

“Passover” or “Easter”? Reclaiming *Pasxa* in Acts 12:4

Easter is right around the corner, a holiday that, for Christians, is all about the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Some will choose to spend the holiday buying new clothing, decorating Easter eggs, engaging in Easter egg hunts and eating chocolate Easter bunnies, but Christians believe in what the Bible says and are unafraid of what “Good Friday” is all about. We know that our faith is built on the fact that Jesus died on the Cross and rose three days later. Without it, without the crucifixion, shed blood, and resurrection of Jesus, there is no remission of sins and we are still in our sins, Paul says (1 Corinthians 15).

I stumbled upon the King James Version (KJV) rendering of Acts 12:4 some time ago, discovering that the translators of the KJV used what appears to be a modern word in Acts 12:4. Here’s the English rendition of the verse in context:

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

² And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

³ And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. **(Then were the days of unleavened bread.)**

⁴ And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; **intending after Easter** to bring him forth to the people. (Acts 12:1-4, KJV)

Reading this verse in the KJV, one would presume that Easter was the name of the “holiday” or occasion and that even King Herod knew that. And yet, what one finds in the Greek is surprising:

1 Κατ' ἐκεῖνον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν ἐπέβαλεν Ἡρώδης ὁ βασιλεὺς τὰς χεῖρας κακῶσαί τινας τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐκκλησίας. **2** ἀνείλεν δὲ Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰωάννου μαχαίρη. **3** ἰδὼν δὲ ὅτι ἀρεστόν ἐστιν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις προσέθετο συλλαβεῖν καὶ Πέτρον (ἦσαν δὲ ἡμέραι τῶν ἀζύμων), **4** ὃν καὶ πιάσας ἔθετο εἰς φυλακὴν, παραδούς τέσσαρσιν τετραδίοις στρατιωτῶν φυλάσσειν αὐτόν, βουλόμενος μετὰ τὸ **πάσχα** ἀναγαγεῖν αὐτὸν τῷ λαῷ.

The word for “pasxa” is not “Easter,” but rather, “Passover.” Since the KJV translators changed the definition of the word from “Passover” to “Easter,” a question looms overhead: Is Easter a substitute name for Passover? This question will require us to examine the Jewish Passover and God’s instructions to the Jews in the Old Testament to determine the nature of the holiday. Then, we’ll take a look at Passover in the New Testament as well as the origin of Easter. Last but not least, we’ll come to terms with this definition change and see what should (or should not) be done.

The Passover in the Old Testament

Exodus 12

Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ²“This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you. ³Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth

of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take *it* according to the number of the persons; **according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb.** ⁵ **Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats.** ⁶ **Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.** ⁷ **And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.** ⁸ **Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.** ⁹ **Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails.** ¹⁰ **You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.** ¹¹ **And thus you shall eat it: *with* a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It *is* the Lord's Passover.**

¹² **'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the Lord.** ¹³ **Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you;** and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ **'So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.**

21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover *lamb*. 22 And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip *it* in the blood that *is* in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that *is* in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. 23 For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike *you*. 24 And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever. 25 **It will come to pass when you come to the land which the Lord will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service.** 26 **And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?'** 27 **that you shall say, 'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.'**" So the people bowed their heads and worshiped. 28 Then the children of Israel went away and did *so*; just as the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did. (Exodus 12:1-28)

The first mention of Passover we see in the Old Testament in Exodus 12, where the Lord tells the Israelites in Egypt to kill a lamb (or sheep or goat, as substitutes), kill it at "twilight," referring to evening, and then sprinkle its blood on the lintels and doorposts to prevent their firstborn males from being killed. The Jews were told to eat the Passover meal in haste, quickly, as though they were too busy to savor it. The reason why the Lord told them to eat the Passover meal in haste, "with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand" (Exodus 12:11) is because He had planned to deliver them from Egypt that night, and they'd need to be on their way so that they could escape the Egyptians.

12 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the Lord.
13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*.
And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:12-13)

The Lord told Israel that He would strike the Egyptians and kill both man and beast, human and animal. “Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment” (Exodus 12:12), the Lord says, reminding us that the plagues were designed to show that God has more power than the Egyptian gods many believed could rescue them from anything. We see the Lord’s desire to show Himself above the Egyptian gods when Aaron throws down his staff and it turns into a serpent (see Exodus 7:8-12).

The word for “Passover” in Exodus 12:11 is “pasxa”:

καὶ ἔδεσθε αὐτὸ μετὰ σπουδῆς· **πασχα** ἐστὶν κυρίῳ. (This Greek phrase is translated “and eat it in haste; for it is the Lord’s Passover”).

The word “pasxa” is Passover, and the word “Pasxa” from the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) refers to “suffering.” Many have defined “pasxa” as Passover, and it is, but at its basic core, the word means “suffering.” So, the lamb, sheep, or goat suffers so that the Israelites don’t have to.

In Exodus 12:21-28 is where we see Moses give the people explicit instructions, and in verses 25-27, Moses tells the people to tell their children why they celebrate the Passover when they enter into the Promised Land. The Passover is to be observed forever, so this is not a one-and-done event; the Passover is annual, to always be observed by God's people.

