

“Cry aloud, spare not – show My people their SINS”! (Isa.58:1-2).

PASSOVER – 14th or 15th of Nisan?

Many churches which came out of Worldwide Church of God keep “Passover” on the same day they always did, when back in Worldwide. It is hard for people to admit error – and to CHANGE. It is simpler just to go along with the “old way.” But what if it is proven WRONG? The incredible lengths to which some ministers will go to justify entrenched error boggles the mind. Truly, as Adolph Hitler said, if you tell a lie big enough and often enough, most people will believe it! How many are really willing to dig in, and PROVE the basis and foundation of their belief and practice?

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Why is there so much heated controversy over the Passover?

Is observance of the Passover really VITAL to your salvation?

To observe this holy festival on the WRONG DAY is disobedience to the plain commandment of God and example of Christ! Therefore, it is imperative that we resolve this question, in our minds, honestly and faithfully, once and for all – and NOT trust the “opinions” of mere men or religious leaders who have their own “ax to grind” and may be guilty of merely coveting a following and their financial support!

Many people assume that in Jesus’ day two “Passovers” were kept – one by Jesus and His disciples, at the beginning of Nisan 14; and the other by the majority of the Jews, who killed the Passover lambs in the afternoon of Nisan 14, and celebrated the feast in the early hours of Nisan 15. But is this assumption true? Is there ANY historic basis for an early Nisan 14

Passover, with the lambs being killed right after sunset and then eaten during the early hours of the 14th?

Hard as we look in history for any evidence of Jews observing a Passover at the beginning of Nisan 14, we come up empty. There is simply NO historical evidence for such a thing. There is only the loud shouting of a few who insist that since the Bible often says the “Passover” is on Nisan 14, all of it had to ALL be on that day – both the killing of the lambs, AND the eating of the Passover!

However, that belief is pure assumption, and has no basis in fact or history! It is based on sheer “reasoning in a circle,” assuming to be true that which is supposed to be being “proved”! It is like saying, “It IS because it IS!”

The 14th of Nisan

The 14th of Nisan is the day when the Jews put leavening out of their homes, as God commanded, so they could celebrate the seven days of unleavened bread. God commanded, “In the first month, on the 14th day of the month AT EVEN (at evening, the ending portion of the day – compare Leviticus 23:32), ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month AT EVEN” (Exodus 12:18-20). No leaven was to be seen with them for the seven days of the feast (Exo.13:6-7). Thus the leavening had to be put out on the 14th day of the month, as the 15th was the first day of the festival (Leviticus 23:6-7).

What, then, was the 14th of Nisan? In Exodus 12:6 we read that on the 14th of Nisan the children of Israel were to SLAY the Passover lambs. “And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation shall KILL it in the evening” (Heb., “between the two evenings”). Notice! The Passover lambs were to be killed in the evening of Nisan 14. That means toward the END of Nisan 14, or late afternoon. The “evening” of a day, in this sense, is not its beginning, but its ending, before sunset (see Exodus 12:18). In this verse, notice that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins at the “evening” of the fourteenth day of Nisan (leading into the high holy day of the 15th) and ends at the “evening” of the twenty first of Nisan – the seventh day of the Feast.

Likewise, the Day of Atonement, which is the tenth day of Tishri, began “in the ninth day of the month AT EVEN” (see Lev.23:32). So the “evening” of the 9th day has to be the ending portion of the day, toward sunset!

What does this tell us? Simply that although the actual festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread BEGAN with the 15th of Nisan and lasted through the 21st of Nisan, the 14th of Nisan was a vital, integral part of the festival – it was the PREPARATION DAY! It was the day when the leavening had to be put out of the houses, and the day the Passover lambs – necessary for the feast which began on Nisan 15 – had to be killed!

“The Preparation Day”

In the gospel of John, the 14th of Nisan is plainly called, by the gospel writer, “the

preparation of the Passover.” After the Jews had apprehended Jesus and interrogated Him, early that morning, they led Him to the hall of judgment to be judged by Pontius Pilate, Roman governor. The Jews themselves, however, would not go into the Roman judgment hall, “lest they should be defiled; but that they might EAT THE PASSOVER” (John 18:28).

Clearly Passover had not yet come!

And notice here – John, the apostle, does not refer to this as the “Jews” Passover – but as “THE PASSOVER.” There was only one, and he acknowledged that the true Passover was not yet come.

Further, in John 19, after Jesus had been scourged and whipped and beaten, and was brought again before Pilate, Pilate sat down in “the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew Gabbatha. *AND IT WAS THE PREPARATION OF THE PASSOVER . . .*” (John 19:13-14).

The “Lord’s supper” was long since completed and finished – but the PASSOVER was still to come – time for it has not yet arrived!

Why? Because in order for Jesus/Yeshua to really be our “Passover LAMB,” He had to die right when the Passover lambs were to be killed – the very same day and time period!

Otherwise, He could not be our Saviour – He would have been another FALSE MESSIAH – A COUNTERFEIT SAVIOR with a *counterfeit* PASSOVER!

After Jesus was crucified, and died (John 19:25-30), late in the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, at the very same moment that the Jews were slaying thousands of Passover lambs at the Temple of God – thus perfectly fulfilling the Passover type – we find that the Jews who killed Him wanted to get the bodies of Jesus and the two criminals who were killed along with Him off the cross quickly, before sunset, so they would not remain there on the high sabbath day of the first day of unleavened bread. We read, “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).

How Much Preparation Time Needed?

The synoptic gospels confirm this picture. In Mark we read, “After TWO DAYS was the feast of the PASSOVER, and of unleavened bread” (Mark 14:1). The Passover was killed on Nisan 14. Mark said “AFTER two days.” In other words, three days later would be the time the Passover was killed, or Nisan 14. So this would have been Nisan 11.

