

THE PASSOVER



DID JESUS
EAT LAWFULLY?

Passover: Did Jesus Eat it Lawfully? Edited.

Considerations on this topic need to focus primarily on this point: was Jesus' last Passover supper eaten in accordance with the Law of God that He gave to Moses to give to Israel?

In Matthew 5:17-19 we read:

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

We assume that those reading this have already spent some time in considering the various scriptures along with the Harvest Message references.

OLD TESTAMENT

It is in Exodus 12:1-14 that the primary instructions on how the Israelites were to observe the Passover are found. The carrying out of the first Passover (on the 14th) is described in vs. 21-36.

In a short summary, they were to kill the Passover lamb on the 14th shortly after 6 PM, the start of their day. They were to put the blood above and on the sides of the entrance doors to their homes. They were to roast and eat the lamb that evening, the evening of the 14th – that is after 6 PM, but before 12 AM – midnight. They were not to go out until the morning (still the 14th) because the destroying angel sent by God was to come over the land of Egypt at midnight (of the 14th). We also note that they were instructed to eat the Passover lamb with unleavened bread (vs. 8).

The Israelites' 24-hour day was from setting sun until the following setting sun. This was from 6:00 PM until 6:00 PM (24 hours later).

The unusual expression, “between the two evenings,” found in Exodus 12:6, follows: **“And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it *between the two evenings*.”** This meant that they were to kill the Paschal lamb during the 24-hour period of the 14th of Nisan. However, the name “Passover” refers to the passing over of their houses, with the blood on the lintel and doorposts, by the

death angel *that very night, the night of the 14th*, thereby sparing the firstborn of every family. They were to kill the lamb after 6 PM on the 14th, put the blood on the door entrance, roast and eat the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, staff in hand and sandals on their feet. This demonstrated their conviction that this miraculous event was to lead to their deliverance out of Egypt.

Note that the destroying angel came at midnight of the 14th. Ex. 11:4, 5; 12:29.

Note that the Hebrews were instructed not to leave their homes until the morning period of the 14th. Ex. 12:22.

When the morning light of the 14th came, the Israelites went to spoil the Egyptians of gold, silver and jewelry (Ex. 12:35). They finished packing up their belongings, with their unleavened dough being particularly mentioned (Ex. 12:34). They came from all around the land of Goshen and organized themselves in Rameses (Ex. 12:37).

Note the Israelites left Egypt at night on the 15th of Nisan. This is the beginning of the 15th. (Numbers 33:1-3, Deuteronomy 16:1) This is the day after the Passover. This day was the start of what would become the Feast of Unleavened bread, lasting for 7 days. It was seven days before they had time to camp long enough to allow their dough to rise before baking it. The first day and last day (the 7th), were to be Sabbaths (Ex. 12:15-17). This feast was to commemorate their exodus out of Egypt.

Numbers 9:1-12 is very helpful in confirming **that even a year later, Moses gave the same instructions on how to keep the Passover on the 14th**. In fact, he also answered the question about those that might be unclean – that they were to eat it one month later, on the 14th.

According to the Rotherham translation, verses 3, 5 and 11, they were to observe all the instructions for the Passover “between the two evenings” of the 14th. It is describing the killing of the lamb and performing all the rites thereof. But we will quote Numbers 9:11, 12:

“In the second month, on the fourteenth day between the two evenings, shall they keep it – with unleavened cakes and bitter herbs shall they eat it. They shall not leave thereof until morning, and no bone shall they break therein according to all the statutes of the Passover, shall they keep it.”

It is clear that Moses instructed the Israelites to both kill and eat the lamb on the 14th, between the two evenings, that is, during the 24 hours of the 14th. There is no mention of the 15th.

In Leviticus 23:5-8 there is a clear distinction between the Passover on the 14th and the 15th which was the beginning of the 7-day Feast of unleavened bread. In verse 5 the Hebrew is “between the two evenings.”

