

CHRISTIAN TECHNICAL NOTES

**THE PASSOVER CONTROVERSY**

**Chronology of the Crucifixion**

by

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Christian Technical Notes

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### **Synopsis:**

For many years there has existed debate concerning the sequence of events surrounding the Passover. Primarily the debate has focused on two separate Passover celebrations. The first focus is on the sequence of events during the original Exodus, and the second focus is on the sequence of events during the last meal and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Regarding the original Passover, most questions focus on the timing of when the Israelites were commanded to kill and eat the Passover lamb. That is, was the Passover lamb eaten as the fourteenth day of Nisan was beginning, or as the fourteenth day was ending? The consequence to this question is that there will be a one day difference between Christians when they observe the Passover's memorial celebration called "The Night to be Much Observed" (Ex 12:42).

Regarding the events surrounding the last meal of Jesus Christ, most questions relate to the possibility that the last meal partaken of by Jesus was the Passover celebration meal. The converse questions relate to the possibility that the last meal of Jesus was not the Passover meal, but rather the Passover meal was eaten the next evening after He was crucified. The consequence of this question is that there may be a one day difference between Christians when they celebrate the Memorial Ceremony of the last meal of Jesus Christ (Lk 12:19). This is the ceremony whereby Christians remember Christ's death and participate in the foot-washing of another's feet, drink of the cup and eat of the broken bread in the manner that Christ commanded his disciples to do after His death (John 13:12).

For the purposes of this paper, the words "Passover Controversy" is used to mean both the questions concerning the original Passover, and the questions concerning the last meal of Jesus Christ. Further, the word "answer" is used to mean a single "theory" which attempts to harmonize all questions relating to the "Passover Controversy". The word "answer" includes the explanation of the scriptures, the description of the sequence of events, and the list of assumptions the "theory" requires.

To date most answers to the Passover Controversy have been heavily structured by individual interpretations, especially interpretations rooted in the English words used by the King James translators. Many proposed answers rely heavily upon hidden assumptions and scenarios which provide a story line to make the proposed answer seem more plausible. Other answers are so vague that they require the listener to possess expert knowledge to determine which of the scriptures are left unanswered. As a result, each proposed answer lacks decisiveness or concludes with some aspect of the Controversy remaining ambiguous.

Over the past several years, a collective study into the Passover Controversy has been conducted and has produced significant results. The significance is that an answer to the Passover Controversy has been found which is both decisive and unambiguous. The result of this study achieves an answer which has no hidden assumptions, has all scriptures in harmony, and leaves no scriptures unanswered. Also of major importance is that the answer does not involve the inventing of a scenario as being a possibility. Such scenarios cannot be proven or refuted, they are simply story-lines which are imagined in order to justify why the scriptures seem to conflict with the proposed answer. In contrast, the result of the study described in this paper does not involve any such speculation, nor the need for the phrase "Could it not be possible that..."

This study was conducted with only one assumption; that the Bible, in its original language, does not contradict. In this study it was assumed that once the original Greek language was interpreted correctly, that the Biblical accounts of the events will harmonize, and the understanding of the sequence of events will materialize without conflict.

This paper is intended to communicate the findings of this study. To properly do this it will be necessary to communicate the original Greek language, with its grammatical rules. Much of the study's findings is a result of understanding the Greek grammatical rules which give different subtle meanings to important

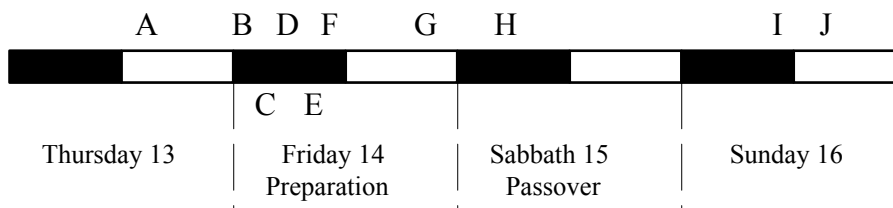
words and phrases used in the scriptures. All scripture quotes are therefore quoted from the original Greek language.

This paper will communicate the study's findings in three parts. First it will summarize the findings, then it will summarize the reasons for the findings, then it will describe in detail the reasons for the findings.

### **Summary of Answer:**

Below is a diagram followed by a list of summary statements which describe in a concise manner the results of the study.

Figure 1:



### **Figure-1 Item A: Jesus Commands Passover Preparation**

Sometime before the fourteenth begins, the disciples ask Jesus where to prepare for the Passover. The disciples left and did as Jesus told them, preparing for the Passover.

### **Figure-1 Item B: Jesus Eats His Last Meal**

Jesus eats dinner with the disciples. This is not the Passover celebration meal. The Passover celebration meal is the next evening, after Christ is crucified.

### **Figure-1 Item C: Jesus Performs Foot-Washing Ceremony**

Jesus implements the foot-washing, cup and bread ceremony. Christians are commanded to do these same things as a memorial of Christ's death until He returns again.

### **Figure-1 Item D: Judas Leaves The Meal**

Judas leaves the supper after the foot-washing, but before the cup and bread ceremony. Other disciples see him leave, and think that he was told by Jesus to go and buy more provisions for the upcoming feast.

### **Figure-1 Item E: Meal Is Over**

Jesus and the disciples leave the dinner and go outside before midnight. The disciples are sleeping outdoors while Jesus prayed three separate times.

