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**WAS PASSOVER THE FOURTEENTH OR FIFTEENTH?**

by Leroy Neff

Some of the ministers have asked about the Church teaching regarding the time of the Old Testament Passover. This question comes as a result of certain papers that were circulated that concluded that the Bible account could be explained in a plausible way for the killing of the lamb on the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan, and then eaten later in the evening of the fifteenth. Even this paper admitted that it could not be proved conclusively either way, and that Christ kept the Passover on the evening of the 14th, not the evening of the 15th, setting us an example to follow today.

Hopefully the following comments will make it clear that the Church teaching has been correct, regardless of the teaching and practice of Jews or others.

A part of the problem lies in the meaning of the words "in the evening" of Exodus 12:6. There are two schools of thought about this term literally meaning "between the two evenings." One is that the "two evenings" are "noon and sunset", the other "sunset and dark". The New Bible Dictionary under the article PASSOVER states that this "can scarcely be determined by etymology." It further states that the two variant renderings are "based on community practice."

The scriptures make it plain that the passover was killed and eaten on the 14th. Exodus 12:6 shows it was killed the evening of the 14th and eaten "in that night" (verse 8), not the next night. The instructions in Leviticus 23 show that the Passover is on the even of the 14th (verse 5) and the Feast is the 15th (verse 6) which is 24 hours later.

In Numbers 9:5 we are told that they kept the Passover (not just a part of the ritual) on the fourteenth day. The following verses tell of the second Passover one month later when on the fourteenth they are to "keep it and eat it."

In the plains of Jericho (Joshua 5:10) they kept the Passover (not just part of the ceremony) "on the fourteenth day of the month at even." The next day they ate unleavened cakes (verse 11).

Ezra records (Ezra 6:19) that the people who returned to Jerusalem "kept the passover upon the fourteenth" and then (afterwards) kept the Feast (verse 22).

These texts should make it clear that the Passover sacrifice was originally killed and eaten on or during the 14th and then the Feast was celebrated during the 15th, 24 hours later, regardless of later practice or interpretation.

### **OFFICIAL RULING ON PASSOVER**

By Herbert W. Armstrong

It is difficult for me to understand why some ministers (probably no longer with the Church) should be mixed up about whether the Passover was on the 14th or the 15th of Abib (or Nisan).

As Mr. Neff states in the preceding, "certain papers were circulated that concluded that the Bible account could be explained in a plausible way" to mislead the Church.

First, let's get settled once and for all: HOW HAS JESUS CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, ALWAYS PUT HIS TEACHINGS AND DOCTRINES INTO GOD'S CHURCH? Search the book of Acts. Search the writings of Paul. The Church always, from the beginning, received its teachings, doctrines and practices FROM THE APOSTLES! And where did the Apostles obtain these teachings? Direct from Jesus Christ who taught them IN PERSON. Jesus was the PERSONAL Word of God. The Bible is the WRITTEN Word of God--the same teachings and truths precisely. Some of the teachings and practices injected into the Church were obtained by the Apostles from the PROPHETS. The Church is founded on the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being chief cornerstone. ALL official teaching, doctrine, and practice in God's Church today has been put in the Church by Jesus Christ THROUGH HIS CHOSEN APOSTLE!

God says He is a jealous God. That is, He does not allow any other to usurp His place or authority! Each of you ministers should feel the same way about anyone else jerking the rug out from under you or usurping, without authority, your place. I feel that way about the Apostleship Jesus Christ has conferred on me.

Now let me, once and for all, take space to MAKE CRYSTAL CLEAR the truth about whether the Passover is on the 14th or the 15th. UNDERSTAND this! Teach it to your congregations!

The children of Israel were slaves in Egypt, living in the sector of Goshen. Through Moses God was about to deliver them from that slavery and lead them out of it. You and I have been in slavery to SIN. It has been God's purpose to lead us out of it into the FREEDOM of God's righteousness!

Through Moses and Aaron, God had sent a number of plagues on Egypt. He took their various objects of worship and turned them into plagues that

tormented the Egyptians. In God's LOVE for the Egyptians, He was showing them that their false gods were enemies, not benefactors!

Finally there was one last plague. God would strike dead the firstborn in each household. He gave instructions to the Israelites that at even (between the two evenings – "dusk," American Jewish translation) on the 14th of Nisan they were to kill a lamb. This lamb was a type of Christ, to be slain for our sins.

They were to take the lamb on the 10th day of Nisan (Exodus 12:3). They were to "keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month" (verse 6) and "kill it in the evening" (between the two evenings, Margin--verse 6). Now was this the late afternoon near the end of the 14th day, or between sunset and dark (dusk) at the beginning? The following Scriptures make this abundantly CLEAR for those willing to receive GOD'S TRUTH!

Next, verse 7, they were to strike the lamb's blood on the two sideposts and upper doorpost of each house.

That night the death angel was to come by striking dead the firstborn in all Egypt except where the blood was on the housefront. The angel was to "PASS OVER" all those houses protected by this blood.