Later in the chapter, we read about additional requirements for the Passover:

⁴³ And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This *is* the ordinance of the Passover: **No foreigner shall eat it.** ⁴⁴ But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. ⁴⁵ **A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it.** ⁴⁶ In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. ⁴⁸ **And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants to keep the Passover to the Lord*, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.** ⁴⁹ One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you." (Exodus 12:43-49)

In verse 43, the Lord gives "the ordinance of the Passover," the word "ordinance" here referring to the Greek word *nomos*, meaning "law." Foreigners cannot partake of the feast, the Greek word ἀλλογενής (*allogenes*) meaning "alien" or "outsider." Only those dwelling among the people of God can partake of the Passover. If a Jew owns servants that he has purchased and chooses to circumcise them, then they, once circumcised, can eat the Passover. In verse 45, sojourners (Greek πάροικος or *paroikos*) and hired servants (Greek μισθωτός or *misthotos*) can't eat the Passover. The Greek word *paroikos* refers to a traveler here, though some of the stranger can eat the Passover --- that is, those who "dwell with you and want to keep the Passover" (Exodus 12:48). The "stranger" who "dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover" will be treated "as a native of the land" when he circumcises his males, whether

son, grandson, nephew, male cousin, brother, etc. In verse 49, the Lord said that there would be one Passover Law for both the native-born Jew and the Gentile who wants to dwell among God's people.

Leviticus 23:4-5

4 'These *are* the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. 5 On the fourteenth *day* of the first month at **twilight** is the Lord's Passover. (Leviticus 23:4-5)

The first month and 14th day is when the Passover is to be observed. The exact timing of the Passover institution is "at twilight," the Greek phrase μέσον τῶν ἑσπερινῶν or *meson ton esperinon* refers to "the middle of the evening" or "middle of the eventide." The Passover meal is to be eaten at night, for it was at night when the Lord killed the firstborn males of Egypt and delivered His people out of Egyptian bondage.

Numbers 9

Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: 2 "Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. 3 **On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time. According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it.**" 4 **So Moses told the children of Israel that they should keep the Passover.** 5 And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the

first month, at twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the Lord commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did.

6 Now there were *certain* men who were defiled by a human corpse, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses and Aaron that day. 7 And those men said to him, "We *became* defiled by a human corpse. Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the Lord at its appointed time among the children of Israel?"

8 And Moses said to them, "Stand still, that I may hear what the Lord will command concerning you."

9 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or *is* far away on a journey, he may still keep the Lord's Passover. 11 On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

12 They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones.

According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it. 13 But the man who *is* clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the Lord at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.

14 'And if a stranger dwells among you, and would keep the Lord's Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover and according to its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the native of the land.'" (Numbers 9:1-14)

The occasion in Numbers 9 is that some in the nation of Israel have a conflict with the traditional time of the Lord's Passover. The Israelites, in context, are in their second year of freedom after having been brought out of Egyptian bondage, and they were reminded by the Lord to observe the Passover as He told them before. The problem with some Jews is that they "were defiled by a human corpse," we're told in Numbers 9:6. The phrase "defiled by a human corpse" in the Greek is ἀκάθαρτοι ἐπὶ ψυχῇ ἀνθρώπου or *akathartoi epi psuxe anthropou*, a phrase that means "defiled (unclean) because of a man's body." A person could become defiled because he or she went to a funeral, grave site, or simply stumbled upon a dead person. The one who came into contact with the dead or went on a long journey and was traveling at the time of the Passover would deem themselves unworthy to keep it --- though the Lord had clearly told them it was necessary for them to keep it (Exodus 12).

So, what were these individuals to do? Moses had to go before the Lord as he did in a number of situations where he didn't have answers himself, and the Lord gave him direction. He does the same here: rather than let these traveling Jews and those who'd been in contact with the dead miss the Passover altogether and be "cut off from among the people" for disobedience, God made provision so that even these who couldn't keep the original Passover could still keep it:

9 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or

is far away on a journey, he may still keep the Lord's Passover. ¹¹ **On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it.**

They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ¹² They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it. ¹³ But the man who *is* clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the Lord at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin.

¹⁴ 'And if a stranger dwells among you, and would keep the Lord's Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover and according to its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the native of the land.'" (Numbers 9:9-14)

The Lord says that if these set Jews cannot keep the Passover on the 14th day of the first month of the year, then they can keep the Passover on the 14th day of the second month. What we see here is that, though the Lord makes the laws for everyone to follow, some Jews don't find themselves in ideal circumstances and the Lord allows them to fulfill the Passover requirement --- but on a different day. I can't stress this enough: the Lord maintains the requirement of Passover observance, but adds an exception to the rule: those who are traveling or have been in contact with a dead person can fulfill the requirement the following month. Some would think that by adding an exception, the Lord is undermining His own Passover law, but He isn't; rather, by adding an exception, the Lord is upholding His Passover Law because exceptions don't exist without laws. Notice that in

Numbers 28, after providing an exception to the Passover Law, the Lord still upholds His original Passover month, day, and time:

¹⁶ 'On the fourteenth day of the first month *is* the Passover of the Lord.
(Numbers 28:16)

The Lord also reinforced the idea that those who did not observe it would be cut off from their people because they have violated their covenant with God.

Deuteronomy 16

"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night. ² Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the Lord your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the Lord chooses to put His name. (Deuteronomy 16:1-2)

The Lord told the Israelites up until now to observe Passover in the first month and the fourteenth day. Now in Deuteronomy 16, we see that the specific month is named: the month of Abib. "For in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night" (Deuteronomy 16:1). The month Abib is when the Lord rescued the Jews and delivered them from Egypt, so they were to observe the very day the Lord brought them out of Egypt. We read of the exact day of Israel's deliverance in Numbers 33:

These *are* the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. ² Now Moses wrote down the starting points of their journeys at the command of the Lord. And these *are* their journeys according to their starting points:

³ They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians. ⁴ For

the Egyptians were burying all *their* firstborn, whom the Lord had killed among them. Also on their gods the Lord had executed judgments.

