the latter evening at the close of the day; and the other the former evening, which commenced immediately after noon" (Vid. Bochart Hierozoic, Part I, lib. ii. cap. I, oper., tom. ii. p.559, edit. 1712).

The term "evening" merely means "leveling." Because of popular use, many people say "good evening" when encountering friends in the very early part of the night, or the very late part of the afternoon. But popular usage of English terms does not indicate the true meaning of Hebrew terms which were extant thousands of years before the English language came into existence.

The term "between the two evenings" actually meant any time from the zenith, or the "leveling" of the sun at its highest point, as it began its decline, until the moment of the "going away of the sun," or sunset. *This is why the sacrificial lambs were sacrificed from about 2:30 p.m. onward, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.*

But we need not speculate about language or custom, for there is irrefutable internal biblical proof about what time of day is meant by the phrase "between the two evenings," translated "in the evening" in Exodus 12:6.

God said, "...and they shall eat the flesh *in that night*" (Exodus 12:8) proving that the killing of the lamb (or kid) took place a few hours prior to the going down of the sun. The paschal meal was concluded in the early hours of the fifteenth of Nisan (within only a few hours after sunset). "SEVEN DAYS shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day shall ye put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day [obviously counting inclusively; seven days in all], that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (Exodus 12:15). To embrace only seven days, the Days of Unleavened Bread HAD TO BEGIN ON THE FIFTEENTH, and the process of putting leavening out of their houses had to be completed ON THE FOURTEENTH, prior to the preparation for the paschal meal.

Otherwise, if the original Passover had taken place just after the thirteenth, just at the beginning of the fourteenth, you have EIGHT DAYS of Unleavened Bread!

But the Bible says there were to be only SEVEN DAYS of Unleavened Bread!

Notice further proof: "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month AT EVEN, he shall eat unleavened bread, UNTIL the one and twentieth day of the month at even." If you begin counting WITH the fourteenth or at the end of the thirteenth, including the whole day, you would

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have eight days, not seven. It follows that the expression “on the fourteenth day of the month at even” means AT THE END OF THE FOURTEENTH, just as the fifteenth is about to BEGIN, or there would be EIGHT days of Unleavened Bread.

The first Day of Unleavened Bread is the FIFTEENTH, not the fourteenth. But the paschal meal was to be in preparation, including the putting away of leavening, and the killing of the lamb (or kid) very late on the fourteenth! Therefore, the Israelite’s homes would be unleavened for a full SEVEN DAYS, plus only a few hours, late on the fourteenth, prior to the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. **This is the PURPOSE of the “preparation” day.** Remember that phrase! Christ was on the Cross until mid afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan, and died at the precise moment when the high priest slew the first of the Pashal lambs! “Between the Two Evenings” They HASTED to bury Him! Why? “The Jews therefore, BECAUSE IT WAS THE PREPARATION, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (*for that Sabbath day was an HIGH day*), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away” (John 19:31). An “high day Sabbath” was an annual holy day! The holy day which came immediately after Christ’s death was the FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan!

So Christ died right at the “ninth hour” which was the time “between the two evenings,” when the lambs were slain.

Now back to the earlier point of when should we keep the Passover.

So if the event of Christ’s death took place exactly at the time when the Passover lamb was slaughtered, then the *Passover Meal was to take place at the same time as well.* This night is very important to God. And he calls this night of eating the Passover Meal, “This is that night of the Lord to be observed” (Ex 12:42). But what are we going to do with the scripture in 1 Corinthians 11:23?

The expression the “same night,” in which Jesus was “betrayed.” The word “same” is in Italics. That means it was added by the translators, therefore not in the original text. They do that some times to try and clear up the translation by adding some words to the text, that’s why you find italicized words in the bible. So this scripture can read, “The night in which he was betrayed.” *All Paul was doing was hearkening back to what happened at the first New Testament Passover Meal.* Nothing indicates that it was the same time that Jesus ate the Passover at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th.