In Matthew we also read, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that AFTER TWO DAYS is the feast of the Passover” (Matt.26:1-2). That means this about Nisan 11. That night, Jesus abode in Bethany (v.6), and a woman came and anointed Him with expensive ointment (vs.7-13). Judas Iscariot, angry,

having felt rebuked and slighted by Christ, went to the chief priests and offered to betray Jesus to them (vs.14-16). This took up the whole day of Nisan 11.

On the daylight portion of Nisan 12, the next morning, we read the very NEXT event to occur. “Now on the first *day of the feast* of unleavened bread” (Matt.26:17).

Let’s stop right here. In the New King James Version, [the words “day of the feast of” are in italics, and were added by the translators and do not belong here! They lead to serious misunderstanding and contradiction! The passage really says, “Now at the first [beginning part] of unleavened bread.” The Greek word for “first” is *protos* and means “beginning,” or “beginning part.” The feast did not begin until Nisan 15, however preparations for the feast began on Nisan 10, when the lambs were selected by each household (Exo.12:3).

A careful reconstruction of Christ’s Last Week shows this day must have been Nisan 12. The disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we PREPARE for thee to eat the Passover?” (Matt.26:17). Do you see? This was the 12th of Nisan – and the disciples knew this was a day of PREPARATION for the Passover celebration yet to come! The time for “preparation,” clearly, is in ADVANCE of the day! *It was not the Passover itself, but a PREPARATION day!*

Jesus then sent them to the city of Jerusalem, a short distance from Bethany, to see a particular man, and make arrangements with him for them to keep the Passover at his house (Matt.13:18). The disciples did so, “and made READY the Passover” (v.19). That is, they did as He instructed them. They “prepared” the room, probably bought groceries, made sure of a table, chairs, and everything that would be needed.

Later that same night, Jesus and the disciples met for their final dinner. “When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve” (Matt.26:20). *It does not say that they met that evening in that same room! Only that He sat down with them for dinner!*

In fact, John records, “Now BEFORE [not during] the feast of the PASSOVER . . . supper being ended [margin, “during supper”] . . .” (John 13:1). This final meal was BEFORE the Passover – so it could not have been the Passover!!!

But notice! This day had been the 12th of Nisan – two days before the Passover. This dinner occurred that same evening, when Nisan 12 became Nisan 13 at sunset. So it was now Nisan 13. That night, after supper, He was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, interrogated by the high priests, and the NEXT day, early, still Nisan 13, He was brought before the Sanhedrin and condemned (Matt.27:1), and then was taken before Pilate (verse 2). Pilate, learning He was of Herod’s jurisdiction, sent Him to king Herod (Luke 23:6-8). Herod returned Him to Pilate (verse 11).

So it is now Nisan 13, toward the middle of the day. He appears before Pilate once again. Notice! Now it was the PREPARATION DAY [Greek *hemera*, or “time”] of the PASSOVER, and about the SIXTH HOUR. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’” (John 19:14).

The “sixth hour” means HIGH NOON! It was about noon-time when Pilate finally condemned Christ to death (verse 16).

Yeshua was flogged, whipped, scourged, beaten, and bruised beyond belief (see Mark 15:16-19; Matt.27:26-29; and Isaiah 52:13-15). He was cast in prison overnight, and led away the next morning, Nisan 14, to be *crucified*. He was nailed to the stake at 9:00 am in the morning – the “third hour” according to Hebrew reckoning (Mark 15:25).

But remember – He was condemned by Pilate at HIGH NOON! Therefore, the crucifixion had to be THE DAY AFTER the sentence was passed! You cannot have a prisoner crucified at 9:00 am on the same day that he is condemned 3 hours LATER, AT NOON! So the condemnation and sentencing had to be the day before the crucifixion! The crucifixion occurred on Nisan 14, the day the Passover lambs were all slain; so the trial and sentencing had to be Nisan 13, the previous day!

Isn't that perfectly clear? Just like looking into a MIRROR!

What does this tell us? This fact plainly shows us that there is NO CONTRADICTION BETWEEN the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke with the account of John! They are all in agreement – all in accord – that the Passover had *NOT YET ARRIVED when the “Lord’s Supper” occurred!* (read John 13:1, 18:28, 19:14, 31 again).

REVIEW these Scriptures! Don't take these things for granted! Don't be lazy, or in a hurry, or skim over these things. Your *very salvation* DESERVES the attention and full concentration of your mind and being upon these things!

Now, let me ask you a question. IF as some claim, this meal was the actual Passover, at the beginning of Nisan 14, doesn't it seem passing strange – weird, in fact – that the disciples would come to Christ and ask Him where they should PREPARE for the Passover – JUST BARE MINUTES or an hour or so BEFORE “Passover”?

Do you see?

If Passover was indeed the Lord’s Supper, then the disciples waited until the very “LAST MINUTE” to even ask Jesus about making preparations for the Passover! Such a theory is ludicrous – ridiculous – nonsense. The disciples of Christ were wise, intelligent, capable men – specially chosen by the Messiah Himself to be apostles, the leaders of His Church! It is inconceivable that they would wait till after sunset to prepare for the “Passover,” that very evening!

Grocery Shopping During Passover?

The New Testament verifies this fact. We read in the gospel of John, that the night Jesus sat down with His disciples for a final dinner, that this was “BEFORE THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER” (John 13:1). This meal was not the “Passover,” but rather was called simply “supper” (John 13:2, 4). If this meal was such an important event as the Passover meal, then

we have an incredible anomaly, because during a Passover meal **NOBODY** gets up to leave half-way through the celebration, and certainly nobody would even **THINK** of leaving the Passover meal to “go shopping” for groceries! In fact, during the Passover celebration, *there would no stores be open of any kind, anywhere!*

Yet we plainly find, that during this supper, Jesus indicated to His disciples that one of them would betray Him. When they asked who it was, He gave a sop to Judas Iscariot. Notice the account in John:

“And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

“Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, *Buy those things we have need of against [FOR] the feast [PASSOVER, which would be the very next night!];* or that he should give something to the poor” (John 13:26-29).