(Numbers 33:1-4)

The Israelites departed from Rameses “on the fifteenth day of the first month,” which is “the day after Passover” (Numbers 33:3, 4). If the day after Passover is the fifteenth day of the month, then Passover occurred the night of the fourteenth day of the month. The Israelites were to observe the fourteenth day of the month of Abib for the Passover meal because it was on that very day, the fourteenth day of the month Abib, that the Lord killed the firstborn males of Egypt and spared His people because of the “blood on the lamb” on their lintels and doorposts.

2 Kings 23:21-23

²¹ Then the king commanded all the people, saying, “Keep the Passover to the Lord your God, as *it is* written in this Book of the

Covenant.” ²² **Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah.** ²³ But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was held before the Lord in Jerusalem. (2 Kings 23:21-23)

The word “Passover” is mentioned here in 2 Kings 23 three times, and the word used for the event is the same as has been used in all other Greek translations of the word in other passages of Scripture: τὸ πασχα, the word “pascha” referring to the event (“to” is an article here, what English speakers would recognize as the way to emphasize a proper noun over a generic one). Here we see that the Israelites had stopped celebrating the Passover. The Lord told them to celebrate the Passover meal forever (Exodus 12), but they had quickly deviated from remembrance of their deliverance when they entered the Promised Land. The Passover had been abandoned in the days of the judges and was further forgotten during the reign of the kings in Israel and Judah. That is, until eighteen years into the reign of King Josiah. In 2 Kings 23 he tells the people to re-enact the Passover as a mandatory meal and observe the event.

We get a glimpse of just how King Josiah re-instituted the Passover in 2 Chronicles 35:

Now Josiah kept a Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* on the fourteenth *day* of the first month. ² And he set the priests in their duties and encouraged them for the service of the house of the Lord. ³ Then he said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to the Lord: "Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built. *It shall* no longer *be* a burden on *your* shoulders. Now serve the Lord your God and His people Israel. ⁴ Prepare *yourselves* according to your fathers' houses, according to your divisions, following the written instruction of David king of Israel and the written instruction of Solomon his son. ⁵ And stand in the holy *place* according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brethren the *lay* people, and *according to* the division of the father's house of the Levites. ⁶ So slaughter the Passover *offerings*, consecrate yourselves, and prepare *them* for your brethren, that *they* may do according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses."

⁷ **Then Josiah gave the *lay* people lambs and young goats from the flock, all for Passover *offerings* for all who were present, to the number of thirty thousand, as well as three thousand cattle;** these were from the king's possessions. ⁸ And his leaders gave willingly to the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. **Hilkiah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover *offerings* two thousand six hundred *from the flock*, and three hundred cattle. ⁹ Also Conaniah, his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave to the Levites for Passover *offerings* five thousand *from the flock* and five hundred cattle.**

¹⁰ So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their places, and the Levites in their divisions, according to the king's command. ¹¹ And they slaughtered the Passover *offerings*; and the priests sprinkled *the blood* with

their hands, while the Levites skinned *the animals*. ¹² Then they removed the burnt offerings that *they* might give them to the divisions of the fathers' houses of the *lay* people, to offer to the Lord, as *it is* written in the Book of Moses. And so *they did* with the cattle. ¹³ Also they roasted the Passover *offerings* with fire according to the ordinance; but the *other* holy *offerings* they boiled in pots, in caldrons, and in pans, and divided *them* quickly among all the *lay* people. ¹⁴ Then afterward they prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the sons of Aaron, *were busy* in offering burnt offerings and fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared portions for themselves and for the priests, the sons of Aaron. ¹⁵ **And the singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places, according to the command of David, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer. Also the gatekeepers were at each gate; they did not have to leave their position, because their brethren the Levites prepared portions for them.**

¹⁶ So all the service of the Lord was prepared the same day, to keep the Passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the Lord, according to the command of King Josiah. ¹⁷ And the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. ¹⁸ **There had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet; and none of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah kept, with the priests and the Levites, all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.** ¹⁹ **In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this Passover was kept.** (2 Chronicles 35:1-19)

The Passover was a lavish occasion: Josiah gave 30,000 lambs and goats as well as 3,000 cattle; the rulers of the house of God gave 2,600 lambs and goats (total) and 300 cattle; 5,000 lambs and goats and 500 cattle

were given by Conaniah and his brothers as well as Jozabad, chief of the Levites. 37,600 lambs and goats and 3800 cattle total were prepared for the national celebration. The singers, the sons of Asaph (yes, some of the Psalms are written by Asaph), as well as the gatekeepers were also in their places for the grand occasion. As can be seen, the entire nation was to observe the Passover and celebrate its independence from Egypt after some 430 years in bondage.

We were told in 2 Kings 23 that the Jews hadn't kept Passover since the days of the kings and the judges; here, we discover that "there had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet" (2 Chronicles 35:18). King Josiah got the priests, Levites, singers, and gatekeepers to play their part in the celebration of the Passover after so long without it.

The judges ruled in the days of Samuel the prophet, as Samuel was a judge, but it was during Samuel's time that the Jews requested a king to rule over them like the other nations (1 Samuel 8:1-22).

2 Chronicles 30

And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel. 2

For the king and his leaders and all the assembly in Jerusalem had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month. 3 **For they could not keep it at the regular time, because a sufficient number of priests had not consecrated themselves, nor had the people gathered together at Jerusalem. 4 And the matter pleased the king and all the assembly. 5 So they resolved to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from**

Beersheba to Dan, that they should come to keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel at Jerusalem, since they had not done *it* for a long *time* in the *prescribed* manner.

6 Then the runners went throughout all Israel and Judah with the letters from the king and his leaders, and spoke according to the command of the king: "Children of Israel, return to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; then He will return to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7 And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation, as you see. 8 Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers *were*, *but* yield yourselves to the Lord; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. 9 For if you return to the Lord, your brethren and your children *will be treated* with compassion by those who lead them captive, so that they may come back to this land; for the Lord your God *is* gracious and merciful, and will not turn *His* face from you if you return to Him."

