

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE IX.

CRITICAL NOTE.

DID JESUS EAT THE PASSOVER ?

IF the teaching that our Lord ate the Passover the night in which he was betrayed is not a delusion that blinds the eye and perverts the judgment, so that the fulfilment of the Passover "sign" (Ex. xiii. 9) cannot be seen, then why is it that they who believe this delusion cannot see the fulfilment of the "sign," and how will we answer the following seven scriptural teachings, which clearly show that Jesus did not eat the Passover?

1. The Mosaic law forbade any change in the time and ceremonies of the Passover: "Ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it" (Num. ix. 3). They were required to eat it with "shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand" (Ex. xii. 11), and not "go out of the door of his house until the morning" (Ex. xii. 22).

The night in which Jesus was betrayed, when it is claimed he ate the Passover, the disciples were shoeless when Jesus washed their feet, and Jesus and his disciples, and many other Jews, were out of their houses. This was done in violation of the law, if they ate the Passover that night; and all who did so were guilty of death (Num. ix. 13).

It is evident that either Jesus and his disciples had no respect for the law, or they did not eat the Passover the night in which he was betrayed.

2. While they were eating the "supper" (John xiii. 2) in the "upper room," during the night preceding the Passover, Jesus said to Judas: "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 [money] bag, that Jesus had said to him, Buy what things we have need of for the feast" (ver. 27-29).

In the second verse of this chapter John calls the meal they were then eating a "supper," and in verse 29 he speaks of the "feast," which was still in the future, because what they surmised Judas was to do, shows that they had not yet bought what they needed for the "feast," when they ate the "supper."

Besides, the Passover is never called a "supper." A supper is an evening meal and the "feast of the Passover" was an "ordinance" (Ex. xii. 24), which had to be observed at a fixed time, and in a certain prescribed way.

3. On the day following the night in which Jesus was betrayed, the Jews refused to enter Pilate's judgment-hall, "lest they should be defiled: but that they might eat the Passover" (John xviii. 28). This shows that the feast of the Passover was still in the future on the morning following the night of the "supper." This truth is also shown by the fact that the Jews could not come near a dead person or a grave, while they kept the Passover without being defiled (Num. ix. 6); and to avoid becoming unclean they requested Pilate to break the bones of those they had crucified, and hurry their death, so they might be taken away before the Passover Sabbath began (John xix. 31). Such facts are conclusive proof that the Jews had not eaten the Passover when Jesus was crucified and that he was betrayed the night before the Passover was eaten.

4. The "supper" and the crucifixion of Jesus did not come on the "feast day": "Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people" (Matt. xxvi. 5).

If the "supper" was not on the "feast day," it was either before or after the "feast day," and the Passover was always eaten on the "feast day." Since neither the Jews nor the apostles had eaten the Passover when Jesus was crucified, we know that the "supper" was eaten "before the feast of the Passover" (John xiii. 1).

5. The "supper" was eaten and Jesus was crucified and

buried the day before a Sabbath. "And that day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew on" (Luke xxiii. 54); "It was the Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath" (Mark xv. 42); "It was the preparation of the Passover," (not for the weekly Sabbath), and "that Sabbath day was an high day" (John xix. 14, 31), (not for the ordinary weekly Sabbath).

The Jews always killed and prepared the Passover the day before a Sabbath. The "feast of unleavened bread," which was "called the Passover" (Luke xxii. 1), came on the fifteenth day of the first month, and that day was always a Sabbath, no matter on what day of the week it came (Lev. xxiii. 6, 7).

That the Sabbath day before which Jesus was crucified was the annual Passover Sabbath, which came on the fifteenth day of Nisan, instead of the weekly Sabbath, which always came on Saturday, is proven by the fact that Jesus came to Bethany on the Friday preceding his crucifixion, and that day came "six days before the Passover" (John xii. 1). The Jewish weekly Sabbath never came six days before Friday, but the Passover Sabbath did. The first weekly Sabbath after Friday came on the next day after they came to Bethany, and the following weekly Sabbath came eight days after that Friday, instead of "six days."

Since Friday came "six days before the Passover," the following day, which was Saturday, came but five days before the Passover, Sunday four, Monday three, Tuesday two, and Wednesday came the day before the Passover.

This shows that the Passover came on Thursday, when Jesus was crucified; and since the Passover always came on the 15th day of Nisan, we know that that Thursday was also the fifteenth day of the first month, and a Sabbath day. This lunar month began at the time of the new moon nearest the vernal equinox. The vernal equinox comes on the 21st of March; and in the year A.D. 30 the new moon nearest the vernal equinox came during the night of the Jewish day which began at sunset on the 22d day of March, and ended at

sunset on the 23d. This makes Thursday the 23d of March the first day of Nisan. Since the first day of Nisan fell on the 23d of March, the fifteenth day of the same month, when the Jews were commanded to eat the Passover, fell on the 6th of April, and it is an established fact that the 6th day of April came on Thursday in the year A.D. 30.

Since the 6th of April and the 15th of Nisan came on the same day we know that the Passover Sabbath came on Thursday the 6th day of April; and since Jesus was crucified and buried before the Sabbath began, we know that the "supper" was eaten the night before the Passover Sabbath. The Passover was always killed and prepared the day before a Sabbath, and eaten on a Sabbath day! and since the "supper" came before the Sabbath it is evident that the "supper" was not the Passover, and that the "supper" and Passover were not eaten on the same day.