If this meal was the Passover, as many contend, then it is strikingly strange that the disciples would have assumed Judas was leaving the Passover celebration, before it was finished, in order to **GO SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES!** The very idea is preposterous. No one in their right mind would have even considered leaving the Passover in order to go grocery shopping – certainly not the disciples of Jesus who were observant Jews who obeyed God’s Laws! This passage proves also that the disciples knew that this meal was **NOT** the “Passover” but that the Passover was still a day away! For they thought that Judas was being sent out to get groceries for preparation for the upcoming “Feast” – which had to refer to the “Feast of the Passover,” as verse one of this chapter so plainly says!

The Matter of the Accuracy of Typology

Do we get the picture? The 14th of Nisan was the final day when preparations were made for the actual Passover Feast which was celebrated on the 15th of Nisan. John clearly says so! So do Matthew and Mark. Luke also corroborates this fact (Luke 22:1, 7). Neither Jesus nor His disciples would have waited till the very last moment to begin preparation for Passover. Therefore, the Lord’s Supper could not have been the same as the “Passover.” Since it occurred during a “preparation day” for the Passover, or “preparation of the Passover,” there is no way it could **BE** the Passover! That would be ridiculous. How could the day of Jesus’ trial, and the day of the crucifixion be the “preparation” of the Passover, if the Passover had already occurred?

How absurd!

But there is another vital factor we must consider here. Nisan 14 was the day the leavening was put out, and the day the Passover lambs were slain, in late afternoon – *at the very same time Jesus expired on the cross!* Therefore, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the typology of

the “Passover sacrifice.” Not only was He slain for our sins, but He was slain at the very moment the Passover lambs were being slain at the Temple! He was indeed the *perfect* Passover sacrifice for our sins (I Cor.5:7).

But consider this: IF the true Passover was celebrated before Christ was slain, then He would not have been slain at the proper time! If the Passover had already occurred the evening before His death, then HE FAILED TO FULFILL THE PASSOVER PROPHECY AND TYPOLOGY!

IF Jesus were the true Passover lamb, then, He had to be slain at the very time the Passover lambs were being slain! HE DID! He died on the very afternoon of Nisan 14, when the Passover lambs were being slain throughout Jerusalem!

If He did not die when they died, then He died IN VAIN and could not have been our true Passover lamb! And the TRUE Passover could not occur UNTIL the Passover lambs were killed! He was slain in the afternoon of Nisan 14, and died at 3:00 pm or middle of the afternoon (Matt.27:46). THEREFORE PASSOVER DINNER COULD NOT OCCUR BEFORE THAT TIME OR THE EVENING/ENDING OF NISAN 14 AND BEGINNING OF NISAN 15, JUST AS THE JEWS HAVE OBSERVED IT THROUGHOUT THEIR HISTORY, SINCE THE DAYS OF MOSES HIMSELF!

If the Passover really was the night BEFORE Christ was crucified then why did the Jews slay all the Passover lambs the next afternoon of Nisan 14? Also, how could three million Jews slay their Passover lambs between sunset, when Nisan 14 began, and twilight, which lasts only 45 minutes or so? And how could they THEN ROAST all those lambs and still eat them at a decent time of evening?

It requires several hours to roast a lamb, depending on its size. They would have had to labor far into the night to cook the lamb before they could eat it! So why do all the churches which observe the beginning of the 14th of Nisan as Passover keep it AT ABOUT SUNSET – before the lambs could have been killed and roasted?

Ludicrous! Preposterous! Ridiculous! Absurd!

Furthermore, if Passover was indeed the beginning of Nisan 14, at night, then Christ WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE SLAIN THAT NIGHT, and not the next afternoon! Otherwise He failed to fulfill the typology of the Passover!

If Jesus Christ were not slain at the proper time, at the very same time as the Passover lambs were slain, then He could not be our true PASSOVER LAMB! He would have died in vain and AT THE WRONG TIME!

Rather, He WAS our Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). He died at exactly the right time! He correctly fulfilled the Passover sacrifice, RIGHT ON SCHEDULE! Praise God for His wonderful love and mercy on His people! And thank Him for His glorious truth!

New Meaning Placed on Passover Rituals

Therefore, the meal Yeshua had with His disciples, the night before, was not and could not have been the Passover at all. It was simply a final, “going-away,” last meal He had with His disciples, at which He gave them special instructions.

Since time immemorial, the Jews have celebrated the Passover according to God’s instructions. They ate a ritual meal, which included lamb, up until the Temple was destroyed. Now, while there is no Temple, the lamb is replaced by a shankbone of a lamb. They also eat, as God commanded, “unleavened bread,” and “bitter herbs” (Exodus 12:8). His was part of the Passover commandment.

But how many of the churches today eat “bitter herbs” with their so-called “Passover”?

Answer: *NONE!*

So once again they VIOLATE God’s command!

Now that Jesus Christ has come, and fulfilled the anti-type of the ancient Passover, the Passover seder/meal is MUCH MORE MEANINGFUL TO TRUE CHRISTIANS! It has incredible, overwhelming, awesome, magnificent meaning and symbolism, for those of us who participate in it and partake of it, today!

It is far more and far different from the fake, bogus, ersatz, counterfeit Passover Satan the devil has palmed off on thousands of deceived, careless, misled people, who participate in a ceremony of grim and austere fearfulness, with little or not talking permitted, with the symbols of Roman Catholicism and its “mass” – the tiny wafer, and a vial or thimble of wine! The true Passover is a far cry from the pagan counterfeit!

Although the last meal Jesus had with His disciples could not have been the true Passover, because the time for that celebration had not yet arrived, it is distinctly possible that Jesus did celebrate with them a type of “seder” or a “pre-Passover” instruction meal. However, He never commanded us to observe such a meal in addition to the Passover. To do so would simply be redundant.