10 So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed at them and mocked them. 11 Nevertheless some from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. 12 Also the hand of God was on Judah to give them singleness of heart to obey the command of the king and the leaders, at the word of the Lord.

13 Now many people, a very great assembly, gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month. 14 They arose and took away the altars that *were* in Jerusalem, and they took away all the incense altars and cast *them* into the Brook Kidron. 15 Then they slaughtered the Passover *lambs* on the fourteenth *day* of the second month. The priests and

the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought the burnt offerings to the house of the Lord. ¹⁶ They stood in their place according to their custom, according to the Law of Moses the man of God; the priests sprinkled the blood *received* from the hand of the Levites. ¹⁷ For *there were* many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; **therefore the Levites had charge of the slaughter of the Passover lambs for everyone *who was not clean*, to sanctify *them* to the Lord.** ¹⁸ For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good Lord provide atonement for everyone ¹⁹ *who prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.*" ²⁰ And the Lord listened to Hezekiah and healed the people.

²¹ So the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, *singing* to the Lord, accompanied by loud instruments. ²² And Hezekiah gave encouragement to all the Levites who taught the good knowledge of the Lord; and they ate throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers.

²³ Then the whole assembly agreed to keep *the feast* another seven days, and they kept it *another* seven days with gladness. ²⁴ For Hezekiah king of Judah gave to the assembly a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep, and the leaders gave to the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. ²⁵ The whole assembly of Judah rejoiced, also the priests and Levites, all the assembly that came from Israel, the sojourners who came from the land of Israel, and those who dwelt in Judah. ²⁶ So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since

the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, *there had* been nothing like this in Jerusalem. ²⁷ Then the priests, the Levites, arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; and their prayer came *up* to His holy dwelling place, to heaven. (2 Chronicles 30:1-27)

In 2 Chronicles 30, we read that King Hezekiah called the people back to the observance of Passover, which they'd forgotten. The fact that the Jews had turned their back on an event that commemorated their deliverance from Egyptian bondage tells you just how spiritually lost and numb they'd become.

In verses 18-20, we read that many from four of the twelve tribes had not been purified according to the required rituals --- and thus, they were eating in violation of God's Law. King Hezekiah was aware of this and prayed for them:

¹⁸ For a multitude of the people, many from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good Lord provide atonement for everyone ¹⁹ who prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though *he is not cleansed* according to the purification of the sanctuary." ²⁰ And the Lord listened to Hezekiah and healed the people. (2 Chronicles 30:18-20)

Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun are the tribes from which the majority of Passover participants "had not cleansed themselves." What does this mean? It means that they had not prepared themselves by

purifying their bodies (washing themselves) and performing other rituals, as detailed by Numbers 19:

14 'This *is* the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who *are* in the tent shall be unclean seven days; 15 and every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, *is* unclean. 16 Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.

17 '**And for an unclean *person* they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. 18 A clean person shall take hyssop and dip *it* in the water, sprinkle *it* on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave. 19 The clean *person* shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean.**

20 'But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he *is* unclean. 21 It shall be a perpetual statute for them. **He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes;** and he who touches the water of purification shall be unclean until evening. 22 Whatever the unclean *person* touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches *it* shall be unclean until evening.'" (Numbers 19:14-22)

Numbers 19 tells us about a burnt heifer who is killed and given as a burnt offering, then some of its ashes are placed in a “vessel” (could be a bowl) with water and then poured on the individual. Unclean persons not only had to have ashes and water poured on them but also “hyssop” (Greek ὕσσωπον, *hussopon*), placed on them as well. Hyssop is a plant the Hebrews used, a plant with green leaves that is said to have medicinal properties (and used to relieve cough). Scholars think that the biblical hyssop is not tied to the current contemporary hyssop plant [but refers more to the “ezov” plant called capparis spinosa](#) found in Egypt and Palestine that gives off a pleasing aroma when burned. This hyssop was used back in Egypt when the Lord told the Jews to kill lambs and goats, and dip the hyssop in blood before applying it to lintels and doorposts (Exodus 12:22).

Back to 2 Chronicles 30 with Hezekiah. Many that gathered to celebrate the Passover were not ritually cleansed; normally, this would have incurred the wrath of God, but Hezekiah prayed for those who weren’t able to purify themselves according to the Lord’s mandated ritual: “May the good Lord provide atonement for everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he is not cleaned according to the purification of the sanctuary” (2 Chronicles 30:18-19). Hezekiah says in his prayer here that the heart of the individual matters more the ritualistic purification, than bodily cleansing. Though the Jews weren’t physically clean, their hearts were pure before the Lord --- and the text says that “the Lord listened to Hezekiah and healed the people” (2 Chronicles 30:20).

The Lord healed them, granted them pardon, even though they didn't meet the purification mandate. In the eyes of the Lord, moral purity matters more than bodily purity. The problem with the Pharisees in the New Testament is that they failed to understand that the rituals are really about the heart, that, if the heart is right with the Lord, if the heart is pure, if someone is pure in heart, then he or she can please God even if their bodies are not clean, that someone can offer a sacrifice before the Lord even if the individual has not taken a shower because what matters most to God is one's heart. In the New Testament, the Pharisees make a big deal out of washing one's hands before eating:

Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ²“Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

³ He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?⁴ For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ ⁵ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* a gift to God”— ⁶ then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. ⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

⁸ ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth,

And honor Me with *their* lips,

But their heart is far from Me.

9 And in vain they worship Me,

Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.' "

10 When He had called the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, "Hear and understand: 11 Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"

13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. 14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

15 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain this parable to us."

