

# A Nisan 14 “Passover” – Fact – or Fallacy?

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

Strangely enough, all of us do believe one thing -- that is, that proper Passover observance is VERY IMPORTANT -- in fact, it is VITAL to your salvation! To observe this holy festival on the WRONG DAY is disobedience to the plain commandment of Yahweh and example of Messiah! Therefore, it is imperative that we resolve this question, in our minds, honestly and faithfully, once and for all -- and NOT trust the “opinions” of mere men or religious leaders who have their own “ax to grind” and may be guilty of merely coveting a following and their financial support!

Many people assume that in Yeshua’s (Jesus’) day two “Passovers” were kept -- one by Jesus and His disciples, and others, at the beginning of Nisan 14; and the other by the majority of the Jews, who killed the Passover lambs in the afternoon of Nisan 14, and celebrated the feast in the early hours of Nisan 15. But is this assumption true? Is there ANY historic basis for a Nisan 14 Passover, with the lambs being killed right after sunset and then eaten during the early hours of the 14th?

Hard as we look in history for any evidence of Jews observing a Passover at the beginning of Nisan 14, we come up empty. There is simply NO historical evidence for such a thing. There is only the loud shouting of a few who insist that since the Bible often says the Passover is on Nisan 14, it had to ALL be on that day -- both the killing of the lambs, AND the eating of the Passover! However, that belief is pure assumption, and has no basis in fact or history.

## The 14th of Nisan

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

What, then, was the 14th of Nisan? In Exodus 12:6 we read that on the 14th of Nisan the children of Israel were to SLAY the Passover lambs. “And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation shall KILL it in the evening” (Heb., “between the two evenings”). Notice! The Passover lambs were to be killed in the evening of Nisan 14. That means toward the END of Nisan 14, or late afternoon. The “evening” of a day is not its

beginning, but its ending, before sunset (see Exodus 12:18, Leviticus 23:32). In these verses, notice that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins at the “evening” of the 14th of Nisan (leading into the high holy day of the 15th); likewise, the Day of Atonement, which is the tenth day of Tishri, began “in the ninth day of the month AT EVEN” (Lev. 23:32).

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

### **“The Preparation Day”**

In the gospel of John, the 14th of Nisan is plainly called, by the gospel writer, “the preparation of the Passover.” The next morning, after the final supper Jesus had with His disciples, after the Jews had apprehended Jesus and interrogated Him, early that morning, they led Him to the hall of judgment to be judged by Pontius Pilate, Roman governor. The Jews themselves, however, would not go into the Roman judgment hall, “lest they should be defiled; but that they might EAT THE PASSOVER” (John 18:28). Clearly Passover had not yet come.

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

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

After Jesus was crucified, and died (John 19:25-30), late in the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, at the very same moment that the Jews were slaying thousands of Passover lambs at the Temple of God -- thus perfectly fulfilling the Passover type -we find that the Jews who killed Him wanted to get the bodies of Jesus and the two criminals who were killed along with Him off the cross quickly, before sunset, so they would not remain there on the high Sabbath day of the first day of unleavened bread. We read, “The Jews therefore, BECAUSE IT WAS THE PREPARATION, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an HIGH DAY), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away” (John 19:31).

### **How Much Preparation Time Needed?**

The synoptic gospels confirm this picture. In Mark we read, “After TWO DAYS was the feast of the PASSOVER, and of unleavened bread” (Mark 14:1). “And the first day of unleavened bread [i.e. the 14th, when they put the leaven out, as the context shows], WHEN THEY KILLED THE PASSOVER, his disciples said to him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the Passover?” (verse 12).

In Matthew we also read, “And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that AFTER TWO DAYS is the feast of the Passover” (Matt. 26:1-2).