Certainly, also, He never told the disciples that He was replacing the Passover celebration, on the night of the 15th of Nisan, with a new and different ceremony, at a different time. Nowhere in the entire New Testament is such a commandment or instruction given!

Nor could it be possible because GOD’S LAW IS ETERNAL, and not even one word, or even one letter, of it may be changed without incurring the WRATH and FURY of God!

Furthermore, IF Jesus had changed the time of the observance of the Passover, and the day of the Passover celebration, meal and rituals, then the Jews, the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, would have bitterly persecuted them for this, and accused them of “changing times and laws,” and the Passover itself! They never did! If they had, the New Testament would

have been full of the story! It tells us how they persecuted Him for His supposed infractions of the weekly Sabbath day. How much more would they have persecuted Him if He had changed the Passover itself!

But the history of the gospels and epistles is completely missing any such account. It never occurred, because the Jews and Christ celebrated Passover at the very same time!

The account of such a change, and the resultant persecution, and its reason, would surely have been recorded in the pages of the New Testament, as well as in Jewish literature, the Talmud, and other historic documents. Such a controversy over the correct day would hardly have been kept silent, quiet, or buried under the carpet!

Yet there is not ONE WORD in the entire New Testament, nor is there a single word about such a controversy, in all the Jewish religious literature or historic documents, such as Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*. There is only massive, incredible silence. Which is proof in itself that such a controversy never existed!

It is a MAJOR SIN to change the Passover unless there is PROOF that God Himself commanded such a change! To take it upon *ourselves* to change it is no better than substituting Easter for the Passover, Christmas for the day of Christ's birth, darkness for light, Satan for Christ, evil for good, idolatry for the truth of God,

Another Strange Anomaly

Here is more food for thought, for those who insist against all reason that the Passover must be at the beginning of Nisan 14. Picture this in your mind. That evening, the people assemble together, and partake of UNLEAVENED BREAD, a symbol of the sinless body of Christ, who was not puffed up with sin, and WINE, symbolizing His shed blood for our sins. To participate in this ritual, of course, the people have BEGUN the Christian life – they have REPENTED OF THEIR SINS, accepted Christ as Saviour and Messiah.

To repent means, literally, to turn around, to stop disobeying God, to begin keeping His commandments. For a person to accept Christ as Saviour, they must REPENT (Acts 2:38), and PUT SIN OUT OF THEIR LIVES! They must “bring forth fruits fit for repentance” (Matt.3:8). They must begin to live by God's commandments, and STRIVE TO KEEP SIN OUT OF THEIR LIVES FROM THAT MOMENT ONWARD!

But, contrary to this perfect picture of the Christian life, those who partake of “Passover” at the beginning of Nisan 14, HAVE NOT YET CLEANED THE LEAVEN OUT OF THEIR HOMES! And they eat “leaven” the next day, put it out not until the END of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th of Nisan, which begins the days of Unleavened Bread.

Leaven, a type of SIN, is not cleaned out by them until the next day AFTER they partake of their “Passover”! What an outrage! What a travesty! Repentance and putting away SIN must come FIRST!

In fact, after people go home from their “Passover” services, many of them have a sandwich with leavened bread. The next morning, they eat waffles, pancakes, doughnuts -- FULL OF LEAVEN! They may even have a hamburger (with bread or bun) for lunch, and finally get in their last taste of leaven just before sunset, at dinner, with rolls, bread and butter, or other pastry (leavened) products!

Do you see how such a picture destroys the entire meaning of Passover, as it connects with the Days of Unleavened Bread? Once we have put all the leaven we can find OUT of our lives, symbolizing sin, THEN we partake of the Passover, on Nisan 15, symbolizing Christ’s sacrifice for our sins – AND THEN, FROM THAT MOMENT ON, WE STRIVE TO *KEEP SIN OUT OF OUR LIVES!*

But according to the early 14th of Nisan view, once you accept and partake of the sacrifice of Christ, *it is all right to PLUNGE BACK INTO SIN, WITH GUSTO, and devour all the "SIN" – symbolized by “leaven” – than your body can absorb!!!*

There is something terribly WRONG with such a picture! It makes no sense. It is contrary to every principle of righteousness, obedience, and respect for the sacrifice of Christ, and shows a spirit of DESPITE to the spirit of grace. It reveals a spirit of sinning WILFULLY, deliberately, AFTER partaking of the sacrifice of Christ! It is a cunning subterfuge of Satan the devil!

But God warns: “For if we sin WILFULLY *after* that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth NO MORE SACRIFICE for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of JUDGMENT and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Heb.10:26-27).

It is simply not right to partake of the sacrifice of Christ, which Passover signifies and symbolizes, and then to brazenly, contemptuously, with knowledge and premeditation, to plunge deliberately back into “sin” – or the SYMBOL OF SIN, leavening and leavened bread!

The Very Words of Christ

Another Biblical proof that the early Nisan 14 “Passover” cannot be correct is very simple, if we will believe the words of Jesus Christ Himself. It is acknowledged by everybody that the scribes and Pharisees observed the Passover at the end of Nisan 14, killing the lambs in the late afternoon, and then eating the Passover meal on Nisan 15 – which is the very night the “destroyer” *passed over* the houses and dwellings of the Israelites, in Egypt, and killed all the firstborn of the Egyptians, about midnight (Exodus 12:21-30). This was the “night to be much observed” by Israel for all generations (Exo.12:41-43). This was PASSOVER NIGHT!

Josephus, who was a Pharisee, also acknowledges that they celebrated Passover, by killing the lambs in the afternoon of Nisan 14, between 3 and 5 o’clock. He writes:

“ . . . the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour to the eleventh [3-5 PM Roman time], but so that a company of not less than ten belong to every sacrifice . . . the number of sacrifices was two hundred and fifty six thousand five hundred. . . ”

(Wars of the Jews, VI,9,3).