### **Figure-1 Item F: Jesus Is Betrayed and Sacrificed As A Passover Sheep**

Jesus is delivered into the hands of men. All that morning He was tried, convicted and then later crucified. Later, Jesus was dying on the stake at the same time that the Passover lambs were being slain by the priests for the Passover celebration meal.

### **Figure-1 Item G: Pharisees Afraid Of Defiling The Sabbath**

The Pharisees desired that the bodies of the three crucified men should not be left on the stake after sunset. Their reason for this was because to leave them up would profane the Sabbath, and that Sabbath was a great day (it was the Passover day, the fifteenth of Nisan). Consequently, Jesus was buried before sunset as the fourteenth day ended. He was in the tomb as the fifteenth day began.

### **Figure-1 Item H: The Pharisees Eat The Passover Meal**

The original Passover meal was eaten as the fourteenth day of Nisan was ending, and the fifteenth day was beginning. Stated another way; the Passover meal was eaten during the night portion of the fifteenth of Nisan, progressing into the morning, up to daybreak, where nothing was to be left of the sacrifice. The participants were commanded by God not to leave the house where the meal was eaten until morning's daybreak. Only then could they leave for their own tents (Deut. 16:7).

In like manner, after Christ was crucified on the fourteenth, the Passover celebration meal was eaten in the evening as the 15th began. Christians are to observe the Passover as a memorial of Israel's coming out of Egypt, and to remember Christ's sacrifice which allows for our sins to be passed over.

### **Figure-1 Item I: Jesus Is Resurrected From The Dead**

All accounts record Jesus being resurrected in the early morning prior to day break on Sunday, the first day of the week.

### **Figure-1 Item J: Jesus Is Presented To The Father**

The wave-sheath offering, where the two loaves are presented on the alter for God's approval, is widely accepted as symbolizing Jesus as the resurrected Christ being presented to the Father. Early on Sunday morning, recorded in John 20:17, Jesus rebukes Mary to not touch Him as "I have not yet ascended to My Father...". Later that same day Jesus is touched by the disciples and eats with them. Jesus' triumphant approval by God the Father nullifies Satan's attempt to crush the Son of God, and marks three days and nights from His betrayal into the hands of men as defined in Luke 24:7, Figure 1-F.

### **Summary of Reasons:**

There are four parallel accounts of these events in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These four accounts do not contradict each other. By understanding the Greek grammar and cases of each of the written words, the following reasons can be given:

### **Jesus Commands Passover Preparation:**

John 13:1 unambiguously declares that these events took place before the feast of the Passover. The other accounts state the same thing, but each in a different manner. See the detailed explanation in the next section.

### **Jesus Eats His Last Meal:**

The preponderance of evidence is that the last meal of Jesus Christ was not the Passover celebration meal. For instance, John 18:28-29 states that on the day in which Jesus was crucified, the Pharisees were careful not to become defiled so that they could eat the Passover. The eating of the Passover must therefore be after Christ's last meal with the disciples. When all points, like this one, are considered, the evidence becomes quite overwhelming. See the detailed explanation in the next section.

### **Jesus Performs Foot-Washing Ceremony:**

In John 13:4-13, Jesus gives instructions to future Christians that they are to wash the feet of other Christians, and to partake of the cup and bread ceremony, in the same way as Jesus instructed His disciples that evening. Also note I Cor. 5:8 and 11:23.

### **Judas Leaves The Meal:**

John 13:28-39 states that Judas left the supper, and that the other disciples thought that Jesus told him to: [Greek] "Buy things need we having into the feast.". Note the word "into", the feast is not reached yet, it is still future, action is not "in" the feast but is progressing towards it. During Christ's last meal the feast was still "upcoming".

### **Meal Is Over:**

Each account states that they left for the garden immediately after the meal. Jesus prayed three separate times before the mob came and seized him. Jesus was already tried and convicted before that morning's daylight broke (Mark 14:72 - 15:1). If this meal were the Passover meal, then Christ, the apostles, the mob, the Sanhedrin, and the High Priest would have violated most of the injunctions of God listed in Exodus 12, and also the rules of the Jewish community regarding the sanctity of that sacred night.

### **Jesus Is Betrayed and Sacrificed As A Passover Lamb:**

These events follow logically from Figure-1-B being proven. See the detailed explanation for Figure-1-B in the next section.

### **Pharisees Were Afraid Of Defiling The Sabbath:**

John 19:31 unambiguously states that the day in which Jesus was crucified was a Preparation day for the Sabbath. The very next day must therefore be a Sabbath day. This makes the crucifixion day a Friday. John 19:14 states that the same day was also a Preparation Day for the Passover. The Passover must therefore also be the next day. This means that the next day was both a Sabbath Day and the first Holy Day of the Passover.

### **Pharisees Eat The Passover Meal:**

Although a great controversy for centuries, it is quite easy to demonstrate that the Passover celebration meal should be eaten as the fourteenth of Nisan is ending, and as the fifteenth day of Nisan is beginning. By knowing this, combined with the Pharisees desiring to remain clean so that they may eat the Passover the evening after Jesus was crucified, makes it clear that Jesus was crucified on the fourteenth of Nisan. See the detailed explanation in the next section.