In Deut. 16:6 we read that they were to sacrifice the Passover “at the going down of the sun.” This was after 6 PM at the start of the 14th. This helps us to understand that, even though they were told repeatedly (quoted and cited foregoing) “between the two evenings,” it was preferred to be done as the sun was going down at the beginning of the 14th, (in keeping with the first Passover when they were in Egypt. so that they could apply the lamb’s blood to their doorposts before midnight on that first Passover).

We also note in Deut. 16:5-7 that they were eventually to observe the Passover only at the appointed place. That is where the LORD would choose to place His name – Jerusalem.

Another example of “even” is found in Num.9:15 where we are informed that the LORD had His pillar of fire rest on the Tabernacle at “even.” Certainly, this would have been after the sun had started to set.

Perhaps one of the best examples of what the expression “between the two evenings” might mean does not even use this expression. It is found in Lev. 23:24-32. It is the instructions for observing the Day of Atonement on the 10th day of the seventh month. The entire day was a Sabbath of rest. They were to do no work, but they should afflict their souls and offer sacrifices. It is in verse 32 where we read: **“It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and you shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall you celebrate your sabbath.”**

The “ninth at even” was actually the start of the 10th day at 6 PM. Their 24-hour Sabbath was to continue from “even unto even.” That is, a 24-hour period from 6 PM at the end of the ninth – the start of the tenth – until 6 PM at the end of the tenth and start of the eleventh.

OLD TESTAMENT CONCLUSIONS

God so arranged the Passover lamb to be both killed and eaten “between the evenings,” the 24-hour period of the 14th of Nisan, so that in due time Jesus could both observe the Passover Feast (Ex. 12:14) with his disciples *legally* as well as be the Paschal Lamb slain at the appropriate time. Thus, he both kept that Law Covenant requirement, and he fulfilled the Law type as the antitypical Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

We know of no scripture that suggests that any “even” or “evening” begins at 12:00 PM noon.

Before leaving the Old Testament Scriptures, we want to outline an impossibility. Some think that the first Passover Lamb was slain in the late afternoon on the 14th and eaten on the evening of the 15th. However, as we read, the Hebrews were instructed to eat the Passover on the 14th and *stay in their homes*

until the morning (Exodus 12:22). Yet, they left out of Egypt on the *night of the 15th* (Deut. 16:1). It would have been impossible to have eaten the Passover lamb on the evening of the 15th and stay in their homes until morning and to also leave at night on the 15th.

Another simple observation: the 14th was called “the Passover.” Why? Because it was at midnight on the 14th that the destroying angel “passed over” the houses of the Hebrews who had the blood of the lamb around their doors. If the destroying angel came at midnight on the 15th, that day – the 15th – would be called “the Passover.” But it is not. The 15th is referred to as the day after the Passover (Numbers 33:3).

Lastly, God through Moses instructed the Israelites that when they entered the land, they could no longer observe the Passover in their homes, but rather in the place where He would choose to place His name. This would eventually be at the Temple. See Deut. 16:2, 5, 6.

It is because of this change that some Jewish writers refer to the “Egyptian Passover” as distinct from the “Permanent Passover.”

NEW TESTAMENT

Now we want to consider the New Testament scriptures on this subject – did Jesus eat his last Passover meal according to the Law Covenant requirements?

As we consider the four Gospel accounts, please note that the disciples *never questioned when they were instructed by Jesus to prepare and eat the Passover*. They did not express any surprise or doubts. Surely these righteous Jews would have protested this gross violation of the Law, just as we read of Peter when God sent him to visit the Gentile, Cornelius. Acts 10:14: **“But Peter said, not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”**

Matthew 26:17-20: “Now the first day of the Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying, where do you wish that we prepare for you the Paschal supper? He answered, go into the city to a certain person, and say to him, the Teacher says, my time is near: I will celebrate the Passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had ordered them; and they prepared the Passover. Now evening being come, he reclined at table with the Twelve.”