Since the Passover was killed on the 14th, the only hours between 3-5 PM on the 14th had to be in the afternoon, before the 15th came. If these lambs were slain a day earlier, at this time, then they would have been killed on Nisan 13 – a date nowhere sanctified or commanded in Scripture.

“But, so what?” some might ask. “What difference does it make, what day the Pharisees observed?” It makes a great DEAL of difference! The Pharisees were in control of Passover services at the Temple. They were in charge of religious worship in ancient Judah. And Jesus Christ Himself acknowledged their authority in these matters. Will you believe CHRIST? Notice!

“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying,
THE SCRIBES AND THE PHARISEES SIT IN MOSES' SEAT:
All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, THAT OBSERVE
AND DO . . .” (Matt.23:1-2).

Jesus here is plainly talking about “OBSERVANCES”! He emphatically says, “ALL . . . they bid you OBSERVE”! This would have to include all the annual holy days! Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, Last Great Day!

Jesus said that we are to OBSERVE PASSOVER AS THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES COMMANDED – on the very day they stipulated – not some other day concocted in the minds of godless men and ignorant shepherds who themselves may be DECEIVED and DELUDED!

The Pharisees said we must observe Passover on Nisan 15, and to prepare for it on Nisan 14. Their religious descendants, the Jewish rabbis today, do the very same thing. *Are Jesus' words good enough for you???*

Will you FOLLOW CHRIST, LISTEN TO HIM – OBEY HIM?

What about Our Dear Friend, Paul?

Again, those who say that we must observe Passover on Nisan 14, fail to quote the words of the apostle Paul on this subject. Either that, or they reject what he plainly said on the subject!

Paul of course, followed Christ (I Cor.11:1). We would not expect him to teach anything differently from Christ Himself, therefore. What was Paul's position on the Passover question? Did he observe Passover at the beginning of Nisan 14, the preparation day? Let's let Paul speak for himself. Paul addressed the Jews in Jerusalem, and boldly proclaimed,

“I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet BROUGHT UP IN THIS CITY AT THE FEET OF GAMALIEL, AND TAUGHT ACCORDING TO THE **PERFECT MANNER OF THE LAW OF THE FATHERS**, and was zealous toward God, as

ye all are this day” (Acts 22:3).

Paul said further, in addressing the Jewish Sanhedrin:

“Men and brethren, **I AM A PHARISEE, THE SON OF A PHARISEE:** of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question” (Acts 23:6).

Paul testified before king Agrippa, also:

“My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that **AFTER THE MOST STRAIT-EST SECT OF OUR RELIGION I LIVED A PHARISEE**” (Acts 26:4-5).

Obviously, these three separate statements of the apostle Paul clearly show that he was a Pharisee, and was taught the laws of God by them, including their most renown teacher Gamaliel (compare Acts 5:34). He LIVED as a Pharisee, and he says they taught him the **“PERFECT MANNER OF THE LAW”** – which would have included the Pharisee’s teaching about Passover being at the END of the 14th and eaten on the 15th of Nisan!!! Isn’t this absolutely, unequivocally CLEAR?

But Paul makes another statement which adds frosting to the cake, which super-imposes another layer of evidence on top of all this evidence. Later, about 64 A.D., roughly 30 years after his conversion to the Christian faith, he writes to the church at Philippi, saying:

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcized the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamine, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; **AS TOUCHING THE LAW, A PHARISEE;** concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the **RIGHTEOUSNESS** which is in the **LAW, BLAMELESS**” (Phil.3:4-6).

Notice! Paul was, and admitted it freely, a “Pharisee” as to his understanding, teaching, and obedience to the LAW of God. Not only that, however, he also plainly declared that concerning the **RIGHTEOUS, LEGAL REQUIREMENTS** of God’s Law, which includes the right understanding and observance of Passover, he was **BLAMELESS – WITHOUT FAULT!**

Thus Paul completely agrees with Christ. They are of one accord. Do you agree with them? Does *your minister* agree with them? If not, then *why do you follow him?*

“Do This In REMEMBRANCE of Me”

This instruction agrees with Matthew, Mark and Luke’s account of the new symbolism of the Passover, the bread and wine, representing Christ’s broken body and shed blood (Matt.24:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20). In all cases, Jesus said to eat the bread and

drink the wine “IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.” This is very important. The Passover, then, is something we do, particularly the bread and wine, to “remember” the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The word “remember” by definition means: “to bring to mind or think of again”; “to keep in mind for attention or consideration”; “to retain in the memory.” The original Greek word is *anamnesis* and means “recollection.”

Now consider this. Jesus was slain in the afternoon of Nisan 14. Therefore, those who observe the Passover at the beginning of *Nisan 15*, a few hours later, and eat the broken bread and drink the cup of wine, truly “look back” on His sacrifice – they “remember” it. They think back on it.

However, those who attempt to observe the “Passover” on the early beginning portion of Nisan 14, year after year, are doing so about 20 hours BEFORE HIS DEATH on the cross, as it is pictured every year. Therefore, in actual fact, they are NOT “remembering” year after year, the death and sacrifice of Christ – rather, they are FORESHADOWING it, doing it IN ADVANCE, not AFTER – they are forecasting, foretelling, His death – NOT “remembering” it!

You “remember” something AFTER it happens, not “before” it happens!

Thus once again, observing “Passover” at the beginning of Nisan 14, DESTROYS THE PROPER TIME SEQUENCE OF EVENTS! It gets the “cart before the horse.”

Such a Passover PREDICTS the death of Christ, in the annual holy day celebration – rather than REMEMBERS it! In so doing, it plainly disobeys Christ's command to “DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”!

Does It Really Matter?