### **Explanations In Detail:**

By looking deeply at the Greek grammar, recognizing the specific grammatical cases of each of the written words, the reasons outlined above are substantiated. Below is described the technical reasons for the conclusions made:

### **Jesus Commands Passover Preparation:**

When did Jesus give instructions for the disciples to prepare for the Passover?

In John 13:1 the Greek language is unambiguous. It clearly states that these events occurred "Before the feast of the Passover". There are no other possible interpretations of the Greek grammar in John 13:1.

The other three parallel accounts use Greek grammar which is not as clear. These accounts require the analysis of the whole Greek sentence to obtain an understanding of the meaning. However, after performing this analysis, it can be shown that each of these accounts also say the same thing as John 13:1, even though each says it using a different sentence structure. There is no conflict in the four accounts.

Matthew 26:17 says: "And prior the unleavens came the...". The key is the Greek words which the King James version translates as "first". In the Greek there are two words "de protee" (#4413). In this sentence "protee" is in the dative case, with the article "de" being present. This means that the word "protee" is more properly translated into English as "prior". (Ref. Thayer Greek-English by Baker, using Strong's number 4413, page 555.)

Mark 14:12 says: "And prior the unleavens-day...". This is exactly the same as Matthew 26:17, except that the noun is "day" rather than "unleavens". This leaves only the account in Luke to analyze.

### **Detailed Analysis of Luke 22:7:**

Of the four major accounts, only the account of Luke presents any difficulty. The Greek translation of Luke 22:7 says: "And was coming the unleavens-day...". This verse is usually translated with the word "came" so that it reads: "And came the unleavens-day...". The problem is that this translation of the Greek word "elthe" (#2064) is grammatically correct, but not "technically" the correct way to translate it. By using the word "came" (past tense of "to come") the English reader is allowed the possibility of interpreting that the motion or action has been completed. That is, the unleavens-day had actually arrived. For example, an English reader may interpret this translation as saying: "The unleavens-day came and was now upon them and...". But this interpretation of Luke 22:7 would not be correct for a Greek reader. If English would allow us to use the past tense of "to come" with the "ing" ending to denote action still in progress, then the sentence could be translated: "And coming the unleavens-day...". Speaking in the past tense, the unleavens-day was coming, but not upon them yet (still coming).

The Greek word "elthe" means "to come". In Luke 22:7 this word is used as a verb, in the indicative mood, aorist tense, active voice, third person, singular; Ref. Analytical Greek New Testament, page 264. The importance of this is that the verb is written in the indicative - aorist and active, denoting a past event conversationally without providing any indication of the event having concluded or still being in progress.

The words "to come" means that something is leaving one spot, moving towards another. The ambiguity in English surfaces when the reader attempts to judge if the moving object has actually arrived or is still in motion? For instance, using the past tense of "to come" we can say: "He came to me running". The reader

might interpret this to mean that the act of "to come" was completed. That is, he arrived "to me" using the means of "running" (now standing besides me). But the word "came" does not have to mean that the action was completed, that is, he arrived. It could mean that he was in the act of coming, still running, but not there yet. For instance the sentence: "He picked up the ball and came to me running." makes this subtle ambiguity more clear. The reader is not sure where the ball is, either it arrived, or it is still in the act of being carried (running) towards him.

When "elthe" is written in the indicative mood, aorist tense, and is in the active voice at the same time, then the interpretation may be more like "came-ing" or "was-coming". To "come" in these combined tenses may mean that the destination spot is not reached yet, but the motion is actively towards reaching it, and the writer is describing a past event.

To substantiate this, note that the Greek word translated "came" in Luke 22:7 is cited as an example of using the word "elthe" to mean "in a future sense, will come", in Thayer's Greek-English by Baker, using Strong's number 2064, page 251. Further, the subtlety of a verb being used in the indicative - aorist is explained on pages 16 through 31 of "Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek". This authority confirms that the Greek past tense implies nothing in regards to the existing results of the verb. Further, the Greek past tense is not the same as the English pluperfect. This means that the Greek past tense does not imply one way or another that the past tense action is to be regarded as having been completed or is still in progress. It is simply an event that occurred, the results or completion of the event is not implied.

The word "elthe" in Luke 22:7 means "to come", but is specifically written in the combined tenses of past and active. It means "came", but may be translated as "coming". The destination spot is not reached yet. Therefore, verse seven is more properly translated "was coming". "The unleavens-day was coming, when they killed the Passover lambs, and Christ sent Peter and John to prepare for the Passover..."

Also note that the words ", when they killed the Passover lambs," is a prepositional phrase; Ref. Analytical Greek New Testament, page 264. A prepositional phrase is like an inset and can be taken out of the sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence. Some Passover answers attempt to use this prepositional phrase as evidence to insist that the Passover lambs were at that very moment in time in the act of being killed. This interpretation of Luke 22:7 is not a grammatically valid possibility.

### **Jesus Eats His Last Meal:**

The crucial question is this: "Was the last meal of Jesus the Passover meal, or not?" The following sections provide the detailed evidence which leads to only one conclusion, that it was not. The next evening, after He was crucified, was the Passover meal.

### **Jesus' Instructions To Prepare, Was It A Prophecy?:**

Some answers focus on the words Jesus used when He gave the command to His disciples to go and prepare for the Passover meal. These answers ask: "Did Jesus include Himself as being one of those who was also going to eat the Passover meal with the disciples?" If the reader concludes that the answer to this question is "Yes", then the reader is lead to conclude that:

1. Since Jesus was divine, and
2. If He linguistically implied that He would eat the Passover, then
3. He had to eat a Passover meal before He died, so
4. Therefore the last meal He ate must have been the Passover, or
5. Else Jesus lied and could not be the Savior.