That means this was about Nisan 13. The account goes on to show that the next day the priests conspire to capture Jesus (vs. 3-5), Jesus abode in Bethany (v.6), a woman came and anointed Him with expensive ointment (vs. 7-13), and Judas went to the chief priests and offered to betray Jesus to them (vs. 14-16). This took up the whole day of Nisan 13. ONE DAY had now passed. It is still ONE WHOLE DAY before Passover.

At this point in time, we read the very NEXT event to occur. “Now the first day of unleavened bread [the words “feast of” are in italics, supplied by the translators of the King James Version, and do not belong here -- this must be the 14th of Nisan] the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we PREPARE for thee to eat the Passover?” (Matt. 26:17). Do you see? This was the 14th of Nisan -- and the disciples knew this was PREPARATION DAY for the Passover celebration! It was not the Passover itself but the PREPARATION!

Jesus then sent them to the city of Jerusalem, a short distance from Bethany, to see a particular man, and make arrangements with him for them to keep the Passover at his house (Matt. 13:18). The disciples did so, “and made READY the Passover” (v.19). That is, they did as He instructed them. Later that same night, Jesus and the disciples met in that room for their final dinner. But notice! This was the 14th of Nisan still ONE DAY before the Passover. We read just previously of when it was TWO DAYS before the Passover (Matt. 26:1-2), and now just one day has passed. Therefore, it must still be ONE DAY BEFORE THE PASSOVER -- just as the apostle John so clearly shows!

What does this tell us? This fact plainly shows us that there is NO CONTRADICTION BETWEEN the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke with the account of John! They are all in agreement -- all in accord -- that the Passover was NOT YET! (See John 13:1, 18:28, 19:14, 31 again). REVIEW these Scriptures! Don’t take these things for granted! Don’t be lazy, or in a hurry, or skim over these things. Your very salvation DESERVES the attention and full concentration of your mind upon these things!

Now, let me ask you a question. IF as some claim, this meal was the actual Passover, at the beginning of Nisan 14, doesn’t it seem passing strange -- weird -- that the disciples would come to Christ and ask Him where they should PREPARE for the Passover -- JUST BARE MINUTES or an hour or so BEFORE “Passover”? If “Passover” is at the beginning of Nisan 14, where is the PREPARATION DAY? Wouldn’t it be the 13th of Nisan? Yet every Scripture calls Nisan 14 the “preparation day.” Nowhere is Nisan 13 referred to as the “preparation of the Passover.”

Do you see?

Since the disciples KNEW that Nisan 14 was “preparation day,” that is WHY they came to Jesus after sunset, at the beginning of Nisan 14, and asked Him where He wanted them to prepare for the upcoming Passover, which would of course be Nisan 15, after the Passover lambs were slain in the “evening” of Nisan 14, toward sunset, “at the going down of the sun” [as it descended in the afternoon sky present tense, not past tense] (Deut. 16:6).

If Passover was indeed the beginning of Nisan 14, then the disciples waited until the very “LAST MINUTE” to even ask Jesus about making preparations for the Passover! Such a theory is ludicrous -- ridiculous -- nonsense. The disciples of Christ were wise, intelligent, capable men -- specially chosen by the Messiah Himself to be apostles, the leaders of His Church! It is inconceivable that they would wait till after sunset, after the 14th of Nisan began, to prepare for the Passover, if it

was to occur that very night!!!

## **Grocery Shopping During Passover?**

The New Testament verifies this fact. We read in the gospel of John, that the night Jesus sat down with His disciples for a final dinner, which occurred at the BEGINNING of Nisan 14, that this was “BEFORE THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER” (John 13:1). This meal was not the “Passover,” but rather was called simply “supper” (John 13:2, 4). If this meal was such an important event as the Passover meal, then we have an incredible anomaly, because during a Passover meal NOBODY gets up to leave half-way through the celebration, and certainly nobody would even THINK of leaving the Passover meal to “go shopping” for groceries! In fact, during the Passover celebration, there would no stores be open of any kind, anywhere!