16 So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." (Matthew 15:1-20)

Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. 2 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. 3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the

elders. 4 *When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.*

5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?”

6 He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

‘This people honors Me with *their* lips,

But their heart is far from Me.

7 And in vain they worship Me,

Teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men.’

8 For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.”

9 He said to them, “*All too well* you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. 10 For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ 11

But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me *is* Corban”—’ (that is, a gift *to God*), 12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, 13 making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”

14 When He had called all the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand: 15 There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come

out of him, those are the things that defile a man. ¹⁶ If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"

¹⁷ When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. ¹⁸ So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? **Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, ¹⁹ because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus purifying all foods?*" ²⁰ And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a man." (Mark 7:1-23)**

Matthew 15 and Mark 7 both refer to the question of the Pharisees to Jesus about why His disciples eat with unwashed hands. Why did the disciples not wash their hands? The Pharisees wondered. They held to the tradition of the elders which demanded ritual purification, but the Pharisees were so consumed with ritual purification that they didn't understand that unwashed hands affect the stomach, not the heart. Jesus wasn't concerned with bodily defilement but with the heart. Everything, including the Mosaic Law, had to be done with a clean heart, but the Pharisees had filthy hearts but clean hands and bodies, an ungodly morality but godly obedience from the heart. The Pharisees prioritized the body above the heart; Jesus turned it around and prioritized the inner man above the outer man. That's not to say that we shouldn't care about our bodies; our health should prosper as our souls prosper (3 John 1:2). And yet, the body and life are more important

than food and clothing (Matthew 6:25). What this means is that our emotional, mental, and spiritual health (and physical health) matter more to God than material possessions, but the heart is of the utmost essence to God. Someone can be bodily clean but spiritually filthy. This is why Jesus referred to the Pharisees in these terms:

²⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.** ²⁶ **Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.**

²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness.** ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. (Matthew 23:25-28)

The Pharisees were concerned with outward appearances, but their hearts were not in it. They were surface without substance. And many believers can be the same, becoming so action-driven that they start to live as if they're saved by works instead of faith. What the Lord wants first is our hearts before all else. If the Lord has our heart, then what we do for Him will be a "sweet-smelling savor" in His "nostrils" and, like Abel, the Lord will respect us and our offering; if our heart lies in other things, as it did with Cain, then the Lord won't respect us or our offering. More than sacrifices,

the Lord desires “the sacrifices of a broken spirit and a contrite heart,” as David says in Psalm 51:16-17.

Hezekiah prays for the people because their hearts were prepared to seek God, though they weren’t ritualistically clean. And the Lord made atonement for them and healed them such that they were able to enjoy the Passover.

Ezekiel 45

In Ezekiel 45, near the end of the Old Testament, we read that the Lord is still in the business of reminding His people to celebrate the Passover:

21 “In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22 And on that day the prince shall prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bull *for* a sin offering. 23 **On the seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the Lord, seven bulls and seven rams without blemish, daily for seven days, and a kid of the goats daily *for* a sin offering.** 24 And he shall prepare a grain offering of one ephah for each bull and one ephah for each ram, together with a hin of oil for each ephah. (Ezekiel 45:21-24)

The Passover meal has turned into a feast, with seven days devoted to unleavened bread. Remember, the Jews ate in haste the night that God delivered them from the Egyptians because they were being delivered --- and God wanted to get them out safely before they would be caught and ensnared in Egypt. Here the feast was to be for seven days, a reminder that Passover was more than just a day but also an entire week of

celebration. The “prince” is to prepare it for him and all who are in the kingdom. There are to be seven bulls and seven rams, unspotted, with no defects, daily for the entire seven days of the Passover feast.

We’ve been seeing a constant connection in Scripture in the passages of the Old Testament between the Passover meal and the “Feast of Unleavened Bread. Here we see that one, the Passover, leads into the other because one (Passover) is part of another (Feast of Unleavened Bread). The word “pasxa,” as we’ve been viewing it, refers to “Passover.” As we read in Luke’s Gospel,

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover. (Luke 22:1)

Passover in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the word “pasxa,” meaning “Passover,” is still used to mark the annual celebration of the Jewish deliverance from Egypt. In fact, what we find in the New Testament is that Jesus celebrates the Passover with His disciples, to the point of being handed over by Judas on the night in which He and His disciples ate the celebratory meal. What we find in the New Testament is that “Passover” now takes on a double meaning: whereas it refers to the deliverance of the Jews in the Old Testament (starting in Exodus 12, when the Passover is instituted), it now

refers to the passion, the suffering, of The Lamb (capital “L”), our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Matthew 26

17 Now on the first *day of the Feast* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, **“Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?”**

18 And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.”’”

19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

20 **When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. 21 Now as they were eating, He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.”**

22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, “Lord, is it I?”

23 He answered and said, “He who dipped *his* hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. 24 The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”

25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Rabbi, is it I?” He said to him, “You have said it.”

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
(Matthew 26:17-30)

Here we see that Jesus tells the disciples to go make the preparations for the Passover (Matthew 26:17-18), but it’s at the dinner that evening that Jesus speaks of His betrayal by one of the disciples, namely, Judas Iscariot. In verses 26-29, Jesus adds a dimension to the Passover that had never been done until now: He takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to the disciples saying “Take eat; this is My body.” What Jesus was telling the disciples in effect was, “this bread represents My body.” In breaking the bread, Jesus was emphasizing that His body would be “broken” for the sins of the world. In telling them to drink the wine, He said, “For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” The bread is “His body” and the wine is “His blood,” and Jesus then says “this is My blood of the New Covenant.” In other words, it was at the Passover meal that Jesus institutes the New Covenant, which is not about being born Jewish and being circumcised (Jewish males), or following all that is in the Old Testament Mosaic Law, but being saved,

having a relationship with God through Jesus, one being saved by faith in Christ and not the law of the letter.