So why did Jesus do the Passover early? *Well, because, he was going to be the Passover lamb at the very time when they slaughtered the Lamb, he couldn't hold the Passover Meal at that time.* That was the time when he had to die for the sins of the world. So he held it early. Now Samuele Biacchiocchi’s Book God's Festivals shows this to be correct, he writes, “A plausible resolution of the discrepancy is to assume that the Last Supper was a special paschal meal eaten the evening before the official Passover Meal. The anticipation of the paschal meal could have been motivated by the fact that Jesus *knew he would suffer death at the Passover in fulfillment of the type provided by the slaying of the paschal lamb on Nisan 14. He knew he could not possibly*

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*eat of the paschal lamb at the usual time and himself be sacrificed as the true paschal lamb when the lambs were slain.*

“It was more important that *Christ’s death should synchronize with the death of the Passover lambs than that his eating of the Passover meal synchronize with the official time of the Passover meal.* In view of the legitimate concern, Jesus anticipated his eating of the Passover with his disciples to the evening before the official Passover so that the types of the slaying of the lamb and the offering of the first fruits would be fulfilled ‘not only as to the event, but as to the time’

“Support for this assumption can be found in the time references to the Passover in Matthew 26:2, 18 and John 13:1. In Matthew 26:2, Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.’ Clearly this indicates that Christ knew that his death would occur at Passover which was two days away. *Christ’s awareness that his death would occur on Passover day could have caused him to anticipate his last paschal meal with his disciples a day earlier.*

“Christ could not have instructed his disciples to prepare the Passover at the official time (Nisan 14) when he had just informed them that he would be crucified at that time. This explains the sense of urgency in the instructions Jesus gave to his disciples: ‘Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples.’ (Matt 26:18). The phrase ‘My time is at hand’ presumably refers to the short time left to Passover when the ‘son of man will be delivered up to be crucified’ Because of the shortness of time, hasty arrangements had to be made for a special Passover meal.

“A similar conclusion can be drawn from John 13:1, which functions as a prologue or title to the story of the Last supper in the Upper room. As translated by the RSV, it reads: ‘Now before the feast of Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.’ Noval Geldenhuys argues that this translation, followed largely by the A.V. & N.I.V. among others, is misleading because it completely detaches the Last supper from the Passover. He suggests that the expression, ‘before the feast’ should be connected with the verb ‘Knowing’ (eidos). Thus the translation would read: ‘Knowing (already) before the Passover that his hour had come to depart out of this world unto his Father, Jesus, who loved his own in this world, loved them unto the end (or to the ‘uttermost’).’

“According to this translation (which is followed by Weymouth, Knox, Moffatt and others), John does not wish to detach the events of the Last Supper from the Passover. *Rather he gives a reason for their occurrence, namely, Jesus Knew in advance of his impending death at Passover and, consequently, He showed his love toward his disciples by arranging for an early paschal supper, at which, among other things, He washed his disciples feet*” (pp.56-57, emphasis added).

So there is no reason to believe that the Passover Meal was changed to one day earlier. We are to eat that Passover Meal on the “night of the Lord to be observed” (Ex 12:42). This night was the “flesh” to be eaten (Ex 12:8), and Jesus gave us no indication that he changed that night. Jesus was killed right at the same time that the Lamb was killed (Ex 12:6). And we are to eat the

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Passover Meal when it is was to be eaten, at the same time, “that night,” at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th of Nisan!

### Foot Washing

During the Passover service the British-Israel Church of God, like Christ, after the Passover Meal, will get up and we wash one another’s feet, as Christ did in John 13:4-5: “He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

“After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”

After this Jesus explained to his disciples that they should follow this example of humility: “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; *ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*

“*For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you*” (vv.13-15).

This ordinance is generally called, “the ordinance of humility” (ibid, p.62). But it also means more than this in Christ’s answer to Peter: “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean...” (v.10). It was a symbol of them being cleaned spiritually in their hearts through the grace of Christ, and his atoning sacrifice he was about to make on the cross.

Every year, the British-Israel Church of God “shows the lord's death till he comes” by Keeping the Passover as a memorial of what Christ has done for his church and the entire world. It is a night to be “observed,” and kept. It is evident in the Bible that the Church of God kept the Passover, and we continue to keep it today following Christ's example and the example of the Apostles as well. Will you keep it?