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

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

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

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

## **The Matter of the Accuracy of Typology**

Do we get the picture? The 14th of Nisan was the day when preparations were made for the actual Passover Feast which was celebrated on the 15th of Nisan. John clearly says so! So do Matthew and Mark. Luke also corroborates this fact (Luke 22:1, 7). Neither Jesus nor His disciples would have waited till the very last moment to begin preparation for Passover. Therefore, it could not have been at the beginning of Nisan 14. If it were, then Nisan 14 could not be called the “preparation day,” or “preparation of the Passover.” That would be ridiculous. How could Nisan 14 be the “preparation” of the Passover, if the Passover occurred just after the day began, after sunset? The whole rest of the day, then, and all the daylight hours, morning and afternoon, of Nisan 14, would then be AFTER the Passover!

How absurd!

But there is another vital factor we must consider here. Nisan 14 was the day the leavening was put out, and the day the Passover lambs were slain, in late afternoon -- at the very same time Jesus expired on the cross! Therefore, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the typology of the "Passover sacrifice." Not only was He slain for our sins, but He was slain at the very moment the Passover lambs were being slain at the Temple! He was indeed the perfect Passover sacrifice for our sins (I Cor. 5:7).

But consider this: IF the true Passover was celebrated the night before, then the Passover lambs had to be slain also the night before. IF Jesus were the true Passover lamb, then, which they all typified, then HE WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE SLAIN THE NIGHT BEFORE, at the alleged time of the killing of the alleged Passover lambs, according to those people who insist that the true Passover was celebrated by Jesus and His disciples the night before!

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

Rather, He WAS our Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). He died at exactly the right time! He correctly fulfilled the Passover sacrifice, RIGHT ON SCHEDULE!

### **New Meaning Placed on Passover Rituals**

Therefore, the meal He had with His disciples, the night before, was not and could not have been the "Passover" at all. It was simply a final, "going-away," last meal He had with His disciples, at which He gave them special instructions and taught them the new "symbols" of the bread and wine of the true Passover meal, which apply to His broken body and shed blood. Since time immemorial, the Jews have celebrated the Passover according to God's instructions. They ate a ritual meal, which included lamb, up until the Temple was destroyed. Now, while there is no Temple, the lamb is replaced by a shankbone of a lamb. They also eat, as God command "unleavened bread," and "bitter herbs" (Exodus 12:8). The Passover "seder," as it is called, is done in such a way as to remind them of the origin of the Passover, its meaning and history, and significance. Wine is used (diluted with water) during the meal at significant times, in the celebration. Jesus, at the last supper, taught His disciples that when they ate of the Passover unleavened bread, it should remind them of Him -- His broken body, beaten and bruised for us. He told them the cup of wine -- the cup of redemption -- now symbolizes His shed blood, poured out for us, to redeem us to God.

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

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

Although the last meal Jesus had with His disciples could not have been the true Passover, because the time for that celebration had not yet arrived, it is distinctly possible that Jesus did celebrate

with them a type of “seder” or a “pre-Passover” instruction meal. However, He never commanded us to observe such a meal in addition to the Passover. To do so would simply be redundant. Certainly, also, He never told the disciples that He was replacing the Passover celebration, on the night of the 15th of Nisan, with a new and different ceremony, at a different time. Nowhere in the entire New Testament is such a commandment or instruction given!

Furthermore, IF Jesus had changed the time of the observance of the Passover, and the day of the Passover celebration, meal and rituals, then the Jews, the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, would have bitterly persecuted them for this, and accused them of “changing times and laws,” and the account of this persecution, and its reason, would surely have been recorded in the pages of the New Testament, as well as in Jewish literature, the Talmud, and other historic documents. Such a controversy over the correct day would hardly have been kept silent, quiet, or buried under the carpet!

Yet there is not ONE WORD in the entire New Testament, nor is there a single word about such a controversy, in all the Jewish religious literature or historic documents, such as Josephus’ Antiquities of the Jews. There is only massive, incredible silence.