It is at Passover that Jesus institutes the New Covenant, so it should matter to believers today to remember Passover as a special night and meal, as a celebration of the birth of the church because Jesus shared it with His disciples, who inaugurated the new church because these disciples were the heads of the church in Acts. The Passover meal here with Jesus is not about the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt, but rather, the deliverance of humanity from bondage to sin by Jesus Christ, whose death on the cross marks Him as the suffering Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Luke 22

7 Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. 8 And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat."

9 So they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?"

10 And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. 11 Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" 12 Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready."

13 So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover.

14 When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.

15 Then He said to them, **"With *fervent* desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."**

17 **Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide *it* among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."**

19 **And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."**

20 **Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. 21 But behold, the hand of My betrayer *is* with Me on the table. 22 And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"**

23 Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing. (Luke 22:7-23)

Luke 22 shows us similarities with Matthew 26, but there are some differences. In Luke 22:15, Jesus acknowledges that He is eating the Passover, for He says that "I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." In other words, Jesus plans to inaugurate this new dimension to Passover at the Passover meal (and so He does). Jesus goes on to say that "This is My body which is given for you" (v.19) and "This cup

is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (v.20). The body is “given for you” and the cup is “shed for you,” which means that Jesus is giving Himself for the disciples, for humans, for humanity. We see here at the Passover meal between Jesus and the disciples that the Passover extends beyond the Old Testament to the New Testament (New Covenant) and even further out to the coming Kingdom of God and the future Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The Passover, once believed to be a past event, is now an event that 1) is past and has already occurred, 2) is present, representing the salvation of humanity through the crucifixion, shed blood, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and 3) is future and will occur again.

John 6

22 On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone— 23 however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks— 24 when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. 25 And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”

26 Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food

which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

28 Then they said to Him, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?”

29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.”

30 Therefore they said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

32 Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

34 Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.”

35 And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

36 But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. 40 And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

41 The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” 42 And they said, “Is not this Jesus, the son

of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

43 Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. 44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. 47 Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. 48 **I am the bread of life.** 49 **Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.** 50 **This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.** 51 **I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."**

52 **The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us *His* flesh to eat?"**

53 **Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."**

59 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

John 6 presents to us an interesting discussion of Jesus and Moses: Moses gave “manna” in the wilderness, so those following Jesus (to fill their stomachs, no doubt) want Jesus to perform a food miracle in order to prove who He is. Jesus said that “I am the bread of life,” making himself the bread that one must eat in order to live. Jesus makes Himself “the food that endures to eternal life” (John 6:27), that He is bread of life that comes down from Heaven (John 6:33, 35, 48, 51, 53-58).

These words of Jesus fit the idea that Jesus is the “Passover Lamb” who was crucified.

Both the Old Testament and New Testament have now been examined for what they offer us regarding the word for “Passover,” the Greek word *pascha*. The word *pascha* remains, in both the Old Testament Septuagint and the New Testament. When you add in Jesus’ own “new covenant” institution on the same night as the Passover meal, you get a sense that Passover extends beyond Exodus 12 to New Testament believers, which makes a strong case for “Passover” as the name of the holiday that is marked by Jesus’ Crucifixion and Resurrection -- not Easter.

To bring Easter into the discussion, we’ll need to examine Easter’s origin and see how it clashes with the idea of Passover.

Easter: Its Origin and History

Most Christians believe that “Easter” as we know it is the Easter that has always existed, and when you ask Christians to define Easter, they’ll point to Jesus, that it’s about Him though many Christians still buy chocolate Easter bunnies, paint Easter eggs, and participate in Easter egg hunts. Churches even host egg hunts for their congregations and communities. Children grow up learning about Easter bunnies, Easter eggs, and Easter egg hunts.

And yet, why is it that we entertain the ideas of bunny rabbits, rabbit eggs, and egg hunts if Easter is truly a celebration of Jesus: His arrest, crucifixion, death, and resurrection? Why do we entertain bunny rabbits and discussions of nature and springtime if, like Christmas, Christians truly believe that “Jesus is the reason for the [Easter] season”? Perhaps we entertain a syncretized form of the holiday, not understanding that we celebrate both pagan and Christian elements. This section is designed to educate Christians on the holiday we call Easter.

Easter as a pagan holiday

There are two predominating views on Easter’s origin. The first view is that “Easter” is named after the Babylonian goddess “Ishtar” (Ishtar, Easter), while others believe that Easter comes from the fertility goddess “Eostre.”

Those who lie in the latter camp include the English monk Bede, who believed that Eostre had feasts celebrated in the month of April (corresponding to the Christian celebration of Easter in the month of April). Eostre is seen as a fertility goddess, and Spring marks the beginning of new life --- as the winter gives way to warmer weather, the flowers bloom, animals emerge from their winter hibernation and mate and procreate, and thus, new animal life is formed due to procreation.

“Many scholars believe that Easter had its origins as an early Anglo-Saxon festival that celebrated the goddess Eastre, and the coming of spring, in a sense a resurrection of nature after winter,” Carole Levin, Professor of History and Director of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program at the University of Nebraska, tells TIME in an email. “Some Christian missionaries hoped that celebrating Christian holy days at the same times as pagan festivals would encourage conversion, especially if some of the symbols carried over. Eggs were part of the celebration of Eastre. Apparently eggs were eaten at the festival and also possibly buried in the ground to encourage fertility.”