It is really amazing to me to what lengths some ministers and teachers will go to maintain their credibility with their people, and to foster the illusion that Passover is at the beginning of Nisan 14, after all. All the arguments, logic, and careful reasoning, put together, will not sway them in the least. Like the ancient Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy, they will manufacture massive amounts of arcane mathematics and spurious reasoning to explain why the sun and stars and planets all circle the earth! Rather than admit their theory is wrong, they invent the most amazing arguments and ludicrous, laughable ideas – which would be very funny, if the situation were not so serious!

This is not a matter to be taken lightly. The subject is serious – DEAD serious. Those who observe Passover on the WRONG DAY, at the wrong time, and even in the wrong manner, do so to their own everlasting spiritual peril and danger of God's judgment. Too many people take this matter carelessly. They study in a slipshod manner. They don't really delve and dig and excavate the nuggets of truth. They listen to hare-brained ideas, and specious reasoning, and don't do really original research. They read one carefully constructed, artfully

crafted, ingenious book, filled with ingenious speculation, and "buy the farm," as the expression goes.

How sad. How tragic. How devastating to truth, faith, and their future in the family of God!

One man, in attempting to explain away Paul's statement in Philippians that he observed God's law blamelessly, as a Pharisee, said that Paul observed it properly, but at the wrong time.

A friend said to him in reply, "Oh, I see. You mean Paul *kept the wrong day* – **PERFECTLY!**"

Extremism in Exegesis

A former minister of Worldwide Church of God, Fred Coulter, wrote a book, *The Christian Passover*, which has been highly praised by another former minister, John Ritenbaugh, who gave many sermons on Passover based on the contents of that book. I would have to say, the book is *neither* "Christian" NOR the "Passover"! It should be titled "The FALSE Passover" or "Satan's Deceptive Passover!" It is certainly not "God's TRUE Passover"!

According to the author of the book, the whole passage on Passover in Deuteronomy 16:1-10 has been "TAMPERED" with, and does not belong in the Bible – has been grievously CHANGED by scribes and copyists, probably beginning in the days of king Hezekiah, *at his own command!* These changes were later supposedly "edited" into the text of Deuteronomy 16 by Ezra the scribe, according to Fred Coulter, thus changing God's original Passover from a domestic "home" observance to a "Temple" oriented feast.

This would mean, of course, that Hezekiah deliberately CHANGED GOD'S PASSOVER COMMAND, and that Ezra the scribe was a CO-CONSPIRATOR in the plot!

According to Coulter, the Passover was to be sacrificed at the homes of the Israelites, and not at the Temple. He claims,

"The differences which exist between the Passover instructions in Exodus 12, Numbers 9 and 28, and the commands which are found in Deuteronomy 16, show that these commands in Deuteronomy 16 cannot be related to the Passover itself" (p.147).

Oh, really? There is no conflict whatsoever between Deuteronomy and the rest of the Scriptures. Exodus 12 simply defines the first Passover, kept in Egypt, when Israel had no Temple or sanctuary, but were slaves in Egypt. They therefore *had* to keep that first Passover in their homes – and it was proper to do so, in order for them to put the blood of the lambs over their doorposts and lintels, so they would be "passed over." But the commands in Deuteronomy tell us that God intended for the "perpetual" Passover to be celebrated AT THE TEMPLE OR SANCTUARY! This clarification and further instruction was given to Moses

himself BY GOD – not written into the text nearly a thousand years later by Ezra the scribe! Such an idea is utter nonsense! It requires that the Word of God itself be “tampered” with, and rewritten CONTRARY to God's command, against God's desire, thus BREAKING THE SCRIPTURES!

Deuteronomy 16 actually says,

“Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover WITHIN ANY OF THY GATES, which the LORD thy God giveth thee: But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to PLACE HIS NAME in, THERE THOU SHALT SACRIFICE THE PASSOVER AT EVEN, *at the going down of the sun . . . And thou shalt roast and eat it AT THE PLACE WHICH THE LORD THY GOD SHALL CHOOSE . . .*” (Deut.16:5-6).

This passage utterly disproves Coulter's entire thesis. This is a powerful and clear statement. No wonder those who reject the 15th of Nisan Biblical Passover have “fits” when they read this!

It reminds me of the story of the professor who was famous for his classification of seashells and had written a book on the subject widely hailed by his peers. But one day, as he worked in his lab, he notice a tiny seashell he'd never ever seen before. As he studied it, his hands began to shake. His fingers trembled. He began to perspire. His eyes bugged out. This one seashell disproved and invalidated his whole classification system and showed his life's work to have been in ERROR! Sweating profusely, he looked around, to be sure nobody noticed. Nobody was watching, so he dropped the seashell on the floor, and stomped on it with his shoes. “Whew!” he exclaimed. “*It doesn't exist!*”

What extremes some people will go to in order to deny the inspired Biblical text and to repudiate God's true original Passover!

Is this passage of Scripture a FRAUD, inserted into the text by arrogant scribes or well-meaning but sinning scribes? To “prove” this obviously far-fetched idea, Coulter resorts to looking at verse two, where God says, “Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and of the herd, in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there.” He says this must have been TAMPERED with, because the passover sacrifice was of lambs and kids of the flock, and never of the cattle. Cattle, of course, comprise “herds.”

Concludes Coulter, regarding Deuteronomy 16:1-8:

“THE WORD ‘PASSOVER’ WAS EDITED INTO THE TEXT AT A LATER TIME, APPARENTLY BY EZRA, WHEN THE PASSOVER AND THE ENTIRE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD WERE COMMONLY CALLED ‘THE PASSOVER’” (p.154, emphasis his).

However, this is a blatant assumption and there is NO PROOF. A righteous man like Ezra wouldn't dare tamper with the Word of God, and change or alter its meaning. Ezra was

“a skilled scribe in the law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6, NKJV). As such, he would not have CHANGED it’s meaning! God forbid! We read of Ezra, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to DO IT” – *NOT TO RE-WRITE IT, OR CHANGE IT!* (Ezra 7:10).