Matthew records that the disciples asked Jesus where they should prepare the Passover meal. Surely, they would not have asked him this question if they did not think it was the lawful and usual time. We do not read of any questioning nor confusion on their part in the preparations. And clearly, they ate it in the evening – the first part of the 14th of Nisan.

Mark 14:12-17: “And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the Passover, his disciples said unto him, where will you that we go and prepare that you may eat the Passover? And he sent forth two of his disciples, and said unto them, go you into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say you to the goodman of the house, the Master says, where is the guest chamber where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared; there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth and came into the city and found as he said unto them; and they made ready the Passover. And in the evening, he came with the twelve.”

Mark also states that it was the disciples who first brought up the killing and eating of the Passover. We read “when they killed the Passover.” This means when the lawful day had arrived (the 14th of Nisan) when it was commonly acceptable to the Hebrews that they could go to the Temple (as required) and obtain a slain lamb to bring it back to cook it and eat it. All was to be done after 6 PM at the start of the 14th. It was “in the evening,” at the beginning of the 14th, after 6 PM, that it was prepared to eat. *Again, no one thought they were doing anything out of the ordinary, certainly not unlawfully – not the disciples, not Jesus nor even the goodman of the house.*

In Luke 22:1: “Now the feast of unleavened bread drew near, which is called the Passover.”

Note: the Passover is called a Feast – Exodus 12:14: **“And this day (the 14th in context) shall be unto you for a memorial; and you shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.”**

And we remember that they were to eat the lamb with herbs and unleavened bread. The feast of Unleavened Bread followed on the morrow after the Passover, that is, on the 15th, and continued for seven days. It started on the 15th (a holy convocation) and lasted until the 21st (also a holy convocation). Altogether there is a total of 8 days in which they ate unleavened bread.

To be clear – these are two separate, but related, feasts. The Passover was strictly on the 14th, for it was that night that the destroying angel came and “passed over” the houses of the Israelites that had the blood of the lamb on them. Then followed the “morrow after the Passover,” the seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread, that represented their exodus out of Egypt when they did not have time to let their dough rise with leaven.

It is of interest that Luke writes in 22:1, cited above, the “feast of unleavened bread ... which is CALLED the Passover.” Yes, at the time of the First

Advent the Jews had developed the habit of running the two separate feasts of commemoration together and they downplayed the killing and eating of the lamb in favor of the more pleasant feasting on the 15th, commemorating their great EXODUS out of Egyptian slavery. Hence, this expression by Luke helps one to better understand how the various Gospel writers expressed themselves, sometimes writing about the two separate ceremonies as one long “Passover feast.” However, it does not change the Law’s instructions, which Jesus was most carefully observing.

We will quote from the Diaglott footnote on Matthew 26:17 which is pertinent here:

“The Passover feast began yearly on the fourteenth day of the first moon, in the Jewish month Nisan, and it lasted only one day; but it was immediately followed by the days of unleavened bread, which were seven. See Josephus, Ant. Iii, 10-5.”

Back to Luke 22:7-15: “Then came the day of unleavened bread, on which it was necessary to sacrifice the Paschal Lamb. And he sent Peter and John, saying, go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said unto them, behold when you are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water, follow him into the house where he enters in. And you shall say unto the goodman of the house, the Master says unto you, where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished, there make ready. And they went and found as he had said unto them. And they made ready the Passover. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”

Once again Luke does not record any confusion or questioning on the part of the disciples (Peter and John in particular). This was in fact THE DAY in which it was NECESSARY TO SACRIFICE AND EAT THE PASCHAL LAMB. That is, it is necessary according to the Law God had given the nation.

Five times the "Passover lamb," "preparing the Passover," or "eating the Passover" is mentioned. No one questioned it. It was killed and eaten by Jesus and the disciples LAWFULLY.