### **Another Strange Anomaly**

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

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

But, contrary to this perfect picture of the Christian life, those who partake of “Passover” at the beginning of Nisan 14, HAVE NOT YET CLEANED THE LEAVEN OUT OF THEIR HOMES! Leaven, a type of SIN, is not cleaned out by them until the next day, the “preparation day.” In fact, after they go home from their “Passover” services, many of them have a sandwich with leavened bread. The next morning, they eat waffles, pancakes, doughnuts-FULL OF LEAVEN! They may even have a hamburger (with bread or bun) for lunch, and finally get in their last taste of leaven just before sunset, at dinner, with rolls, bread and butter, or other pastry (leavened) products!

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

But according to the early 14th of Nisan view, once you accept and partake of the sacrifice of Christ, it is all right to PLUNGE BACK INTO SIN, WITH GUSTO, and devour all the “SIN”leaven --

than your body can absorb!!!

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

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

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

### **The Very Words of Christ**

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

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

“. . . the Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour to the eleventh [3-5 PM Roman time], but so that a company of not less than ten belong to every sacrifice . . . the number of sacrifices was two hundred and fifty six thousand five hundred. . .” (*Wars of the Jews*, VI, 9, 3).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What about Our Dear Friend, Paul?**

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

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

Paul addressed the Jews in Jerusalem, and boldly proclaimed,

"I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet BROUGHT UP IN THIS CITY AT THE FEET OF GAMALIEL AND TAUGHT ACCORDING TO THE PERFECT MANNER OF THE LAW OF THE FATHERS, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day" (Acts 22:3).

Paul said further, in addressing the Jewish Sanhedrin:

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

Paul testified before king Agrippa, also:

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

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

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

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath



whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamine, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; AS TOUCHING THE LAW, A PHARISEE; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the RIGHTEOUSNESS which is in the LAW, BLAMELESS” (Phil. 3:4-6).

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

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

### **“Do This in REMEMBRANCE of Me”**

The apostle Paul wrote about the Passover as follows:

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the night in which he was betrayed took bread And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.

“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the LORD’S DEATH till he come” (I Cor.11:23-26).

This instruction agrees with Matthew, Mark and Luke’s account of the new symbolism of the Passover, the bread and wine, representing Christ’s broken body and shed blood (Matt. 24:26-28, Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20). In all cases, Jesus said to eat the bread and drink the wine “IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.” This is very important. The Passover, then, is something we do, particularly the bread and wine, to “remember” the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

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

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

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

If we “remember” something, we “look back” to it, not “look forward” to it!

Thus once again, observing “Passover” at the beginning of Nisan 14, DESTROYS THE

PROPER TIME SEQUENCE OF EVENTS! It gets the “cart before the horse.”

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

### **Does It Really Matter?**

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

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

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

One man, in attempting to explain away Paul’s statement in Philippians that he observed God’s law blamelessly, as a Pharisee, said that Paul observed it properly, but at the wrong time. A friend said to him in reply, “Oh, I see. You mean Paul kept the wrong day -- PERFECTLY! “

### **INCREDIBLE PASSOVER “LOGIC”**

Another former minister of Worldwide Church of God, Fred Coulter, wrote a book, *The Christian Passover*, which has been highly praised by another former minister, John Ritenbaugh, who gave many sermons on Passover based on the contents of that book. I would have to say, the book is neither “Christian” NOR the “Passover”!

According to the author of the book, the whole passage on Passover in Deuteronomy 16:1-10 has been “TAMPHERED” with, and does not belong in the Bible -- has been grievously CHANGED by scribes and copyists, probably beginning in the days of king Hezekiah, at his own command! These changes were later “edited” into the text of Deuteronomy 16 by Ezra the scribe, according to Coulter, thus changing God’s original Passover from a domestic “home” observance to a “Temple” oriented feast. This would mean, of course, that Hezekiah deliberately CHANGED GOD’S PASSOVER COMMAND, and that Ezra the scribe was a co-conspirator in the plot!