In reality, there is a simple explanation why Deut.16:2 speaks of the “sacrifice of the passover . . . of the flock and the herd.” The Passover lamb, killed on Nisan 14, had to be a lamb or kid. However, there were many more Passover sacrifices connected with the seven days of the whole Festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread! During that festival, BULLOCKS were sacrificed, as well as lambs! On the first day of the Feast, the very day the Passover was eaten, God commanded His people:

“And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD. And in the fifteenth day is the FEAST: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten.

“In the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein: But ye shall offer a SACRIFICE MADE BY FIRE unto the LORD; TWO YOUNG BULLOCKS, and one ram, and seven lambs of the first year

“After this manner ye shall offer DAILY, THROUGHOUT THE SEVEN DAYS . . .” (Numbers 28:16-24).

Therefore, the fact that Deuteronomy 16 speaks of the “passover . . . of the flock and the herd,” does not prove this passage is SPURIOUS at all. It was not “tampered” with. The Passover itself always had to be a lamb or kid. However, these other sacrifices were also “Passover sacrifices,” special to the days of the Passover Feast!

Another Difficulty with His Theory

However, the author of *The Christian Passover* claims that God intended the Passover to always be sacrificed in the homes of the Israelites – not at the Temple. One wonders, of course, if this were true, how they were expected to assemble at Jerusalem, or the place where God put His name, for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread! For notice verse 16 of Deuteronomy 16:

“THREE TIMES IN A YEAR shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty” (Deut.16:16).

If they keep the Passover AT HOME, then they would not be able to also keep the Feast in Jerusalem, a journey of a great distance from many parts of the land! Can you imagine? You cannot be in two places at the same time! Try it!

Think of the poor Israelites, in Galilee, or near Tyre and Sidon, or east of the Jordan river in the region of Naphtali, and the half tribe of Manasseh, trying to eat the Passover at home,

and then – the PREPARATION DAY – spending the whole day in ARDUOUS TRAVEL, by mule, horse, or cart, or travelling by foot – rushing to attempt to be in Jerusalem for the FEAST! It is absurd – in the highest degree. Obviously the Passover was to be killed at the same place where the FEAST was to be observed – together, by all the people, the entire nation!

Was Hezekiah Another Bad Guy?

Compounding error on top of error, however, this author flagrantly says that it was king Hezekiah who caused this tampering with the Holy Scriptures, by insisting that the Jews all come up to Jerusalem, to the Temple, to observe the Passover. Coulter says the king had good intentions, but that this was contrary to God’s Word! But would Hezekiah ever do such a thing, and change the commandments and statutes of God, and replace them with NEW laws and statutes?

Rather, we read simply the words about Hezekiah’s tremendous renewal of the Passover, and the worship of the true God, in II Chronicles, 29-30, with the final statement:

“So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to KEEP THE PASSOVER unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: *for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written*” (II Chron.30:5).

The expression “of a long time” does not mean the Passover had never been observed at Jerusalem until this very time, since the days of the Exodus! It simply says “a long time.” There were many wicked kings in Israel between David and Hezekiah. The point being made here is that there simply was never so GREAT a Passover celebrated in Israel in many years! Let’s not read into statements what simply is not there – *forcing, twisting, wresting, grappling violently* with the Word of God! As Paul wrote, “For we are not as many which CORRUPT the word of God” (II Cor.2:17). Or as the New King James has it, “For we are not, as so many, *peddling [marginal reading, “adulterating for gain”]* the word of God . . .”

We must not “wrest” or “twist” the Scriptures as those “that are unlearned and unstable” do, “to their own destruction” (II Pet.3:16).

The Mystery of King Hezekiah

To believe that a righteous king like Hezekiah would wrest the Scriptures, and cause the scribes to TAMPER with the divine word of God, is utterly ridiculous. If he had done so, then he would hardly be called a righteous king in Scripture. Further, if he had done so, then God did NOT preserve His Word intact – He FAILED! Yet Paul speaks of the Scriptures, which the Jews preserved, as the “HOLY ORACLES of God” – including the book of Deuteronomy (Rom. 3:2-3). Stephen says Moses received “the lively oracles TO GIVE UNTO US” (Acts 7:38). The Word of God was NOT “tampered” with by king Hezekiah – it was throughout history, sedulously, diligently, painstakingly PRESERVED by godly and inspired men who feared God, and who even counted the very letters per page and word, to insure against ANY

error creeping into the text!

Paul declared, forcefully, “*ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*” (II Tim.3:16). By definition, that includes Deuteronomy 16. Jesus also said, “The Scripture CANNOT be broken” (John 10:35). Yet this author says Hezekiah broke the Scriptures, and rewrote them, along with another righteous man, Ezra the scribe – causing Deuteronomy 16 to be inserted into the text centuries later. That is sheer NONSENSE!

Notic! The Word of God itself says about king Hezekiah:

“And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought that which was GOOD AND RIGHT AND TRUTH before the LORD his God. And in EVERY WORK that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the LAW, and in the COMMANDMENTS, to seek his God, he did it with ALL HIS HEART, and prospered” (II Chron.31: 20-21).

“And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. . . . He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he CLAVE to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but KEPT HIS COMMANDMENTS, WHICH THE LORD COMMANDED MOSES” (II Kings 18:3-6).

“And he [Hezekiah] did that which was RIGHT in the sight of the LORD, according to ALL that DAVID his father had done” (II Chron.29:2).

Hezekiah, according to the inspired WORD of God, did that which was RIGHT in God’s sight – not that which was *wrong!* And surely “tampering” with the Word of God, and “rewriting” it, would have been terribly WRONG in God’s sight! Rather, Hezekiah was a righteous king, LIKE DAVID, and followed in David's own footsteps. Does this sound like a man who would tamper with the Word of God, and pervert Scripture, and rewrite it?