In the three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) the term “preparation” or “day of preparation” in context meant the weekday (Friday) in which, each week, the Jews prepared their homes for the next day, Saturday, which was the weekly sabbath. Note Matt. 27:62; Luke 23:54 and Mark 15:42.

Mark 15:42, 43:

“And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, an honorable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.”

When the even was come on the day of preparation it meant it was toward the close of the week day Friday. That year, Friday was also Nisan 14th. The weekly Sabbath or Saturday was the 15th of Nisan.

Note that these three Gospel writers do not use the term “high day,” meaning a high Sabbath, as John does.

John 19:31:

“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.”

This preparation day is the usual weekday Friday. Saturday was their usual weekly Sabbath. However, John adds that it was a “high day.” This is because that year the weekly Sabbath day also fell on Nisan 15th, which was the first day of the seven days of Unleavened Bread, after the Passover. The first and last days were to be observed as their own “holy Convocation” or Sabbath days with special sacrifices and feasting (see Lev. 23:5-8).

Now as we consider John’s Gospel, we want to make a few observations.

John wrote to provide us with events, prayers and conversations that the other Gospel writers did not include. However, John includes enough of the same events that it allows us to be familiar with his sequence of what is transpiring in Jesus’ life, the same as in the first three Gospels.

Also, John’s expression of timing seems to be referring to Roman or Gentile timekeeping rather than the Jewish method. These times can thus be easily reconciled. Another notable difference is the expression “feast of Passover” which he seems to use to refer more particularly to the feast of Unleavened Bread. This followed the proper Passover of the 14th as noted in the three other Gospels.

It is of particular importance to understand that John NEVER uses the word “Unleavened” in his Gospel! Rather, John used the all-encompassing expression “Feast of Passover” instead. This is as Luke wrote in Luke 22:1 noted above, **“Now the feast of unleavened bread drew near, which is called the Passover.”** That is, it is a more generalized expression encompassing the entire 8 days in which they did not eat leavened bread.

John 13:1, Diaglott: **“Now Jesus, knowing before the Feast of the Passover that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved those his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”**

Even though this verse is usually read in the context of the whole chapter, we separate it from the following verses because this verse is a statement all its own. This verse is not meant to imply that the following verses regarding the supper could not be the Passover supper for Jesus and his disciples. For we read in Luke 22:15 that Jesus stated, while they were at the supper, that **“with desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you.”**

Rather, John 13:1 is stating the facts that Jesus knew before the Passover observation that his hour had come. Really, Jesus had known this for some time and he had already told his disciples so (John 12:23, 24). Furthermore, this verse (1) is stating that Jesus would demonstrate his love for his disciples right up until he died.

Then we read in John 13:2-4, Diaglott: **“And as supper was preparing, the enemy having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, that he should betray him, he knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and was going to God, rises from the supper and put off his mantle and, taking a towel, girded himself.”**

It is very striking that there is no mention of the two disciples going to prepare the Passover, or of the upper guest chamber room, nor of the institution of the Memorial Emblems! Apparently, John felt this was already well covered by the other Gospel writers. Rather, John just starts right in on what the other 3 writers had not recorded, that is, the foot washing lesson. The following verses – John 13:5 and all the way through to 14:31 – record different events, conversations and instructions from Jesus while they are still in the upper room. Yet, he does record (with greater detail) the same event found in all four Gospels – that the Betrayer sat at the supper table with them.

In John 13:29, Diaglott: **“For some thought, seeing that Judas had the box, that Jesus said to him, ‘buy what things we need for the Feast’: or that he should give something to the poor.”**

The Feast referred to here was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, starting on the next day – the 15th. Why might some have thought this? Because that year the 15th was a “high day” (John 19:31). It was both the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is a holy day itself. So then, there could be little to no shopping on the 15th.