They were to eat the roast lamb that night with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. They were to eat it with staff in hand and prepared to flee.

Nothing was to remain until the morning (daylight), yet in the morning they were still there, for then they were to burn what remained with fire (verse 10). Again (NOTE CAREFULLY! on that night none of the Israelites were to go outside his house: "and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning" (verse 22).

IF, as some would TWIST God's sacred Word, they killed the lamb late afternoon near the end of the 14th day, then they were to remain in their houses all the night of the 15th, until morning, and in the morning burn what was left of the lamb. HOW, then, could they have gone out of Egypt on the 15th of Nisan (or Abib) BY NIGHT? "For in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt BY NIGHT" (Deut. 16:1).

Notice Numbers 33:3: "They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians."

They went out of Egypt on the morrow after the Passover, on the 15th, and BY NIGHT!

Put this together. At dusk, the beginning of the 14th, they killed the lamb and sprinkled its blood on the doorposts outside their houses. They remained in

their houses all that night. Their only protection was remaining IN THE HOUSE WHERE THE BLOOD was sprinkled on the outside door. They DID NOT DEPART FROM EGYPT ON THE SAME NIGHT THEY KILLED THE PASSOVER! ! **[Editor:** Note Exodus 12:29 clearly says "the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt" at MIDNIGHT!].

Next morning, daylight of the 14th, they burned the leavings of the lamb, then spoiled the Egyptians, gathering their gold and silver. Then that night, after sunset, beginning of the 15th, the morrow after the Passover, they started out of Egypt BY NIGHT!

Notice Numbers 28:16-17: "And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD. And in (not after) the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten."

Now to the New Testament.

Obviously it was IMPOSSIBLE for Jesus to be crucified at dusk on the beginning of the 14th day of Abib and also take the Passover--when He changed it into the NEW Testament Passover--at one and the same time. So Jesus took the Passover, INSTITUTING AND SETTING THE TIME OF THE NEW TESTAMENT PASSOVER on the evening of the 14th--same time the lamb had been killed in ancient Israel--but the ROMANS crucified Him in the afternoon of the same 14th day. It was the ROMANS who did their part (crucifying) at a different time of day. But Jesus instituted the New Testament Passover at the precise time of day we take the Passover today.

But by that time the Jews had begun to call the seven days of unleavened bread by the name "Passover."

Jesus had sent disciples to prepare the Passover. "Now when the even (dusk) was come, he sat down with the twelve" (Matt. 26:20).

Now Mark 14:1-2: "After two days was (omitting uninspired italicized words) the passover, and of unleavened bread; and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft, and put him to death. But they said, 'Not on the feast day [annual holy day--Abib 15] lest there be an uproar of the people.'"

So notice, Jesus was not to be taken and crucified on the annual holy day, the 15th.

Now notice Luke's account. "Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the passover lamb had to be sacrificed" (Luke 22:7, RSV). It does not say "Feast of Unleavened Bread" but "day" of unleavened bread. Unleavened bread was to be used at Passover, but unleavened bread was NOT to be removed from the house until during the next day--the "preparation" day before the annual Sabbath.

And when the hour was come, Jesus sat down with the disciples. At this last Passover they partook of roast lamb and a meal. But after that, same evening, Jesus introduced the NEW TESTAMENT service of the bread and wine.

After this Passover, beginning of the 14th, after sunset, Jesus and the disciples went outside. Later that night the bloodthirsty men, headed by Judas Iscariot, came and seized Jesus.

All through that night – the 14<sup>th</sup> – the night before the annual Sabbath, they took Jesus to be tried before one judge and another. Finally, by daylight, still the 14th, Jesus was brought before Pilate. Unbelieving Jews cried out for His crucifixion.

Finally that morning, the 14th, Jesus was scourged, beaten severely with stripes, then ordered to carry his own cross to Golgotha outside the city wall. He was crucified at about 9 a.m. He died at about 3 p.m. Joseph of Arimathaea took His dead body. His own new and unfinished tomb was directly below Golgotha. He had to hasten to have the body properly prepared and buried before the holy day came on at sunset.

I think this sets the record straight. The Passover, officially, is the eve of the 14th day – the night before the preparation day for the annual holy day which comes on at sunset.

God commands us through Paul that we all speak the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10), that there be no divisions among us!

Judaism today keeps ONLY the Feast. They reject Christ, so could not celebrate the memorial of His death. But they call it "Passover."

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**EDITORIAL ADDITION:**

**FURTHER EVIDENCE IS IN THE WRITING  
OF THE APOSTLE PAUL**

When Paul was instructing the Corinthians about keeping the New Testament Passover, he wrote:

11:23: For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus **the same night in which he was betrayed** took bread:

What night was that? Christ was betrayed on the first part of the 14th, that is, the first evening into the night!

Today, we follow what Christ instructed. He kept the New Covenant Passover with the disciples on the same night He was betrayed.

We, too, follow that custom.

-John Graham Davies,  
The Bible Fund  
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