### Passover in the History of the Church

Now in the second century, several documents inform us of the meaning, manner and time when the Christians celebrated the Passover.

“According to these documents, Christians celebrated the Passover at the *same time as the Jewish Passover, beginning at sundown on Nisan 14 [not late 13th, early 14th]* and continuing their vigil until the next morning. For this reason they are called ‘Quartodecimans,’ Latin for ‘Fourteeners.’” (ibid, p.95, emphasis added). The early church celebrated the Passover as a memorial of Christ's death. But then as the church became more *gentile than Jewish, the gentiles refused to celebrate it because they viewed it as a Jewish feast*: “...as a result of the influx of gentiles who were reluctant to observe a feast previously unknown to them...the controversy erupted after A.D. 135, when the Jewish-Christian bishops of Jerusalem were replaced by gentile bishops as a result of Hadrian's edict which forbade Jews and Jewish Christians to enter the city” (ibid, p.97). This started the Passover Controversy or the Quartodecimen Controversy.

The Controversy flared up in the second century over the date of the celebration of the Passover. This controversy threatened to split the churches.

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The two protagonists of the controversy were on the one side Bishop Victor (A.D. 189-199) on the one side and Bishop Polycrates of Ephesus on the other.

Victor championed the observance of Easter-Sunday, that is the observance of Passover on the Sunday following the date of the Jewish Passover, and he eventually “excommunicated the recalcitrant Christian communities of the province of Asia for refusing to adopt Easter-Sunday” (ibid, p.99).

Bishop Polycrates of Ephesus represented the Asian Churches who strongly advocated the traditional date of the Passover on the 14th of Nisan commonly known as “Quartodecimen” or “Fourteenth” day of Passover. “The Asian bishops, however unanimously agreed to remain true to the Apostolic tradition transmitted to them by the Apostles Phillip and John...” (ibid, p.99). The sent a letter to Bishop Victor of Rome, and in turn Victor sent a letter to the churches excommunicating all the churches of the province of Asia.

But why did the Bishop of Rome want to change it to Easter-Sunday, the Sunday after the Jewish Passover?

As mentioned above, when the Emperor Hadrian expelled the Jews and Christians from Jerusalem he “adopted new repressive measures against Jewish religious practices” and since the Church became more gentile (as mentioned above), “such measures influenced the new gentile hierarchy to change the date of the Passover from Nisan 14 to the following Sunday (Easter-Sunday) in order to *show separation and differentiation from the Jews and Jewish-Christians*” (ibid, p.102, emphasis added). So here was the motive, to dodge persecution. But also anti-Semitism as noted above. So why did they pick Easter-Sunday?

“Gentile Christians usually came from a background devoid of scriptural knowledge. They did not have a natural appreciation for, allegiance to, or comprehension of the scriptures, especially the Law and the Prophets which they misunderstood, overlooked, or actually discarded in the early churches struggle to break free from erroneous legalizers. They found it easy to disregard Passover and other major institutions of the Mosaic Covenant” (Passover Before the Messiah and After, p.142, Donna and Mal Broadhurst).

Biacchiocchi continues to say: “The problem with Gentile Christians was not only their lack of familiarity with Scripture, but also their excessive fascination with their *Greek philosophical speculations, which conditioned their understanding of biblical truths*. While Jewish-Christians often erred in the direction of legalism, Gentile Christians often erred in the direction of the philosophical speculations which sundered Christianity from its historical roots” (God’s Festivals, p.103, emphasis added). The background of the gentile Christians was Paganism. So it was only natural as history shows, that they would choose Easter-Sunday.