We observe that in this verse (13:29) it does not say “buy what things we need for the Passover.” It just says, “the Feast.” It is a point to note, because they had just finished eating the Passover supper according to the other 3 Gospel

writers! It is appropriate for us to assume it was in fact the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th that was being referred to.

Please note – it is of little consequence how the various Jewish factions might be preparing and eating the Passover. We are interested in whether or not Jesus and his disciples were correctly preparing and eating the Passover meal according to the Law requirements. In fact, the Jews to this day do not all agree. A small segment of Judaism, known as the Karaites and Samaritans, reject the Talmudic writings and use just the Torah (Scriptures). These will offer the sacrifice in the beginning of Passover, at dusk on the 14th of Nisan. It is claimed by some that the Sadducees and Pharisees did not agree among themselves, some preferring to slay and eat the Passover at the beginning of Passover after 6 PM and before midnight. (See references following).

John 18:28: “Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover.”

Remembering that John does not use the word “Unleavened” in his account, it may mean the coming Feast of Unleavened bread, that high sabbath on the 15th. Or it may mean they thought they could eat the Passover meal still at the end of the 14th. Or yet, it may even mean that they (improperly) were pushing the Passover meal onto the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Benjamin Wilson’s footnote in his Diaglott on this verse reads: “It was probably then thought lawful for the Jews to eat the paschal lamb at any hour between the two evenings, though Exodus 12:6, 8, seems to require it to be eaten at the time when Jesus ate it.”

John 18:39: “But you have a custom, that I should release unto you one during the Passover; will you therefore that I release unto you the king of the Jews?”

The Diaglott and Rotherham translations state “during the Passover.” Hence, that day was the Passover. This is in keeping with the other verses in John and his lack of making a distinction between the Passover of the 14th and the Feast of Unleavened Bread starting on the 15th. It can also include the whole 8 days.

John 19:14: “Now it was the preparation of the Passover, and the hour was about the sixth: and he says to the Jews, Behold your king!”

John’s sixth hour is 6:00 AM. Once again, the same possibilities might apply here as were suggested before on John 18:28.

The word “preparation” is used in John 19:31 and 42, but they do not shed any more light on our consideration of the proper time for observing the Passover. As previously noted, it can easily mean the “high Sabbath” that year, or the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or even the misunderstanding of the Jewish culture in that day.

HARVEST MESSAGE QUOTES

Having considered the Scriptures from the Old and New Testament, we will quote from Br. Russell.

"The New Creation," page 462: "It was at the close of our Lord's ministry, on the 14th day of the first month, in 'the *same night* in which he was betrayed,' and in the *same day*, therefore, in which he died, as the antitypical Lamb, that he celebrated with his disciples the typical Passover of the Jews – eating, with his twelve apostles, the typical lamb which represented himself, his own sacrifice for the sins of the world ... The eating of this supper on the night preceding our Lord's death, and yet the same day, was made possible by the Jewish custom, which began each day, not at midnight, but in the evening. The Lord evidently arranged all the affairs of Israel in conformity with the types which they were to express.

As Jews 'born under the Law,' it was obligatory upon our Lord and his apostles to celebrate this type, and at its proper time." Italics added.

"The New Creation," page 470 footnote: "... The 14th day is easily reckoned, but should not be confounded with Feast Week, which began on the 15th and continued for a week following it – the Jewish celebration ... With the Jew the sacrifice of the lamb was a means to the end, a start for the feast of the week ..."

Reprint 2115: "We celebrate the fourteenth; a day of which the Jew takes little or no account. It would appear that the fourteenth of Nisan should have been generally observed, but that the Jews seemed to begrudge the time, and generally crowded the supper over unto the fifteenth day, to gain one more day for business. *Certain it is that it was proper to both kill and eat the Passover lamb on the fourteenth, for our Lord and the twelve apostles so did, and our Lord was crucified on the same day; this being provided for in the Jewish arrangement of time which began each day at six P.M. – Lev. 23:5, 6.*" Italics added.