There seems to be ample room for debate regarding the Greek grammar of the controversial sentences which describe this event. These sentences are found in Matthew 26:18, Mark 14:15, and Luke 22:11. Some interpretations of the Greek say that the linguistically manner in which Jesus told the apostles to go and prepare for the Passover implied that He was also an intended eater of the coming Passover meal. Other interpretations of the Greek say that He actually did not grammatically include Himself as being an implied participant, or one who would necessarily be eating the meal they were preparing. An excellent paper on this subject has already been written by James Sorenson, and is available by writing to his attention, 13111 Upper Cow Creek Road, Azalea, OR 97410. This paper provides evidence that Jesus did not grammatically include Himself, and therefore these sentences cannot be used as "proof" that His last meal was also the Passover meal.

Although this debate over the Greek grammar is important to some proposed Passover theories, it actually does not need to be resolved before the debate can be determined to be of no sequential significance. As far as determining the sequence of events, it does not matter one way or the other if Jesus did or did not include Himself as an intended eater of the Passover meal.

This grammatical question surrounding Jesus' instructions to prepare for the Passover meal is only important in determining the sequence of events if the reader is willing to accept two very large assumptions. This grammatical controversy (although interesting to discuss) is only important to the chronological studies of the crucifixion if you have the following convictions regarding Jesus:

Assumption 1: You believe that Jesus, while being human on this earth, had all knowledge and knew all things which was about to happen to Himself, prior to the events happening to Him. Therefore, Jesus knew exactly how and when He was going to be killed, and knew that the current Passover was the actual Passover that He was to be killed (not next year's Passover).

Assumption 2: If Jesus did know that He would not eat that coming Passover meal with His disciples, and if He still verbally gave the apostles the impression that He would be a participant in that meal, then Jesus would have committed a sin, He would have been a liar.

Using these underlying assumptions (and allowing for just a moment that Jesus did include Himself as one who was going to eat the Passover meal that the disciples prepared) then by deduction Jesus must have eaten the Passover meal before He died. Since that evening's meal was the last meal that Jesus ate, that meal must have been the Passover meal.

Although many Christians may read the first assumption and agree with it, most would still read the second and see that the second assumption does not have a valid conclusion. When God chooses to hide matters from us (as with prophecies), that does not make Him a liar nor a sinner. For instance in Luke 4:16-21 Jesus quotes only half of the prophecy found in Isaiah 61:1-2. Jesus stops reading in the middle of the sentence and declares that the prophecy is fulfilled to them. Just because the remaining part of the prophecy was not also "fulfilled" at the same time does not make God a liar. The point is that what we as humans consider to be "implied", is not how God necessarily "fulfills" things. Therefore, even if it is proven to be true that Jesus grammatically included Himself to eat the Passover, but knew otherwise and chose to keep the matter hidden from them, it does not mean that He was a liar or a sinner.

### **Did Jesus Know Exactly When He Would Be Crucified:**

For the purposes of this paper, we can proceed from here after defeating the second assumption. However, of interest to many is the concept of Jesus having divine knowledge of all things about to happen to Himself, especially regarding the crucifixion. For those interested in this subject, the following section is

included. For those not wanting to "complicate" the issue with a diversion, they may wish to skip this next section.

**Diversion:** Can the first assumption be wrong? On the surface, it would seem almost heresy to say otherwise. But upon examining the scriptural evidence it appears that the first assumption is also incorrect. Jesus did not have a complete knowledge about when He was to be killed. The evidence is found by comparing some scriptures:

1. By the evening of Jesus last meal, He knew that He was about to die. He was very distressed by this fact, Mark 14:34. The question of: "Why was He distressed?" provides the best clue to this issue.
2. In Luke 22:15 Jesus states that: "With a deep-desire I once had desiring to eat the Passover with you before I must suffer..." The word "desire" is translated from the Greek word "epithumeo" (#1939 and #1937 respectively). Here the same root word is used twice, back to back, once as a noun and once as a verb. Strong's Concordance sites that #1939 means "a longing (especially for what is forbidden)". It cites #1937 as meaning "to set the heart upon".

The verb (#1937) is written in the indicative, aorist, and active (as was "elthe" in Luke 22:7); Ref. Analytical Greek New Testament, page 265. This means that the desire is conversationally in the past tense and may be translated as still active at the same time. The Greek gives us no implied indication as to if the desire was completed or still in progress. Therefore, it may be like saying in English: "I desire-ed-ing...", or "I was desiring...". The action of 'desire' was active while being stated in the past tense. Because "the desiring" was expressed in the past tense, it could mean that "the desiring" was no longer possible to attain. The desire that Jesus felt was dashed from His hopes, no longer possible to become true.

The noun of the sentence (#1939) is the same word "to desire", but expressed as a noun, that is, the word "desire" expressed as a thing, "that thing the desiring". Yet "the desiring" was something forbidden to Him. The combination of these two uses of "to desire" would be more clearly translated as: "With the-desiring (now forbidden to me) I was desiring to eat (the Passover)..." The fact that His desire is expressed in the past tense and also as a noun only makes sense if Jesus (days prior) earnestly desired to keep the coming Passover meal with the disciples, but later learned that He would not be allowed to live to that event, making Him very upset.