Because of what happened with Hadrian, the gentile Christians began to hold and develop a so-called “Christian” theology of contempt for the Jews and their religion. Then a whole body of literature against the Jews started to come out by the leading church fathers at that time, see Sabbath to Sunday by Biacchiocchi, pp.213-235. At this time two major changes took place. “The Sabbath was changed to Sunday and Passover was transferred to Easter-Sunday” (ibid,

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p.103). The anti-Semitism grew so much that at the time of Constantine, the church really wanted to make a clean break from Judaism. In the council of Nicea, they desired to establish a clean break from Judaism which took place in A.D. 325. They said, "Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd: for we have received from our Saviour a different way" (Eusebius Life of Constantine 3, 18-19, Nicene and Post-Nicene Father 2nd series, vol.1, p.524-525). So there is the official break, and the visible Church was born. Now mainstream Christian Orthodox Catholics Protestants etc... all celebrate Easter instead of the Passover. Ever since this controversy, scattered remnants of God's true church have been keeping Passover throughout the centuries. The Quartodecimans, after that, the Paulicians, the Bogomils, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, the Seventh-Day Baptists, and the Churches of God today.

### Appendix

Study the accompanying charts, together with all scriptural references, to create in your mind a vivid impression of the entire week of Unleavened Bread, and how the whole process of the Exodus took place.

### **ABIB 14th: EXODUS WEEK** (Preparation for Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread)

SUNSET	6:00 PM	The three days of darkness end. Pharaoh calls Moses,
(Approx.)	7:00 PM	says to go, but insists cattle must stay. Moses says
	8:00 PM	cattle must go. Pharaoh changes his mind, refuses to let
	9:00 PM	Israelites go (Exodus 10:21-29).Moses pronounces final
	10:00 PM	plague - that of death of firstborn - goes from Pharaoh's
	11:00 PM	presence in anger (Exodus 11:1-8).
MIDNIGHT	12:00 midnight	
	1:00 AM	
	2:00 AM	
	3:00	

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	AM	
	4:00	
	AM	
	5:00	Moses gives final command concerning
	AM	Passover lamb during
SUNRISE	6:00	morning hours. Explains death angel will pass
	AM	this night
(Approx.)	7:00	(Exodus 12:12).
	AM	
	8:00	
	AM	
	9:00	“Spoiling” of Egyptians probably occurred
	AM	during daylight hours of
	10:00	fourteenth, while final preparations for
	AM	Passover meal being made
	11:00	(Exodus 3:22;11:2).
	AM	
NOON	12:00	
	noon	
	1:00	Paschal lambs (or kids) slain “at even” or in
	PM	afternoon of fourteenth,
	2:00	but allowing sufficient time for preparation -
	PM	some hours required for roasting,
	3:00	for was roasted “whole,” like barbecue. Blood
	PM	was collected, painted
	4:00	on lintels and doorposts of Israelites’ houses.
	PM	
	5:00	PM
SUNSET	6:00	PM Israelites indoors. Preparing to eat Passover.
(Approx.)		

### **ABIB 15th: EXODUS WEEK**

(First day of Unleavened Bread – Annual HolyDay;  
Leviticus 23:6)

SUNSET 6:00 PM Passover meal being eaten, with loins girded,

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		shoes on feet, staffs in
(Approx.)	7:00 PM	hand, with roast lamb (or kid), bitter herbs, unleavened bread
	8:00 PM	(Exodus 12:9-11)
	9:00 PM	Remains of lamb (or kid) to be burned (Exodus 12:10).
	10:00 PM	
	11:00 PM	Death angel smites Egyptians - no house is spared save Israelites
MIDNIGHT	12:00 midnight	(Exodus 12:29).
	1:00 AM	Pharaoh summons Moses, Aaron, immediately (Exodus 12:31).
	2:00 AM	Orders Israelites out of Goshen urgently, Egyptians “urgent” upon
	3:00 AM	them, depart “in haste” (Exodus 12:31,33,39).
	4:00 AM	
	5:00 AM	This was a NIGHT to “be much observed” (Exodus 12:42).
SUNRISE	6:00 AM	“Went out of Egypt with high hand” (Numbers 33:4).
(Approx.)	7:00 AM	
	8:00 AM	Probably about 3 million Israelites, with huge herds of cattle, goats,
	9:00 AM	sheep, journeyed from Rameses to temporary camping place, later
	10:00 AM	called “Succoth,” meaning “booths” (Exodus 12:37, 38).
	11:00 AM	
NOON	12:00	Included in their number were a number of other



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	noon	races who had become
1:00 PM		'proselytes' ("A mixed multitude went up also with them" Exodus 12:38).
2:00 PM		They stopped for food, but baked unleavened bread (1st day of Unleavened
3:00 PM		Bread) "for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt, and
4:00 PM		could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual" (Exodus 2:39).
5:00 PM		
SUNSET	6:00 PM	Camping in "Succoth."
(Approx.)		