Reprint 3554: "THAT THEY MIGHT EAT THE PASSOVER

This expression has caused some confusion of thought. Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover Supper the evening before. Why, then, it is asked, should these fear to be contaminated lest they should thus be prevented from eating the Passover Supper, if it were in the past? We reply that their solicitation was in respect to the Passover Feast which would last the entire week, beginning that very day. *We must bear in mind when using this word Passover that it is applicable both to the Supper and to the Feast week which followed it, and the Jews thought more of the Feast week, while we as Christians center our interest specially in the Passover Supper, or rather in the Memorial Supper, instituted that evening to take*

the place of the Passover Supper for the Lord's followers throughout this Gospel age." Italics added.

Reprint 3749, 3750: "The term Passover amongst the Jews was frequently applied as the name of a festival week, otherwise called the Feast of Passover, beginning the fifteenth day of Nisan. But we must not confound this with the frequent references to the Passover found in the Scriptures when the word feast is not used, which generally referred to the lamb that was killed, the Passover ... *The Lord appointed the Passover – the killing and eating of the Passover lamb on the 14th day – to be followed by a Passover week of unleavened bread ... that it be observed in the evening, to correspond with the original institution in Egypt and with our Lord's subsequent Memorial institution.*" Italics added.

Reprint 5192: "The Jews will celebrate the Passover week as a 'feast' beginning April 22nd (at 6 o' clock p.m., April 21st), the 15th of Nisan. We in the Memorial Supper do not celebrate the feast week, but the day previous, the 14th of Nisan, beginning on the evening of April 20th, 1913, which is the anniversary of the ***proper date for killing and eating the Paschal lamb*** – the anniversary of the death of our Lord Jesus, the true Lamb of God." Bold and italics added.

Reprint 5541: "They met to celebrate the Jewish Passover at its appointed time. The lamb had been roasted, and the unleavened bread prepared, also the bitter herbs. ***Everything, we may be sure, was exactly in conformity with the original requirement; for Jesus and his apostles were bound by every feature of the Jewish law as much as were other Jews*** – the new dispensation not yet having been ushered in. Every feature of the law was binding up to the time of the Pentecostal blessing, which marked the divine approval of the sacrifice of Jesus, and the divine acceptance of all those who had become his disciples by a full consecration."

"The Photo-Drama of Creation" page 67: "Jesus ate the typical Passover lamb with His disciples."

Bold and Italics added.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

The reason there are several different understandings or views among Bible Students, is because there were several different interpretations and practices among the Jews at the time of Christ. This is basically what Br. Russell has pointed

out in some of the foregoing references. That is, for most of the Jewish people they were observing the Passover timing differently than the original Passover.

However, as the references following demonstrate, there were two distinct practices. One, the minority view, was closest to the original Exodus 12 instructions (the one Jesus and his disciples followed). This view killed and ate the Passover lamb after 6 PM at the start of the 14th of Nisan. The majority view, held by the Pharisees, killed the Passover lamb later, during the afternoon of the 14th, but they ate it on the 15th of Nisan, the following day, as a part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread week. Yet the LORD overruled matters so that we can see lessons from both practices.

1. The minority view (held by the Samaritans, Karaites, and Sadducees), was correct in that they both killed and ate the Passover lamb on the 14th. of Nisan, shortly after 6 PM. However, their interpretation of “between the two evenings” meant when the sun started to disappear below the horizon and when it became completely dark. While this was true for the very first Passover (because the death angel came at midnight), it was not what God intended as the meaning of “between the two evenings”.
2. The majority view (held by the Pharisees), seems to have developed during the Second Temple period. They interpret “between the two evenings” as meaning halfway between 12:00 PM noon and sunset at 6 PM, that is at 3 PM on the 14th. This leads them to then eat the slain Passover lamb on the following day/evening – the 15th. This is not how God intended the expression “between the two evenings” to be understood. This practice led them to eat the lamb on the wrong day, “the day **after** the Passover.”
3. God’s intended meaning of “between the two evenings”, meant anytime between the beginning of the day at sunset, or 6 PM, and twenty-four hours later at the beginning of the next “evening,” 6 PM of the following day. Both Jewish views and practices misunderstood God’s intention.
4. However, God overruled both practices for good. Jesus and his disciples were able to obtain a slain lamb and eat the Passover lamb on the right day – between the two evenings – *legally* and yet Jesus could also be slain as the Lamb of God on the same day – between the two evenings – thus *fulfilling the type!*