The same scurrilous book claims that the Jews during the time of Christ were observing Passover at Jerusalem, “contrary” to God’s law to keep it at home, because they inherited the error from Hezekiah’s time. But do you really believe this? If you do, then you make Christ Jesus Himself out to be a LIAR – since He said the Pharisees and scribes sit in Moses’ seat, and that we must observe all that they command us to observe that are written in the Torah (see Matt.23:2-3).

Such a writer/minister also makes Jesus out to be a SINNER, since *He observed the Passover at Jerusalem!*

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem EVERY YEAR AT THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem AFTER THE CUS-

TOM OF THE FEAST. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. . . . And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:40-47).

Clearly, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, kept the Passover by leaving His home with Joseph and Mary, and traveled to Jerusalem to observe Passover – quite a distance from Nazareth, where their home was located, near the Sea of Galilee. They did this every year, according to the “*custom of the feast.*” Jesus and his parents, who were righteous, would not have done this, if it were a sin.

If the Jewish leaders were following the wrong custom, then Jesus, during His ministry, surely would have reprimanded them and blazed out in wrath against their false teaching – as He did regarding many other things (see Matt.15:1-9, 23:14-33). Such an issue of paramount importance, as the Passover, He could not have ignored.

Do You REALLY, TRULY, Sincerely Follow Christ?

When we honestly, sincerely seek to follow God, with all our hearts, like David did, and Hezekiah, and Jesus Himself, as well as Paul and the other apostles, then we must also OBSERVE THE PASSOVER ON THE SAME DAY AND IN THE SAME MANNER THEY DID – “ACCORDING TO THE *CUSTOM OF THE FEAST*” (Luke 2:42). That is, we should observe it on Nisan 15, with a Passover meal, and instruction, like the Jews do, today.

Jesus, who Himself gave the Passover to ancient Israel, was the “Rock” who followed them through the wilderness (I Cor.10:4). He is the Yahveh, the YHVH, the member of the Godhead who revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, the Logos (John 1:1-2; Zech.14:1, 4; Acts 7:38, Exo.3:2-15). He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the “I AM” (John 8:58). He says, “For I am the LORD, I change not” (Malachi 3:6). Paul wrote of this same Christ, “Jesus Christ the SAME yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb.13:8). He doesn’t change, either!

Jesus does not change. His LAW and HOLY DAYS do not change. There is *NO WAY* that Jesus replaced the Passover, which was slain on the 14th of Nisan, and eaten on the 15th of Nisan, with a NEW and DIFFERENT Passover slain on the 13th of Nisan, and eaten early on the 14th of Nisan!

God’s Law is eternal – unchangeable – inexorable! David wrote, “The works of His hands are verity [“truth”] and justice; all His precepts are sure. They STAND FAST FOR EVER AND EVER, and are done in truth and uprightness” (Psalm 111:7-8, NKJV).

Almighty God thunders: “***I CHANGE NOT!***” (Malachi 3:6).

When Yeshua kept His last supper with His disciples, it was like a final going away meal – very meaningful and sobering. But it was NOT THE PASSOVER! It was held in advance of

the true Passover, so He could give His disciples “final instructions,” before His soon-coming death which would occur shortly thereafter. Since He was prophesied to be in the GRAVE, soon thereafter, for three days and three nights (Matt.12:40), He would not be able to observe the regular TRUE Passover at the appointed time with His disciples.

However, He observed Passover all His life on earth as a human being, AT THE APPOINTED TIME – on Nisan 15, following the sacrifice on Nisan 14. So did His disciples. Therefore, He was not changing the TIME of the Passover, when He gave His disciples the new symbolism of the bread and wine – which were traditional parts of the Passover itself. He was merely giving new MEANING to the ancient bread and wine ceremony, observed by the Jews, which began in the days of Abraham and Melchisedek (Gen.14:20). The bread and wine ceremony is called the “Kiddush,” which means “holy,” or “sanctified,” or “set apart.” It was an ancient custom which Christ revealed, at the last supper, portrayed His own body and blood, given as a sacrifice for our sins and transgressions of God’s Law. Bread and wine were always a part of the Passover service, also. But this kiddush with the disciples WAS NOT PASSOVER, nor was it taken to show that Christ was ALTERING THE PASSOVER *ITSELF!* *The day itself was ordained a feast FOREVER!* (Exo.12:14).

GOD WARNS us to *beware* of those who “think to change TIMES AND LAWS” – including the time of the PASSOVER! (Daniel 7:25).

God says, “THIS DAY shall be unto you for a MEMORIAL; and ye shall KEEP IT A FEAST to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a FEAST by an ORDINANCE FOREVER” (Exodus 12:14).

This Feast has always been observed by the true people of God on the beginning portion of Nisan 15, at night. It is a spectacular, wonderful FEAST! It was never commanded to be a mere “mass,” or grave, solemn, austere observance, or “communion” type service, like so many today misrepresent and misunderstand. Because of their error, they miss out on the FULL JOYOUS MEANING and TRUE IMPORTANCE of this HOLY DAY!

Passover was celebrated on Nisan 15 in the days of Moses. It was so celebrated during the time of Christ and the apostles. It is also so celebrated by God’s true people, today! THOSE WHO CELEBRATE ANOTHER DAY demonstrate by so doing that *they are disobeying the commandments of God, and therefore do not have His “sign” that they truly belong to Him! They have been DECEIVED BY SATAN, and led astray following him in his diabolical error!*

What about YOU?

Are you going to COME OUT OF RELIGIOUS “BABYLON,” so that you will NOT partake of her sins, or receive of her PLAGUES? (Rev.18:4).

May God help you to SEE the truth, to UNDERSTAND the truth, and to OBEY the truth from your heart, with your whole heart, mind, strength and soul!