### **"This Passover"**

Also in Luke 22:15 are the English words "this Passover". These words are interpreted by some to mean that Jesus was referencing "that evening's meal" as being the Passover meal He wanted to eat before He suffered. Although this interpretation of the two words "this Passover" is grammatically a possibility, it is not the only possibility of interpretation.

The words translated as "this Passover" are actually three Greek words with Strong's numbers #5124, #3588, #3957. The first word and the second word combine into the English word "this", but with the meaning of "that thing"; Ref. Thayer's Greek English Lexicon by Baker, page 467.II.

In the Greek the word "this" is an adjective and in the accusative case. This means that it is tied directly to the subject, accusing the word "Passover". This grammar defuses the interpretation that can be derived in our English language for the word "this". In English a reader may interpret the "this" to refer to "that evening's meal" which was the context the statement was made in. This interpretation would be incorrect for Luke 22:15. Here the word "this" is directly tied as an adjective to the subject, making it more like saying: "that thing the Passover". This form of the

word "this" implies only "the closest Passover", whenever that event happens to be. In this case, the Passover event was the next evening.

This very subtle distinction can more easily be explained by a simple parallel example. Imagine that you read in a letter from home about how one of your relatives stood up at the dinner table and said: "I really wanted to eat this Thanksgiving Dinner with you before I got assigned to work in Europe." After reading this sentence, you would not jump to the conclusion that the meal they were currently eating was actually Thanksgiving Dinner. The reason is because you understand that Thanksgiving Dinner is an event which happens once a year, and only will occur at its "appointed" time. The meal that was currently being eaten may have been in the month of October or July, and the same statement could still have been made without changing a word.

Even so, in English it is still possible to interpret this sentence as if the relative said: "this current meal which is also Thanksgiving Dinner". But this interpretation is only one of two possibilities. It is just as possible that the relative was referring to the very next Thanksgiving Dinner, whenever that happened to be. In English this sentence is ambiguous. Some other information would be required before we could favor one interpretation over the other.

In like manner, Luke 22:15 is also ambiguous from an English speaker's point of view. However, in the Greek the grammatical evidence leans on the side of interpreting it as referring to "that thing" the next coming up Passover, whenever that event happens to occur. If you were sitting there with the disciples and knew for sure when "this Passover" was scheduled to occur, then the sentence would not be ambiguous. But for those not having the benefit of knowing the implied schedule of events, it may seem ambiguous. This ambiguity means that we must study and weigh all of the other evidence, before making any conclusions about these three Greek words.

3. Jesus states that He will not (triple negative for triple emphasis, "Moods and Tenses", page 185) eat of the Passover until it is fulfilled in the kingdom; Ref. Luke 22:16. Some translations add the word "again" to this sentence to imply that the meal itself was also a Passover meal. However this word is not present in the Greek. Such an emphatic denial of not being able to eat of the Passover meal makes sense if the Passover meal is still a future event.
4. In Matthew 26:39 Jesus prays: "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will..."

Although to some the following may sound like "heresy", the reader is asked to take special note that Jesus specifically asks for His pending ordeal to be taken away from Him. Jesus wanted things to proceed in another way. This request directly implies that Jesus did not Himself believe that He absolutely must be crucified that very day. Further, in order for Jesus to make the request, He had to believe that there existed enough flexibility in "God's plan" so that He could ask for an "alternative scenario" to be taken. Still further, note that in order for Jesus to make the request that He had to have in mind His own preferred plan. The significance of this scriptural account is that Jesus' attitude was to allow God's will be done, not His.

5. In Mark 13:32 Jesus Himself states that He does not know everything, some things are known only by the Father.

These five points describe a situation where Jesus did not have total knowledge of precisely what was going to happen to Him. Jesus wanted very much to eat the Passover with His disciples, planned for it to happen, later learned that He was not going to be able to participate, but rather would suffer tremendous pain and die before the Passover meal would occur (which was within the very next 24 hours). He prayed that the scenario be changed, that He had a preferred scenario in mind. This means that Jesus could feel tremendous disappointment and sorrow, especially

because of His deep desiring to eat the Passover meal with the disciples, which now He would not be able to do.

Combining these points into a single conclusion: Jesus greatly desired to eat the Passover with His disciples. It is not unreasonable for Jesus to then include Himself as being a Passover participant in His instructions to the disciples. But, by the evening of the beginning of the fourteenth, He learned that He would not live to the next Passover meal. He was greatly distressed, asked for a change of plan, but willingly obeyed The Father's plans instead of His own.

To believe that because Jesus grammatically included Himself as an implied eater of the Passover meal, and then because events prevented Him from fulfilling that intent, would make Jesus a liar and therefore a sinner, is a belief which most will recognize as being speculative, unreasonable and unprovable.

### **Jesus' Instructions To Prepare, Was It A Schedule?:**

Another reason why the command of Jesus to his disciples to prepare for the Passover provides no sequential significance into determining when the Passover occurred is provided by simple deduction.

Simply stated, the reason is that to command someone to prepare for an event does not imply when the event will take place. The Passover celebration meal is an event, happening once a year. This concept is similar to our terms of "Thanksgiving dinner" or "Christmas dinner". They happen once a year, making them events.