### **ABIB 16th: EXODUS WEEK** (Second day of Unleavened Bread)

SUNSET	6:00 PM	
(Approx.)	7:00 PM	At Succoth for the night
	8:00 PM	
	9:00 PM	
	10:00 PM	
	11:00 PM	
MIDNIGHT	12:00 midnight	
	1:00 AM	
	2:00 AM	
	3:00 AM	

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	4:00 AM	“And they took their journey from Succoth,... and the Eternal went before them by day
	5:00 AM	in a pillar of fire, to give them light ...”
SUNRISE	6:00 AM	
(Approx.)	7:00 AM	
	8:00 AM	
	9:00 AM	
	10:00 AM	
	11:00 AM	
NOON	12:00 noon	
	1:00 PM	
	2:00 PM	
	3:00 PM	
	4:00 PM	“.. He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from
	5:00 PM	before the people” (Exodus 13:20-22).
SUNSET	6:00 PM	
(Approx.)		

### **ABIB 17th: EXODUS WEEK** (Third day of Unleavened Bread)

SUNSET	6:00 PM	3rd day of travel - on route from Etham, “In the edge of the wilderness”
(Approx.)	7:00 PM	(Exodus 13:20).

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	8:00 PM	
	9:00 PM	
	10:00 PM	
	11:00 PM	
MIDNIGHT	12:00 midnight	
	1:00 AM	“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not
	2:00 AM	through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said,
	3:00 AM	lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt
	4:00 AM	
	5:00 AM	
SUNRISE	6:00 AM	
(Approx.)	7:00 AM	“But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea: and
	8:00 AM	the children of Israel went up harnessed (armed) out of the land of Egypt’
	9:00 AM	(Exodus 13:17,18).
	10:00 AM	
	11:00 AM	
NOON	12:00 noon	
	1:00 PM	
	2:00 PM	

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	3:00 PM	
	4:00 PM	Making camp at "Etham," at the edge of the wilderness (Exodus 13:20).
	5:00 PM	
SUNSET	6:00 PM	
(Approx.)		

### **ABIB 18th: EXODUS WEEK** (Fourth day of Unleavened Bread)

SUNSET	6:00 PM	Encamped at Etham.
(Approx.)	7:00 PM	
	8:00 PM	God tells Moses, "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn, and encamp before
	9:00 PM	Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon; before it shall ye
	10:00 PM	encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel They are entangled in
	11:00 PM	the land, the wilderness hath shut them in" (Exodus 14:2,3).
MIDNIGHT	12:00 midnight	
	1:00 AM	
	2:00 AM	"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them"
	3:00 AM	
	4:00 AM	
	5:00 AM	"And it was told the king of Egypt that the people (had) fled, and... he made ready his
SUNRISE	6:00 AM	chariot, and took his people with him:... he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all

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(Approx.)	7:00 AM	the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them”(Exodus 14).
	8:00 AM	
	9:00 AM	
	10:00 AM	
	11:00 AM	Pharaoh’s pursuit begins.
NOON	12:00 noon	
	1:00 PM	Israelites journey toward Pihahiroth.
	2:00 PM	
	3:00 PM	
	4:00 PM	
	5:00 PM	
SUNSET	6:00 PM	
(Approx.)		

