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THE O.T. PASSOVER - THE 14th OR 15th OF NISAN

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Did Christ surreptitiously establish a new earlier date for keeping the Passover or were the Jews of Judea in His time keeping the Passover erroneously on the 15th instead of the 14th of Nisan? It's abundantly clear from the Gospel accounts that Christ took the Passover with His disciples the evening before the Jews kept their Passover. Why?

From the O.T.

At the institution of the Passover in Exodus 12 the lamb was to be killed in the evening of the 14th of Nisan. The Jews in Christ's day killed the lamb in the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan and took the Passover in the evening of the 15th of Nisan which is not according to scripture.

"And you shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." (Exodus 12:6)

The words, "in the evening" are from a Hebrew expression, "between the two evenings" around which, there is much controversy.

"between the two evenings.... the meaning is disputed. (1) Onkelos renders.... 'between the two suns; which is explained in the Talm. to mean the time between sunset and the stars becoming visible; cf. Ibn Ezra (as cited by Kalisch), 'We have two evenings; the first, sunset, the second, the ceasing of the light which is reflected in the clouds; and the interval between them is about an hour and 20 minutes.'.... cf. Dt. 16:6, where the Passover is to be sacrificed "at the going down of the sun, 'i.e. at sunset." (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, comment on Exodus, S. R. Driver)

There is much more in the above footnote in reference to the traditional practice of killing the lamb in the afternoon of the 14th, but the explanation given above is stated to be the most logical meaning for "between the two evenings" and it is the only one that fits all of the O.T. scriptures. Just to mention one other in the same 12th chapter of Exodus:

"And you shall eat the flesh in that night,..."  
(Exodus 12:8)

Since a new day would have started at sunset after the Jewish traditional time for killing the lamb it would be impossible to eat it "in that night."! Clearly the Jewish tradition is in error. They kill the lamb about 21 hours late and take the Passover a day late, on the 15th of Nisan.

### New Testament

It was stated in the meeting at Bricket Wood on Sunday the 4th of April that the only controversy concerning the Passover 1976 observance in the time of Christ, was in the manner, not the time of its observance. This too is clearly in error.

"They have frequently been identified with the Sadducees or with the Samaritans with neither of whom have they any historical connexion or much affinity. ... Other (differences) related to Paschal and Pentecostal ritual, such as the precise hour for killing the lamb or for burning its remains." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., Article, "Qaraites").

And one more:

"But still the question arises: whether Luke himself conceived of that first Christian Pentecost as a Saturday or a Sunday? As he, following with Matthew and Mark the Galilean tradition, makes the Passover occur already on Thursday evening and be partaken of by Jesus Himself, and accordingly makes the Friday of the crucifixion the 15th of Nisan;..." (Commentary on the New Testament by Meyers. Acts, vol 2, page 56)

There is certainly some obvious error in these quotes but the essential point to be noted is that there was confusion as to the time Christ observed the Passover vs. that of the Jews in His day.

### How Confusion Arose

It came about through the Jews adopting the Egyptian way of reckoning the days as starting at midnight. This confusion still arises among members of the Church today.

With the day starting and ending at midnight, the lamb could be killed in the afternoon and then eaten that night and it still would be the same day. Once this tradition had become established, the change back to the sunset to sunset way of reckoning time put the Passover into the beginning of the 15th of Nisan. This is the day they still hold rejecting "the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

That is quite likely the reason John refers to these feasts as "the Jews' feasts" and "the Jews' passover".

Christ died at the same hour that the Jews killed their passover, "The animal (Paschal Lamb) was slain on the eve of the Passover, on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, i.e., at 3 o'clock..." (The Jewish Encyclopedia, article "Passover Sacrifice")

(CONT.) "OR, IN THE CASE THE EVE OF THE PASSOVER FELL ON FRIDAY, AT TWO."  
 This is in no way meant to be exhaustive or even considered a research paper as no "authority" has been quoted in this section concerning the change in reckoning the day. Basically the simple logic of the Bible has been followed. It is everywhere consistent - Old and New Testaments.

I hope that any consideration of this topic will answer all of the questions from the Bible as translated - not some obscure Hebrew rendering. And that we heed Dr. Charles F. Kettering's warning, "Beware of logic. It is an organized way of going wrong with confidence."