Using this familiar concept: if you were to ask a Thanksgiving dinner committee to go and prepare for Thanksgiving dinner, they would understand that this command does not imply when the Thanksgiving dinner meal would actually be eaten. The command to "go and prepare" does not tell us when the preparations must be completed, that evening, or next week, or next month.

The reason is simple. They understand that Thanksgiving dinner is an event which will occur when it occurs, not before hand. For someone to overhear you command the dinner committee to go out and prepare for Thanksgiving dinner, and then insist that such a command meant that Thanksgiving dinner was the very next evening's meal, would be an assumption that most would recognize as being ridiculous.

Likewise, to demand that the once in a year event of the Passover celebration meal must be the very next evening's meal, solely because Jesus commanded them to go and prepare for it, is an assumption that should be recognized as being just as unwarranted.

Further, the scripture states that the disciples prepared for the Passover as they were instructed to. Yet in John 13:29 it states that during that evening's meal the disciples could still be lead to believe that all preparations were not yet complete. It states that they thought that Jesus asked Judas to go out and buy other preparations for the feast. John 13:1 makes it clear that the term "the feast" was used in the context of "the Passover feast".

### **Points Of Evidence: Last Meal, Not The Passover:**

Below is a list of ten separate reasons which provide evidence that the last meal of Jesus Christ was not, nor could have been, the Passover meal. For:

1. They ate in a reclined position, (Lk 22:14). The Passover meal was commanded to be eaten in haste, staff in hand, ready to go out the door at any moment, (Ex 12:11; Deut. 16). Even allowing that this original eating posture may have been replaced by custom, the accounts do not specifically state that the meal was a Passover meal. This omission is important. Those who insist that this meal was the Passover meal have no direct scriptures to quote in their support. Their arguments are only that of inference and personal opinion.
2. They left the meal before morning, (John 13:30). The Passover meal was to last all night, leaving nothing of the lamb to the morning, (Ex 12:10). The Passover participants were forbidden to leave the house prior to morning, (Deut. 16:7).

Regarding the question of: "When is morning? After midnight or after day-break?" This question, although interesting, is of no importance to this point. Simply note that Jesus and the disciples left the house after supper, well before midnight. Jesus had time to pray three separate times before He was betrayed and taken prisoner. Jesus was already tried and condemned before daybreak.

3. John 13:28-30: Judas left the dinner, and the other disciples thought that he was told by Jesus to go out and buy more preparations for the feast. Such a conclusion is not possible, for:
  - A. If that meal were the Passover meal, nobody (stores or kin-folk) would be open for business. The disciples could not have had such a thought enter into their minds if they were at that moment eating the Passover meal.
  - B. If that evening was the Passover celebration meal, called the feast of the Passover in John 13:1, then the thought of Judas going outside at night to buy something for the feast would be a complete contradiction, as they were already eating the meal.
  - C. This verse only makes sense taking it literally as the Greek grammar allows for its interpretation. That is, the feast was still future, upcoming, and Judas was going out to buy provisions for it.
4. Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12, and Luke 22:7 each state specifically that they ate a supper. Neither account calls the meal anything else (also note John 13:1 and 29).
5. In I Cor. 11:23 Paul states that: "in the night in which He was betrayed..." Paul makes no special point to the meal that they ate, but rather concentrates on the events of the night.
6. John 19:31: In the Greek, very clearly states that the next day (after the evening meal, the day Jesus was crucified) was the preparation day for the Passover. The day of Christ's crucifixion could not be called a preparation day if the evening before were the Passover celebration meal. That would make the day of Christ's crucifixion day a Holy Day, whereby no preparations would be allowed. It further states that the next day was the Sabbath, and that "this particular Sabbath" was a great day. It would be considered a great day if that Sabbath fell on the fifteenth of Nisan which is the first day of unleavened bread, which is a special Holy Day.

7. The armed band and priests which took Jesus captive, tried Him, presented Him to Pilot, and had Him crucified would have violated and profaned the sanctity of the Passover night as they would have:
  - A. Disobeyed the command to not go out of their dwellings before morning.
  - B. Became defiled from contact with Jesus blood, they struck him repeatedly, and could not have officiated in the temple duties of that Holy Day.
  - C. Held a trial on the Passover night and continued on into the next day with Pilot, which would then be a Holy Day.
  - D. Conducted business (with Judas, false witnesses, and Pilot) on a Holy Day.
  - E. Profaned the Holy Day by allowing a crucifixion to occur.
  - F. Contradicted themselves by desiring to have the bodies taken down before the Sabbath, yet allowed the bodies to be there during the Holy Day.
  - G. Performed work and conducted civic duties on the Holy Day.
8. In John 18:28 it states that on the day of Jesus crucifixion, the Pharisees and priests did not want to defile themselves, lest they could not eat of the Passover. This means the Passover meal must have been still in the future, after the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.
9. The Passover celebration was a family event. Its participation was to include the whole family, including children and slaves. (Ref. Ex. 12:24-28, 43-49.) Yet, none of the disciples' family, Mary, or the other women (who were in Jerusalem at that time) were at this meal.
10. The next day Simon the Cyrenian was returning from the field, which is a reference to working in the field. The day of the crucifixion was a "working-day".

Concluding: The preponderance of evidence given by the above points is quite substantial. The combination of these points with the previous points made in this paper constitute overwhelming evidence. Add to this the observation that all of the scriptures are answered, remain in harmony, that no assumptions were made, and what can be concluded is that an impressive harmony has been found.