Following are some scholarly references and suggestions for the meaning, and subsequent Jewish practices (for there are several), regarding the Exodus 12:6

expression of “at even” or “between the evenings.” As stated above, the debate and opinions among the scholars vary greatly and long and tedious are much of their writings. However, some information that they put forth can be useful. Yet it is helpful to remember that the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and the Jewish people scattered during their Diaspora by 135 A.D. There has been no priesthood for almost 2 millennia.

SCHOLARLY REFERENCES

The Hebrew used in Exod. 12:6 for “twilight” is *beyn ha`arbayim*. *Beyn* is Hebrew for between (also “interval” and “within”). And *ha`arbayim* is the dual of *`ereb*, evening. Hence, “between the two evenings”—found in some translations and marginal references—is an accurate, literal translation of *beyn ha`arbayim*.

At the time of Christ, the Pharisees interpreted “between the two evenings” to mean the interval between the early hours of the sun’s declination—early to midafternoon—to sunset. Thus, they justified the slaying of the Passover lambs on the afternoon of Nisan 14. However, the Sadducees, the Samaritans and later the Karaites (a Jewish sect that arose in the eighth century AD) understood the term as the time interval between sunset and total darkness.

The prevailing view among Bible scholars is that the original, specific meaning of the term *beyn ha`arbayim* is the latter. “Aben Ezra agrees with the Caraites and Samaritans in taking the first evening to be the time when the sun sinks below the horizon, and the second the time of total darkness. ... Modern expositors have decided in favour of the view held by Aben Ezra and the custom adopted by the Caraites and Samaritans” (Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, Keil & Delitzsch, vol. II, p. 12).

“Samaritans, Karaites, and Sadducees specify the time as after sunset and before darkness. The latter probably designates the more archaic practice” (Interpreters Bible, vol. 1, p. 919).

The respected scholar Alfred Edersheim wrote extensively on Jewish history and customs. We quote from “The Temple, It’s Ministry and Services, as they were at the Time of Christ”, Page 208: “... the Passover taking place on the 14th of Nisan, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread commencing on the 15th, and lasting for seven days, to the 21st of the month. *But from their close connection they are generally treated as one*, both in the Old and in the New Testament; and Josephus, on one occasion, even describes it as a feast for eight days.”

Page 211: “Accordingly, Jewish authorities rightly distinguish between the Egyptian and the Permanent Passover ... The lamb was to be killed on the eve of the 14th, or rather, as the phrase is, ‘between the two evenings.’ According to the

Samaritans, the Karaite Jews, and many modern interpreters, this means between actual sunset and complete darkness (or, say, between six and seven P.M.); but from the contemporary testimony of Josephus, and from Talmudical authorities, there cannot be a doubt that, at the time of our Lord, it was regarded as the interval between the sun's commencing to decline and his actual disappearance."

Due to both of their [mis]understanding of the meaning of "between the two evenings," the Sadducees designated the beginning of Abib (Nisan) 14, not the following afternoon, as the correct time to kill the Passover lamb. *Consequently, "the Sadducees and Pharisees differed as to the proper day to eat the Passover"* (Smith's Bible Dictionary, "Passover," p. 235). Italics added.