If the Jews kept the Passover as the law required in the year A.D. 30, the "supper" was eaten during the night of the Jewish day that began at sunset on Tuesday evening, April 4th, and ended at sunset Wednesday evening, April 5, because this was the 14th day of Nisan, when they were commanded to kill and prepare the Passover, and each Gospel writer puts the "supper" on the day of the "preparation of the Passover." They ate the "feast" during the following night, which came on the 15th of Nisan, and was always a Sabbath day.

John calls that Thursday the "Passover" and also a "Sabbath"; and astronomy shows that the 15th of Nisan fell on Thursday, which makes that day the "Passover" and a "Sabbath."

6. The night of the "supper" came "before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of the world" (John xiii. 1). Jesus was the antitype of the paschal lamb, "our Passover sacrifice for us"; and to fulfil the Passover "sign" he knew that he must die and pass out of the world on the same day the Jews were commanded to kill and prepare the Passover. This statement

of John is equivalent to saying that the "supper" was eaten the night of the 14th of Nisan instead of the 15th, when they were commanded to eat the Passover. The fact that John puts the "supper" before the "feast of the Passover" is conclusive proof that the "supper" and the "feast of the Passover" were not the same, and did not come at the same time. If Jesus did not eat the Passover at the time of the "supper," he did not eat it at all. In the 29th verse of this chapter, John shows that they had not yet bought what they needed for the "feast" when they ate the "supper." Since they had to buy what they needed for the "feast" after the "supper," the Passover could not have immediately followed the "supper." There was no time or opportunity to buy what they needed for the "feast" that night after the "supper."

The "supper" came before the "feast of the Passover," because it was eaten during the night of the 14th, and the feast of the Passover could be eaten no other time than the night of the 15th (Ex. xii. 8). It was a crime worthy of death to kill or eat the Passover out of order; and there is no evidence that they did not strictly conform to the law in keeping the Passover when Jesus was crucified.

7. Each Gospel writer calls the day Jesus was crucified, when the "supper" was eaten, the "preparation of the Passover" (see Matt. xxvii. 62; Mark xv. 42; Luke xxiii. 54; John xix. 14, 31, 42). If the apostles had eaten the Passover the night in which Jesus was betrayed, it would have been the Passover to them; but they all call that day the "preparation of the Passover," instead of the "Passover." Can it be possible that all the Gospel writers were so absent-minded as to call the day on which they ate the Passover the "preparation of the Passover," instead of the "Passover," and that John should make such a blunder three times in one chapter? It is clearly evident that the Gospel writers call the day the "supper" was eaten the "preparation of the Passover," to show that it was not the Passover.

The fact that Jesus instructed Peter and John to prepare the Passover is no evidence that he ate it with them after it was

prepared. The confusion comes from mistaking, for the "Passover," what is said of the "supper." Jesus said, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him." And we are told, "When the hour [that he must depart out of the world] was come, he sat down [to the supper table, not the Passover], and the twelve apostles with him" (Luke xxii. 14). During this last supper with his disciples, the Passover, which was due to be eaten the following night, was spoken of, but not partaken of. This is clearly evident from the fact that the time of the "supper" was the night before the Passover could be killed. There is no evidence that they ate of a lamb or of bitter herbs during or after the "supper" that night. This is because the lamb could not be legally killed till the afternoon following the "supper."

We are told that the "supper" was eaten the night "before the feast of the Passover," and it was on the day "of the preparation of the Passover," instead of the Passover, and when the apostles had not yet bought what they needed for the "feast. The fact that Jesus and his disciples and many other Jews were out of doors during the night of the "supper" is conclusive proof that the Passover was not eaten that night. Such act was strictly forbidden during the night of the Passover, and there is no evidence that any Jew was out of the house the following night, when they were commanded to eat the Passover. Nor is there any evidence that they ate unleavened bread at the time of the "supper," because the "supper" was eaten before the days of unleavened bread began. There were but "seven days of unleavened bread," and they ended on the "one and twentieth day of the month, at even." If we count the 14th, when the "supper" was eaten, it makes eight days of unleavened bread, instead of seven.

Let no one entertain the thought that it makes no difference whether Christ ate the Passover or not; because such teaching blinds the eyes and perverts the judgment. The Passover was a "sign," or prophecy, foretelling the time of the year, the day of the month, the day of the week, and even the time of the day, when Jesus was to suffer and die. In order to fulfil

the "sign," it was just as necessary that the Passover be eaten the night following the "supper," as taught by the Gospel writers, as it was for them to choose a perfect first-born male lamb each year on the 10th of Nisan, and keep it until the 14th of the same month, and then kill it without breaking a bone in it. Everything required to be done in the ordinance of the Passover had a typical meaning, and any change would destroy the meaning of the "sign." The two most important prophecies found in the Bible to prove that Jesus was the Christ are the Passover type and the "sign of Jonas." The Bible student who does not know this truth cannot produce scriptural proof showing how Christ died for our sins, or how he rose again the third day "according to the Scripture" (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4). The theory that Jesus ate the Passover cannot be harmonized with the fulfilment of the Passover "sign."

WILLIAM FREDRICK.

Clyde, Ohio.