### **Jesus Performs Foot-Washing Ceremony:**

It is evident from John 13:14 that not only did Jesus wash the feet of His disciples, but commanded us to do the same with each other. The primary word translated as "ought" is Strong's number 3784, which means "to owe {money}". We are under debt to wash each others feet as Christ instructed us to do so.

### **Judas Leaves The Meal**

It is concluded by context that Judas left the meal after the foot-washing, and prior to the bread and drink ceremony. Assuming that the events were recorded chronologically, then this conclusion is true. Further, notice that since the meal began at or after sunset, that by the time it took to wash twelve men's feet, it was probably fully dark when Judas left the meal to betray Jesus.

It was after dark that Judas met the priests in order to betray Jesus, and gathered the mob to arrest Him. Therefore, neither the priests nor the mob were at home eating their own Passover meal with their own families. Rather, they were conducting business on that night, including an arrest and trial. By considering all of the "business" which actually transpired the night in which Jesus was betrayed, it should appear obvious that no one was regarding it as being a sacred night, as is the Passover. This can only be because it was not a sacred night. The sacred rituals and traditions that make up the Passover celebration and meal were performed the next evening.

### **Meal Is Over**

Notice that Luke 22:39 states that Jesus left the meal, "as His custom was", to go to the Mount of Olives to pray. This indicates that they were not doing anything special, or acting like it was a special time of celebration. This ordinary demeanor gives more evidence that this meal and night was not a feast celebration. They followed their normal practice of retreating to the Mount to pray, which is why Judas knew exactly where to find Him.

### **Jesus Is Betrayed And Sacrificed As A Passover Sheep**

By the time Jesus was betrayed, He had prayed three separate times, each time included walking back to find the disciples asleep. Many have suggested that the time of this betrayal was at midnight, but the scriptures do not say this. However, it seems reasonable to say that it occurred close to midnight, certainly well after sunset. This is important to note when considering the practices associated with keeping the Passover meal. It was forbidden by God to exit the meal-houses prior to the next morning (Ex. 12), where it was important to burn any remaining lamb so that nothing remained. Clearly, Jesus and the disciples were not practicing these Passover precepts by leaving the house to the Mount of Olives and sleeping outdoors.

### **Pharisees Afraid Of Defiling The Sabbath:**

"...was for great (adjective) the day (noun) of that the Sabbath (noun)". Is the word "Sabbath" in John 19:31 used as an idiom to refer to a "Holy Day", or was the writer actually making reference to a Sabbath day (Saturday) which was also a "Holy Day"?

The Greek grammar for this verse is constructed in such a manner that the primary subject of the sentence is "the Sabbath", and has an adjective-construct "great the day". This specific Sabbath day was also a "great day". Remember the difference between a noun and an adjective. The noun already exists, and the adjective tells you something more about it. This Sabbath would also be "great the day" if it were also the fifteenth of Nisan, which is the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. This sentence is grammatically constructed in such a manner which specifically eliminates the possibility that the word "Sabbath" was just another way of referring to a Holy Day. To express this idea the "great the day" would have to be the noun of the sentence, and then "Sabbath" would have to be the adjective to it. But the word "Sabbath" is not an adjective, it is the noun being attributed the additional descriptive of also being a "great day" too.

### **Pharisees Eat The Passover Meal:**

When is the Passover celebration and meal to be eaten, as the fourteenth of Nisan begins, or as it ends?

### **Original Passover Was A Fourteenth - Fifteenth Event:**

Exodus 12:6-11 states that the Passover sacrifice was to be selected on the tenth of Nisan, kept until the fourteenth, killed between the evenings, eaten at night, eaten with unleavened bread, eaten with loins girded, sandals on feet, staff in hand, and eaten in a hurried manner.

Lev. 23:26-32 informs us that the phrase "on the ninth at evening" has the meaning of "on the ninth as the ninth day is ending". Likewise, "on the tenth at evening" has the meaning of "on the ten as the tenth day is ending". Likewise, this strongly suggests that the phrase "on the fourteenth at evening" means "on the fourteenth as the fourteenth day is ending".

Deut. 16:1-8 states that we are to keep the Passover, including eating unleavened bread. Verse four states that unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days, and that none of the flesh of the Passover shall remain until the morning of the first of the unleavened-days.

Note that the word "morning" is Strong's #1242 which means dawn, having the root of "to break". This strongly suggests that the word "morning" refers to the actual time of sunrise or "breaking of day".

Further, in verse six it states that the Passover (lamb) is to be killed "at evening when goes down the sun." Note that the original language has three words, Strong's numbers #6183, #935 and #8121. Literally it says: "at evening goes sun". This can only refer to one astronomical event, that is the time when the sun sets over the horizon.

Verses seven and eight specify that they were to go to their own tents only after morning, and then eat unleavened bread for an additional six days after that. Since the total number of days of unleavened bread is seven, then the 15th and its previous night must also be one of the days of unleavened bread.

These points combine to suggest that the original Passover meal occurred on the same night that we begin the first day of unleavened bread, which is the fifteenth.

### **The Egyptian Calendar Also Clarifies Moses' Writings:**

But how can the Passover be started on the fourteenth as the day is ending, have the meal extend into the night, progressing to a conclusion to the next morning, and not be stated as being eaten on the fifteenth? The scriptures always specify that the date for the Passover is the fourteenth.