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

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

Oh, really? There is no conflict whatsoever between Deuteronomy and the rest of the Scriptures. Exodus 12 simply defines the first Passover, kept in Egypt, when Israel had no Temple or sanctuary, but were slaves in Egypt. They therefore had to keep that first Passover in their homes -- and it was proper to do so, in order for them to put the blood of the lambs over their door-posts and lintels, so they would be “passed over.” But the commands in Deuteronomy tell us that God intended for the “perpetual” Passover to be celebrated AT THE TEMPLE OR SANCTUARY! This clarification and further instruction was given to Moses himself BY GOD -- not written into the text nearly a thousand years later by Ezra the scribe! Such an idea is utter nonsense! It requires that the Word of God itself be “tampered” with, and rewritten CONTRARY to God’s command, against God’s desire, thus BREAKING THE SCRIPTURES!

Deuteronomy 16 actually says,

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

This passage utterly disproves Coulter’s entire thesis. No wonder he has to find some “explanation” for it, and even resorts to calling it an uninspired insertion not belonging in the Scriptures -- a forgery -- a FRAUD! But in so doing, the very God Almighty who inspired those verses will hold him to account!

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

Concludes Coulter, regarding Deuteronomy 16:1-8:

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

However, this is a blatant assumption and there is NO PROOF. A righteous man like Ezra wouldn’t dare tamper with the Word of God, and change or alter its meaning. Ezra was “a ready scribe in the law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6). As such, he would not have CHANGED it’s meaning! God forbid! We read of Ezra, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to DO IT” -- NOT TO RE-WRITE IT, OR CHANGE IT! (Ezra 7:10).

In reality, there is a simple explanation why Deut. 16:2 speaks of the “sacrifice of the Passover

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

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

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

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

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

### **Another Difficulty with His Theory**

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

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

If they keep the Passover AT HOME, then they would not be able to also keep the Feast in Jerusalem, a journey of a great distance from many parts of the land! Can you imagine? Think of the poor Israelites, in Galilee, or near Tyre and Sidon, or east of the Jordan river in the region of Naphtali, and the half tribe of Manasseh, trying to eat the Passover at home, and then-- the PREPARATION DAY -- spending the whole day in ARDUOUS TRAVEL, by mule, horse, or cart, or traveling by foot -- rushing to attempt to be in Jerusalem for the FEAST! It is absurd -- in the highest degree. Obviously the Passover was to be killed at the same place where the FEAST was to be observed -- together, by all the people, the entire nation!

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

Rather, we read simply the words about Hezekiah’s tremendous renewal of the Passover, and

the worship of the true God, in II Chronicles, 29-30, with the final statement:

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

The expression” of a long time” does not mean the Passover had never been observed at Jerusalem until this very time, since the days of the Exodus! It simply says “a long time.” There were many wicked kings in Israel between David and Hezekiah. The point being made here is that there simply was never so **GREAT** a Passover celebrated in Israel in many years! Let’s not read into statements what simply is not there -- forcing, wresting, grappling violently with the Word of God! As Paul wrote, “For we are not as many which **CORRUPT** the word of God” (II Cor. 2:17). We must not “wrest” the Scriptures as those “that are unlearned and unstable” do, “unto their own destruction” (II Pet. 3:16).

### **The Mystery of King Hezekiah**

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

Paul writes, “**ALL** Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16). By definition, that includes Deuteronomy 16. Jesus also said, “The Scripture **CANNOT** be broken” (John 10:35). Yet this author says Hezekiah broke the Scriptures, and rewrote them, along with another righteous man, Ezra the scribe -- causing Deuteronomy 16 to be revised and/or deliberately miscopied and **VIOLATED!** That is sheer **NONSENSE!** Notice what the Word of God itself says about Hezekiah:

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

“And he did that which was right in the sight of the **LORD**, according to all that David his father did.... He trusted in the **LORD** God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he **CLAVE** to the **LORD**, and departed not from following him, but **KEPT HIS COMMANDMENTS, WHICH THE LORD COMMANDED MOSES**” (II Kings 18:3-6). “And he [Hezekiah] did that which was **RIGHT** in the sight of the **LORD**, according to **ALL** that **DAVID** his father had done” (II Chron. 29:2).