(<http://time.com/4732984/easter-eggs-history-origins/>)

According to Enduring.org, “The name “Easter”, its traditional practices and observances are pagan in origin but disguised in Christian dress...The name “Easter” is the English name of the ancient Assyrian goddess Ishtar (from the Babylonian goddess Astarte). Ishtar was the goddess of fertility and immoral sexual activity.” “The Sumerian goddess Inanna, or Ishtar,

was hung naked on a stake, and was subsequently resurrected and ascended from the underworld,” we’re told by [The Guardian](#).

When we celebrate “Easter,” we’re celebrating, to be fair, the dawning of Spring (“Easter” means “daybreak” or “dawn,” by the way). The “sunrise service” is a clear reference to the rising of the sun and the dawning of the day (and Spring). Again, Easter in its original context refers to fertility, as indicated by bunny rabbits and easter eggs. These are symbols of fertility and are part of the Easter holiday because their existence proves Easter’s pagan origin. There is some thought regarding the use of Easter eggs in the Christian holiday observance that says that [Easter eggs represent the empty tomb](#) and “cracking” them symbolizes the tombstone having been rolled away. And yet, the Christian perspective on Easter eggs is rather late in its origin, having originated in Christianity no earlier than the first century AD (many believe Easter eggs and bunny rabbits hail from German immigrants who came over to the US in the nineteenth century). Egyptians [believed their sun god “hatched from a primeval egg”](#) hundreds of years before Christians adopted “egg hatching” as related to the Christian resurrection. Titian’s painting “The Madonna of The Rabbit” shows Mary holding the rabbit in the foreground, and some have said that [rabbits were once thought to reproduce without sexual intercourse](#) (hence, its connection to the virgin Mary who is believed to have had Jesus without sexual intercourse). Even if Mary and the rabbit are connected, it’s an odd connection indeed: Mary was a virgin who gave birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, while the bunny rabbit is known for its biological breeding and

promiscuity. The only connection between Mary and the bunny rabbit is that both can “breed” offspring (the idea that rabbits can reproduce without animal reproduction is absurd), but this may explain why the Roman Catholic Church just adopted “Easter” without the slightest hesitation.

Though the Roman Catholic Church [relabeled the Winter Solstice in December as “Christ-Mass”](#) (from where we get the American spelling, “Christmas”), the Roman Catholic Church did not rename the Spring Equinox but maintained it as “Easter.” I’ll get into this in the next section.

The term “Easter” is pagan in origin, and sadly, our Christian culture has celebrated it down through the ages. For the first 500 years of the church, there was no set standard for the Christian Church as a whole to celebrate the Passover Feast as a holiday about Jesus. There were some who still celebrated Passover as the Jews did, but there were others who celebrated “Easter” but commemorated the death and resurrection of Jesus. At some point, controversy arose over which date to celebrate the Jesus holiday: whether on the fourteenth day of the month or on Sunday (wherever it falls). This controversy is known throughout church history as the Quartodeciman Controversy, *quartodeciman* being [a Latin word that means “fourteenths”](#) because a certain subset of Christians celebrated Passover on the 14th day of the first month while others celebrated the Christian

Easter holiday on “Resurrection Sunday” (they still called it “Easter,” though).

How did a pagan holiday (and name) enter the Christian Church?

Some will ask, “if Easter is pagan, then how did Christians come to endorse this? Did they not struggle with endorsing pagan ritual and worship all while claiming to be followers of Christ, the One true living God? Why didn’t the earliest Christians and beyond retain the Passover language to celebrate Christ, the Passover Lamb?” These are good questions.

The answer can be found in that the early church wanted to separate itself from Jewish practices because some were anti-Semitic, blaming the Jews for the death of Jesus and wanting to distance themselves as much as possible from Judaism. Others wanted to separate themselves because they believed they were under no obligation to celebrate a Jewish holiday when Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament Scriptures. The [Ecclesiastical History and Encyclopedia Britannica](#) give some insight in this area:

“Fourth Century Catholic historian Socrates Scholasticus, in his work *Ecclesiastical History*, wrote the following in Book V, Chapter 22:

Neither the apostles, therefore, nor the Gospels, have anywhere imposed Easter. The Savior and His apostles have enjoined us by no law to keep this feast...so also the feast of Easter came to be observed in each place according to the individual peculiarities of the peoples inasmuch as none of the apostles legislated on the matter.”

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* has this to say under the subject “Easter”:

“There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic Fathers...The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals foreshadowed...The Gentile Christians, on the other hand, unfettered by Jewish traditions, identified the first day of the week with the Resurrection, and kept the preceding Friday as the commemoration of the crucifixion, irrespective of the day of the month.”

For those who want to study more on the origins of Easter, I submit to you the following resources:

[Origins of Easter](#)

[Easter Pagan Symbolism](#)

[Easter's Origin](#)

[History of Easter](#)

[Easter's ancient origins](#)

[Here's Why Easter Eggs Are A Thing](#)

[Easter Symbols and Traditions](#)

[This is Where the Word 'Easter' Comes From](#)

[Beyond Ishtar: The Tradition of Eggs at Easter](#)

[Definition of "Easter"](#)

There's not enough space to provide all the information about Easter, but there are a few things that one can take away from the evidence: First, until 500 years after the resurrection of Jesus, Easter observance or the observance of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus wasn't instituted for the Christian Church as a whole, so different churches celebrated the event as they pleased (some chose Passover observance, others chose Easter). Next, Easter has its origins in the pagan goddess of fertility, represented in a few cultures such as the Babylonians, Assyrians, and so on.

To be brief, the Church, at that time Roman Catholic, chose to break with Jewish tradition and employ the Christian Easter because it didn't see the Jewish Passover as essential to Christian faith. While that is understandable, siding with pagan Greek Easter celebration was an erroneous alternative.

What's Wrong With Easter in Acts 12:4?

