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Under the title of *Good Shepherds* (pp. 87, 1s. 6d.), Messrs. Wells Gardner have published a searching manly volume of addresses to candidates for Holy Orders, by the Bishop of Stepney. It is a good divine that follows these instructions.

Messrs. Williams & Norgate are the publishers in this country of a remarkable volume,

entitled *Creation Myths of Primitive America*, by Jeremiah Curtin. Manifestly it touches biblical things closely. It is besides of great scientific value. And the author is able to present the various myths in so pleasing a form that the book becomes, even to the un-biblical and unscientific reader, most attractive reading.

## Was our Lord Crucified on the 14th or 15th of Nisan?

BY DR. E. W. G. MASTERMAN, ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

THE question of the exact date of our Lord's Crucifixion is one of interest from every point of view, but it has a real and practical importance because of the bearing of the subject on the relation of the synoptists to the author of the Fourth Gospel. No one will dispute that an unbiassed reading of the three Synoptical Gospels would lead an outsider to the conclusion that our Lord was crucified the day following the killing of the Passover lambs, *i.e.* on the 15th of Nisan. An examination of the Fourth Gospel in the same way, but independently of the other Gospels, would, in all probability, lead an equally unbiassed observer to conclude that at the time of our Lord's trial the Passover had not been eaten, and that therefore He was crucified on the 14th of Nisan, that is, when the Paschal lambs were slain. The first thought, too, might be that His death at that time was the most appropriate fulfilment of the type. I wish in this paper to make a few suggestions, tending to show that our Lord must have suffered on the 15th and not the 14th, and that the accounts in the four Gospels really completely harmonize.

As the explanations of the difficulties have been fully dealt with in many places, it will be only necessary to very briefly indicate the answers to the chief ones. With respect to the minor difficulties urged against the trial and death of our Lord occurring on the 15th of Nisan, a consideration of the fact that these must have been present to the minds of the writers of the Synoptical Gospels, and must have demanded an explanation from them *if they really existed then*, must assure us that they are the products of the conditions of a later time.

With regard to St. John's Gospel, it is essential at the outset to remember that the writer must have been familiar with the traditions, if not with some of the actual materials, used in the Synoptical Gospels. How is it, then, we have no hint that in his Gospel he is making a change in the common tradition? The supper mentioned in John 13, would certainly on the surface be considered by all those familiar with the synoptical tradition to mean the Paschal Supper.

The four chief passages in St. John's Gospel which require some explanation before we proceed farther, are 13<sup>29</sup>, 18<sup>28</sup>, 19<sup>14</sup> and 31.

1. It is stated in Jn 13<sup>29</sup> that the disciples thought Judas had gone out to buy things needed 'against the feast.' It is supposed on this ground that the Supper could not be the Paschal feast. But if we examine this Gospel we shall find that 'the feast of the Passover,' or 'the Passover,' is constantly used to include the *whole* feast, *i.e.* the Passover proper and the feast of unleavened bread. Might not Judas have gone out—their Passover proper being ended—to buy what was needed for the succeeding day? But could shops have been opened at such a time? It is possible they were not, and that this fact the disciples momentarily forgot in the midst of their pre-occupation; but it is also more than possible that there were some means whereby late comers to the holy city might get some necessities on an emergency.

2. In Jn 18<sup>28</sup>, we read that the chief priests and the captors of Jesus went not into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled, 'but that they might eat the Passover,'—*ἀλλ' ἵνα φάγωσι τὸ πάσχα.*

Now it is fully admitted that τὸ πάσχα is used several times in this Gospel, and also in Lk 22<sup>1</sup>, to signify the whole seven days' feast, and though to 'eat the Passover' does not occur elsewhere as referring to all the special food of that period, there seems no difficulty in recognizing the possibility. So great an authority as Dr. Edersheim<sup>1</sup> admits that such a usage is quite permissible. The other clause, 'Lest they should be defiled,' I shall refer to later.

3. Jn 19<sup>14</sup> contains the phrase, 'It was the preparation of the Passover.' This, though at first a great difficulty, is understood when we compare the phrase with that in Mk 15<sup>40</sup>. Here the word ἡ παρασκευὴ—'the preparation,' is explained to mean 'the day before the Sabbath,' *i.e.* Friday. In other words, we may read—'It was the Friday of the Passover (week),' which makes the events in all the Gospels coincide. This reading (of ἡ παρασκευὴ = Friday) is now so fully recognised as permissible by all competent scholars, that it is unnecessary to dwell upon it further.

4. The phrase in Jn 19<sup>31</sup>, 'That Sabbath day was a high day,' has been explained as implying that the first day of the feast (15th of Nisan) came on that day, and therefore it was a feast-Sabbath as well as a legal Sabbath. Surely such an explanation cannot be used to support the idea that the crucifixion was on the 14th of Nisan? For in the other view we find the Sabbath to have been a High day, firstly, because it was the Sabbath of the Passover week—always a great Sabbath among the Jews; and secondly, according to this reckoning, the Sabbath would fall on the 16th of Nisan,—the second day of the feast,—when the wave-offering had to be made.

Having now very briefly indicated the lines on which the main difficulties in St. John's Gospel may be met, I wish to show one or two reasons, gathered from the history in that Gospel, why our Lord *must* have been betrayed, tried, and crucified on the 15th of Nisan. The Paschal Supper was, and is to-day, eaten on the 15th of Nisan, the day beginning at sunset—the sunset of Thursday, as we reckon time. The Paschal lambs had been killed 'between the evenings,' shortly before sunset on the 14th; that is, in the afternoon of the same day, only earlier.