Hezekiah, according to the inspired **WORD** of God, did that which was **RIGHT** in God’s sight - - not that which was wrong! And surely “tampering” with the Word of God, and “rewriting” it, would

have been terribly WRONG in God's sight! Rather, Hezekiah was a righteous king, LIKE DAVID, and followed in David's own footsteps. Does this sound like a man who would tamper with the Word of God, and pervert Scripture, and rewrite it?

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

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now his parents went to Jerusalem EVERY YEAR AT THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem AFTER THE CUSTOM OF THE FEAST. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.... And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers" (Luke 2:40-47).

Clearly, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, kept the Passover by leaving His home with Joseph and Mary, and traveled to Jerusalem to observe Passover -- quite a distance from Nazareth, where their home was located, near the Sea of Galilee. They did this every year, according to the "custom of the feast." Jesus and his parents, who were righteous, would not have done this, if it were a sin. If the Jewish leaders were following the wrong custom, then Jesus, during His ministry, surely would have reprimanded them and blazed out in wrath against their false teaching -- as He did regarding many other things (see Matt. 15:1-9, 23:14-33). Such an issue of paramount importance, as the Passover, He could not have ignored.

### **Do You REALLY Follow Christ?**

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

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

Jesus does not change. His LAW and HOLY DAYS do not change. There is NO WAY that Jesus replaced the Passover on the 15th of Nisan, with a NEW and DIFFERENT Passover on the 14th of Nisan! Jesus Christ thunders: "I CHANGE NOT!"

When He kept His last supper with His disciples, it may well have been a Pasover-like seder,

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

However, He observed Passover all His life on earth as a human being, AT THE APPOINTED TIME -- on Nisan 15, following the sacrifice. So did His disciples. Therefore, He was not changing the TIME of the Passover, when He gave His disciples the new symbolism of the bread and wine -- which were traditional parts of the Passover itself. He was merely giving new MEANING to the bread and wine, which always were a part of the Passover -- HE WAS NOT ALTERING THE DAY ITSELF! The day itself was ordained a feast FOREVER!

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

God says, “THIS DAY shall be unto you for a MEMORIAL; and ye shall KEEP IT A FEAST to the LORD throughout your generations, ye shall keep it a FEAST by an ORDINANCE FOREVER” (Exodus 12:14). This Feast has always been observed by the true people of God on the beginning portion of Nisan 15, at night. It is a spectacular, wonderful FEAST! It was never commanded to be a mere “mass,” or grave observance, or “communion” type service, like so many today misrepresent and misunderstand. Because of their error, they miss out on the FULL MEANING -- THE TRUE IMPORTANCE of this HOLY DAY!

Passover was celebrated on Nisan 15 in the days of Moses. It was so celebrated during the time of Christ and the apostles. It is also so celebrated by God’s true people, today! THOSE WHO CELEBRATE ANOTHER DAY demonstrate by so doing that they are disobeying the commandments of God, and therefore do not have His “sign “ that they truly belong to Him!

Nisan 15 will be the correct time to celebrate this feast FOR EVER (Exodus 12:14; Lev. 23:5). The idea that Passover can be observed correctly at the beginning of Nisan 14 is a flagrant spiritual fallacy. It is unadulterated heresy. The apostle Paul warns:

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord UNWORTHILY, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the LORD. But let a man EXAMINE himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh DAMNATION (JUDGMENT TO HIMSELF, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this CAUSE many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (I Cor .11:27).

What about you? Will you observe the Passover correctly this year? Will you stand up for the TRUTH? May God help you to make the right decision!