The answer to this "riddle" is simple. The Egyptian calendar began its days at sunrise, in the morning; Ref. "Egyptian Chronology and The Torah", page 3 and "Ancient Planetary Observations", Pg. 42. Beginning the day twelve hours earlier at sunset was not how the Egyptians counted days. The Israelites had lived in Egypt for generations, and therefore it is reasonable that the instructions given by God and the account of their exodus would be written from the Egyptian calendar point of view.

From the Egyptian calendar's point of view, the Israelites actually did eat the Passover "on the fourteenth". The fifteenth of the month would not start until that next morning when the Passover meal was to be concluded. In accordance with the Egyptian calendar they grew up with, they both sacrificed the lamb at sunset and ate the Passover at night, doing the entire ceremony while it was still the fourteenth of the month.

Notice Leviticus 7:15, they must eat the offering the same day, leaving nothing until morning, which would be the start of the next day. To the Egyptians the night portion before morning, sunset to daybreak, was considered to be the same calendar day. Likewise with Passover night.

The scriptures are written absolutely correctly. But they are written within the culture of the time. By reading the Exodus account using the Egyptian method of counting calendar days, there remains no contradiction or any ambiguity. There is no reason to have a controversy regarding the chronology of the original Passover.

Also note another subtlety. That according to the Egyptian calendar, the Israelites not only ate the Passover on the fourteenth at night, they allowed nothing to remain until the next morning, which began the fifteenth day, which was the first day of the days of unleavened bread. This again provides more evidence that the word "morning" (#1242) means sunrise, which began the next Egyptian calendar day. Again, showing that the holy scriptures are written correctly, but from the view point and context of the time. As one of many examples of counting the night portion as the "same day", read Deuteronomy 21:23: do not let a body hang on a tree all night, but you must bury it the SAME DAY.

### **Book Of Jubilees Clarifies How To Observe The Passover, A Fourteenth - Fifteenth Event:**

Still further: In the book of Jubilees Chapter 49, the whole chapter explains both the history of, and the details of how to observe the Passover. In this discourse we are told what is meant by the words "between the evenings". We are told that the day is divided into three (3) unequal parts, two (2) parts for the daylight twelve hours of the day, and only one (1) part for the entire night portion. It then explicitly details how you are to interpret the words "between the evenings". The Hebrew word for "evening" only means "mixture", and by context means "mixture" of lightness and darkness. The morning before sunrise is a "dusk" of lightness and darkness, and the time after sunset is a "dusk" of lightness and darkness too. The time in between these two "mixtures" is the night-portion and is the entire third division of the ancient day. This chapter tells us that we are to kill the Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> and then eat the Passover "between the mixtures" during the night portion, and leave nothing of the meat after sunrise the next morning. This chapter is so clear, it even calls this night-portion the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Even if the reader discounts this Book's authority, as it is not "scripture", this Book nevertheless tells us how the Jewish scholars of circa 135 BC understood the division of the day into three parts, and their interpretation of the words "between the evenings". Thus we are provided with a significant historical insight into the Hebrew text. [Jubilees was written in Hebrew circa 135 BC, probably by a Pharisee that broke away from the Pharisee-party. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jubilees> . It is considered as part of the Coptic Bible called "The Book of Divisions".]

Concluding: The combination of all these points describe only one possible sequence of events. As viewed by the Jewish calendar we use today:

1. The Passover sacrifice was to be killed as the sun set, on the evening as the fourteenth day ended, which starts the third-portion of a 24-hour day which is dusk at sunset.
2. The Passover meal was eaten that night "between the evenings" as the fifteenth day begins, up to the end of the third-portion of a 24-hour day which is dusk at sunrise.
3. The Passover meal was eaten with unleavened bread, was performed as part of the first day of unleavened bread, and that unleavened bread was eaten for an additional six days after that.

### **Conclusion:**

This paper has provided evidence which is necessary to harmonize the key scriptures in the Passover Controversy. The Bible does not contradict itself. The four gospel accounts of the last meal of Jesus Christ and the accounts of the first Passover meal have been sequentially harmonized in an unassuming and unambiguous manner. The other scriptures which are not itemized in this paper also harmonize immediately with the answer described herein.

By allowing the preponderance of evidence to guide us, we can conclude:

1. The last meal of Jesus Christ was not the Passover celebration.
2. That Christians have been instructed to participate in the washing of each other's feet, drinking of the cup and eating of the bread as a memorial to Christ's sacrifice for us, until He returns again as King of Kings. The original "Last Meal of Jesus Christ" was conducted on the evening of the fourteenth, as the thirteenth day was ending, relative to the Jewish calendar in use today.
3. That Christians should celebrate the Passover memorial on the evening of the fifteenth, as the fourteenth day is ending, relative to the Jewish calendar in use today.
4. That Christians should observe this special "Night of Remembrance" by eating unleavened bread, and to continue eating unleavened bread six days after that (making seven days total).

Everyone studying this material should understand that when we as Christians participate in the memorial service of the "Last Meal of Jesus Christ", and participate in the memorial of the Passover celebration, that each of us are doing so for the glory and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who choose to honor God by keeping these memorials in different ways, and on different days, are also doing so for the glory and honor of God. These matters should therefore never be regarded as issues of differences which keep Christian groups separated. Rather, these are matters of common concern, and help to keep all of us focused on our one Lord, Jesus Christ.

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