### **ABIB 19th: EXODUS WEEK** (Fifth day of Unleavened Bread)

SUNSET	6:00 PM
(Approx.)	7:00 PM
	8:00 PM
	9:00 PM
	10:00 PM
	11:00 PM
MIDNIGHT	12:00

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	midnight	
	1:00 AM	
	2:00 AM	
	3:00 AM	
	4:00 AM	
	5:00 AM	
SUNRISE	6:00 AM	Traveling toward Pihahiroth
(Approx.)	7:00 AM	
	8:00 AM	
	9:00 AM	Pharaoh in pursuit.
	10:00 AM	
	11:00 AM	
NOON	12:00 noon	
	1:00 PM	
	2:00 PM	
	3:00 PM	
	4:00 PM	
	5:00 PM	
SUNSET	6:00 PM	
(Approx.)		

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### **ABIB 20th: EXODUS WEEK**

(Sixth day of Unleavened Bread)

SUNSET	6:00 PM	
(Approx.)	7:00 PM	
	8:00 PM	
	9:00 PM	
	10:00 PM	
	11:00 PM	
MIDNIGHT	12:00 midnight	
	1:00 AM	
	2:00 AM	Pursuit continues.
	3:00 AM	
	4:00 AM	
	5:00 AM	
SUNRISE	6:00 AM	
(Approx.)	7:00 AM	“And they removed from Etham, and turned again unto Pihahiroth, which is before
	8:00 AM	Baalzephon: and they pitched (camped) before Migdol” (Numbers 33:7).
	9:00 AM	
	10:00 AM	
	11:00 AM	

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NOON        12:00  
              noon  
  
              1:00 PM  
              2:00 PM  
              3:00 PM  
              4:00 PM  
              5:00 PM  
SUNSET     6:00 PM  
(Approx.)

### **ABIB 21st: EXODUS WEEK**

(Seventh and last day of Unleavened Bread; Leviticus 23:8)

SUNSET     6:00 PM    “Pitched before Migdol” (Numbers 33:7).  
(Approx.)   7:00 PM    “An holy convocation;” no work, no traveling.  
              8:00 PM  
              9:00 PM  
              10:00  
              PM  
              11:00  
              PM  
MIDNIGHT   12:00  
              midnight  
              1:00  
              AM  
              2:00  
              AM  
              3:00  
              AM  
              4:00  
              AM  
              5:00  
              AM



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SUNRISE	6:00 AM	Pharaoh overtakes Israel. “But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and
(Approx.)	7:00 AM	chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by
	8:00 AM	the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the
	9:00 AM	children of Israel lifted up their eyes...and said...Because there were no graves in
	10:00 AM	Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? ...it would have been better
	11:00 AM	for us to serve the Egyptians...and Moses stretched out his hand over the sea” (Exodus
NOON	12:00 noon	14:9-21).
	1:00 PM	
	2:00 PM	
	3:00 PM	
	4:00 PM	“...and the Eternal caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and
	5:00 PM	made the dry land” (Exodus 14:21)
SUNSET	6:00 PM	
(Approx.)		

### **ABIB 22nd: EXODUS WEEK**

SUNSET	6:00 PM	
(Approx.)	7:00 PM	
	8:00 PM	
	9:00 PM	
	10:00 PM	Strong wind blows apart waters of Red Sea all this night (Exodus 14:21, 22).
	11:00 PM	

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MIDNIGHT	12:00 midnight	God casts light on Israel, but darkness on Egyptians (Exodus 14:20)
	1:00 AM	
	2:00 AM	
	3:00 AM	3:00 a.m., "The morning watch," God troubles Egyptians, they begin to reverse
	4:00 AM	direction.
	5:00 AM	
SUNRISE	6:00 AM	EXODUS TAKES PLACE, Israel escapes through dry sea bed
(Approx.)	7:00 AM	(Exodus 14:26-31).
	8:00 AM	Pharaoh's army drowned (Exodus 14:26-31).
	9:00 AM	
	10:00 AM	Israel regroups on opposite shore. "Song of Moses" sung by Miriam and women
	11:00 AM	(Exodus 15:1-21).
NOON	12:00 noon	
	1:00 PM	
	2:00 PM	
	3:00 PM	Begin three day's journey into wilderness (Exodus 15:22).
	4:00 PM	
	5:00 PM	
SUNSET (Approx)	6:00 PM	