Firstly, then, Why did Judas Iscariot choose this time of all others to betray his Master?

<sup>1</sup> See references at end.

It would seem that since the Feast of Dedication, the previous December, our Lord had been away from Jerusalem up to this week. During all the previous days of this week He had, apparently, returned for the night to Bethany, where he was among many friends. This Passover night was the *first* night our Lord was in the city. The rulers had been afraid to take Jesus 'because of the people,' and had expressly desired to avoid arresting Him 'on the feast' (R.V.). Judas, however, knew our Lord's movements, he had been goaded to desperation by our Lord's words (Jn 13<sup>27</sup>), and he recognized an opportunity which was never likely to occur again. Most probably in his own mind he had really long planned for this particular night. And why? Because this—the Passover night—was just the night above all others when Jesus could be arrested quietly and brought *unknown to the whole multitude* to the high priest's house.

Those who are familiar with Passover nights in Jewish cities (I speak from an experience of four Passovers in Jerusalem), must have remarked the entirely deserted streets that night—not a Jew is to be seen. Although not absolutely legally binding, nevertheless at this season (as in Ex 12<sup>26</sup>) all Jews remain indoors. I think we may consider that such was probably the case that night. Renan states: 'As the feast of the Passover which commenced that year on a Friday evening was a time of bustle and excitement, it was resolved to anticipate it; . . . the arrest was therefore fixed for Thursday.' This is an extraordinary statement, for the evening *before* the Passover would have been just such an evening of bustle and excitement as would have made a quiet and secret arrest and conduct through the streets of the city to the place of trial impossible. Probably large numbers would be up all night finishing their preparations for the coming sacred days. As it was, on Passover night, Judas with his band could creep through deserted streets, bright in the full Paschal moon, and having effected the shameful arrest, could bring Him unknown to all but the hating chief priests and rulers to His trial. Probably not till Jesus was safely condemned did the majority of His friends in the city even know of His arrest.

Secondly, in referring back to Jn 18<sup>28</sup>, we find the Jews would not enter the judgment hall 'lest they should be defiled.' What was the

nature of this defilement? If we accept the theory that this occurred on the 14th we have no explanation, for by sunset they could be purified ready for the Passover; but if on the 15th, the explanation is as clear as day to those who are familiar with Jewish customs. With the sunset of the 14th, *i.e.* the beginning of the 15th, began that period in which it was, and is, sin for any Jew to come in contact with the slightest *leaven*. Those who know the extreme precautions taken by the Jews of to-day to avoid the slightest chance of defilement during this feast, can easily understand that a heathen law court would be the last place 'the chief priests and rulers of the synagogues' would dare to enter. Defilement then would mar their whole feast. Defilement on the 14th, however, would not be too late for them, by changes of raiment and ablutions, to prepare themselves for keeping the feast.

And now lastly, though this cannot be perhaps used as an argument, What bearing has the date on the typical fulfilment of the Passover institution? Those who maintain that our Lord was crucified on the 14th, point out that he was the Paschal Lamb, and therefore died when they were slain—which even then would not be exactly the case. But it should be remembered that the 15th was the Passover Day—the day of the great deliverance. It was in the night of the 15th (which *preceded* the day, as always in Eastern reckoning) that the angel of the Lord smote those whose doors were not sprinkled. The lamb was killed, it is true, shortly before the 15th, but only, as it seems, to be sure that it should be ready for

the great day. It was killed in ancient times by the head of each household. It was the sprinkling of the blood and the consuming of the lamb which were the essentials of deliverance, as in the temple sacrifices it was the consumption and burning, not the killing, on which stress was laid. Now that no lamb is killed, the 14th has lost all significance, but the 15th remains to-day as the great day of Israel's deliverance.

Further, it is interesting to observe that the new symbols of the body and blood which our Lord instituted were to be the perpetual representatives of this new Passover. The new institution took place at the very day and hour of the old. In both cases the *feast* was the essential, only the symbols of the bread and wine were a higher development of the idea.

It would thus seem that our Lord's Last Supper, agony, arrest, trial, torture, crucifixion, death, and burial all occurred on the 15th of Nisan, the great day of the Passover in past ages and at the present time. 'For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us' (1 Co 5<sup>1</sup>).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Full popular discussions of this subject will be found in Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, special note 'On the Day of the Crucifixion'; Plummer, *St. John's Gospel* ('Cambridge Bible for Schools'), special appendix; Farrar, *Life of Christ*, special appendix. All these support a view different from the above. Also Edersheim, *The Temple and its Services* and *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, in favour of the 15th of Nisan view. In Andrews' *Life of our Lord*, the arguments on both sides are quoted and discussed, the decision being left open. See also Turner's article, 'Chronology of the New Testament,' in *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. i. p. 411.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF GENESIS.

#### GENESIS xii. 1-3.

'Now the Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed' (R.V.).

#### EXPOSITION.

THE historian has reached the end of the first chief portion of his narrative; he has completed the introductory

section of his grand composition; he has shown the origin of the world through the omnipotence of God, and the descent of the nations of the earth from one common ancestor; he has, by a universal pedigree, disclosed the beautiful hope that, however dispersed and inimical to each other the nations may be, they will, in a happier future, be reunited in brotherhood; but before the human family reaches this aim, it has to pass through a long and wearisome career: during unnumbered ages the various tribes will continue in hostility and warfare; for unmeasured periods the omnipotent Creator will be forgotten, and darkness will shroud the earth. In one tribe alone the spark of truth will be preserved, and through that tribe 'all the