"McClintock and Strong Cyclopaedia of Biblical Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature," Volume VII, page 747: "That testimony, [regarding John's Gospel] however, does not appear to be so distinct, and so incapable of a second interpretation, as that of the synoptical Gospels in **favor of the meal having been the paschal supper itself, at the legal time** (see especially Matt. xxvi, 17; Mark xiv, 1, 12; Luke xxii, 7). Whether the explanations of the passages in John, and of the difficulties resulting from the nature of the occurrences related, compared with the enactments of the Jewish law, be considered satisfactory or not, due weight should be given to the antecedent probability **that the meal was no other than the regular Passover**, and that the reasonableness of the contrary view cannot be maintained without some artificial theory, having no proper foundation either in Scripture or ancient testimony of any kind." Bold added.

SUMMATION THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS

As presented above, at the time of Jesus there were differing practices so that it might be rather easily thought of that *both views were accommodated*, that is, that it might have been possible to obtain a properly/legally slain lamb at either just after 6 PM on the 14th of Nisan or during the following afternoon portion of the 14th of Nisan. Thus, both prevailing views might be satisfied, which would then allow for the proper, legal observance for Jesus and his apostles, nothing being thought of as curious or improper.

Br. Russell observed in a number of places that by the time of Jesus at the First Advent, the majority of the Jewish people had blended the killing and eating of the Passover lamb with the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, blending the 14th and 15th events together into a sort of overlap, actually putting more importance on the Feast of the Unleavened Bread than that of the Passover lamb.

At least one other example presents itself of Jesus referring back to the original manner that God had ordained, rather than the current popular thinking of the Jewish leadership. This example is when Jesus was being questioned and challenged regarding adultery, divorce and remarriage as found in Matthew 19:3-9. Here Jesus answers by going back to the Garden of Eden and the first, or original, marriage that God had sanctioned, not concerning himself with the later developments.

How wonderful to think that the LORD God Almighty had the wisdom and foresight to incorporate in this Passover observance both events. First, the legally binding aspect of Jesus having to keep the Law Covenant requirements perfectly, even to his last Passover meal – unto the very end of his life so that he could be the ransom for all. Second, he was able to die at the time that the majority of Jews (misguidedly), were slaying their Passover lambs.

There is a sense of satisfaction, following Br. Russell’s example of just reading the Old Testament accounts on this matter without needing to try to accommodate the various Jewish writers *interpretations* and the apparent *changes* they had made by the time of Jesus’ day. We are simply accepting that Jesus and his disciples *knew* what was the *lawful manner* in which to observe the Passover.

Although a bit wordy, the quote from McClintock and Strong’s Cyclopaedia, on page 14, foregoing, is actually quite succinct in summarizing so many differing views. Coupled with the Seventh Messenger’s statement, from Reprint 5541 on page 11 above, copied below, satisfies this simple servant.

“Everything, we may be sure, was exactly in conformity with the original requirement; for Jesus and his apostles were bound by every feature of the Jewish law as much as were other Jews.”

A very brief order of events surrounding the first Passover.

Action	Time	Scripture
Take a lamb	10th of Nisan	Exodus 12:3
Kill lamb	After sunset 14th of Nisan	Exodus 12:6
Put blood on doorposts	Later evening 14th of Nisan	Exodus 12:7
Striking of Egyptian firstborn	About midnight 14th of Nisan	Exodus 12:29
Israelites allowed out of homes	Morning of 14th of Nisan	Exodus 12:22
Israelites grab dough and clothes	Daytime of 14th of Nisan	Exodus 12:34
Israelites plunder Egyptian wealth	Daytime 14th of Nisan	Exodus 12:36

Israelites gather/organize in Rameses	Daytime 14th of Nisan	Exodus 12:37
Israelites leave Rameses	Evening/Night of 15th of Nisan	Numbers 33:3
Keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread	Sunset 15th to sunset 21st of Nisan	Exodus 12:17-19 Leviticus 23:6