We've looked at the word "pasxa" and its definition of "Passover," but now it's time to go back to Acts 12 and see how and why "Easter" as the translation of "Pasxa" is wrong. So, with that said, let's reexamine the passage:

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after **Easter** to bring him forth to the people. (Acts 12:1-4, King James Version)

The strangest thing about the KJV's use of the word "Easter" is that only in Acts 12:4 do we find the word from the KJV translators, and not even Luke used the word. The word *pasxa* never meant "Easter," only "Passover." Luke used the same Greek word, *pasxa*, that we've been talking about throughout the entire Old Testament and even in the New Testament Gospels. Adam Clarke says in his commentary on Acts that the KJV's translation of *pasxa* as "Easter" is an absurd act by the translators themselves:

*Intending after Easter to bring him forth - Μετα το πασχα, After the passover. Perhaps there never was a more unhappy, not to say absurd, translation than that in our text...The term Easter, inserted here by our translators, they borrowed from the ancient Anglo-Saxon service-books, or from the version of the Gospels, which always translates the το πασχα of the Greek by this term; e.g. [Mat 26:2](#) : Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover. Wite ye that aefter twam dagum beoth Eastro. [Mat 16:19](#) : And they made ready the passover. And hig gegearwodon hym Easter thenunga (i.e. the paschal supper.) Prefixed to [Mat 28:1](#), are these words: This part to be read on Easter even. And, before [Mat 28:8](#), these words: [Mar 14:12](#) : And the first day of unleavened bread when they killed the passover. And tham forman daegeazimorum, tha hi Eastron offrodon. Other examples occur in this version. **Wiclif used the word paske, i.e. passover; but Tindal, Coverdale, Becke, and Cardmarden, following the old Saxon mode of translation, insert Easter: the Geneva Bible very properly renders it the passover. The Saxon Earten, Eartne, Eartno, Eartna, and Eartnon are different modes of spelling the name of the goddess Easter, whose festival was celebrated by our pagan forefathers on the month of April; hence that month, in the Saxon calendar, is called Easter month. Every view we can take of this subject shows the gross impropriety of retaining a name every way exceptionable, and palpably absurd.** (Adam Clarke's Commentary, Acts 12:4; taken from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/cmt/clarke/act012.htm>)*

Adam Clarke, here in his Acts 12:4 commentary, says that the translation “Easter” in Acts 12:4 is absurd, and I agree with him. The context shows that in Acts 12, King Herod is the king of the Jews (political, anyway); the Jews would’ve celebrated Passover, not Easter, because Jesus was handed over to be killed at Passover:

6 Now **at that feast** he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired.

7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection.

8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them.

12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

13 And they cried out again, Crucify him.

14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. (Mark 15:6-15, KJV)

Here in the King James Version, “at that feast” (v.6) is a reference to “the feast of the Passover” (Mark 14:1), which the King James translators label “Passover” without the slightest regret. So, if Jesus was handed over at Passover, then King Herod of the Jews would’ve honored the Jewish events, including Passover. Easter didn’t exist in the first century AD when Jesus walked on the earth, so its place in the KJV in Acts 12:4 is anachronistic (a more modern term placed in an ancient text). The King James Version wasn’t released until 1611, but the events of Acts 12 occurred in the first century AD --- 1,600 years before the KJV was produced and released worldwide. A term that is 1600 years younger is placed on a text that is 1600 years older; it’s inaccurate, and no Jew in the first century would recognize the term “Easter,” in the same way that no first-century Jew would’ve ever recognized the food “Hummus.”

The KJV’s use of “Passover” in other places makes their use of “Easter” in Acts 12:4 problematic as well. After all, the KJV translators use the word “Passover” in 1 Corinthians:

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. **For even Christ our passover** is sacrificed for us:

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

1 Corinthians was written to Gentiles, and yet, even to the Gentiles, Paul still deemed Christ as “our Passover.” Why is this the case? If “Passover” was too hard to understand in Acts 12, why would it have been any easier to understand in 1 Corinthians 5? As Adam Clarke has said, the KJV translators used different sources and translations of their own, but the inclusion of “Easter” in Acts 12:4 for the Greek word *pascha* is anachronistic and illogical.

Conclusion

I realize that this research could easily create controversy. For Christians, Easter is about the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, but the research shows that the Catholics’ use of “Easter” in Acts 12:4 (KJV) stems not from the religious observance of the Jesus holiday but from the Anglo-Saxon culture where “Eostre” or “Eastre” (among other spellings of the name of the German fertility goddess) was the goddess of fertility whose rituals were performed in Spring Equinox. Secular paganism celebrated the seasons that “Mother Earth” or some nature god/goddess gave to humanity, so the Spring festivals of the pagan culture were used as

a bridge to help Roman Catholics win pagans over to Christianity. Using the word “Easter,” a word that pagans would recognize, as well as maintaining the German folklore tradition of bunnies and easter eggs, would also help win converts to the kingdom of God.

And yet, how many converts has the Catholic Church won to the faith because they’ve maintained pagan elements and the name “Easter”? That’s the question. The Christian Church, even down to now, is guilty of what has been called “syncretism”: the practice of merging different views together by keeping elements of one and adding them to elements of the other. The Catholic Church decided to keep pagan elements of bunnies, easter eggs, and the name of the holiday that matches the name of the German fertility goddess (“Easter”) with Christian elements of Jesus, the Cross, and His death and resurrection.

Some have said that the claims of the evidence above are not true: “Only Venerable Bede makes the connection with the pagan fertility goddess Eostre, Eastre, etc., that Bede is only one source and we can’t validate anything he says because he’s one source alone.” Well, commentator Adam Clarke is another source (though much later on the scene than Bede), who suggests that the KJV translators took the word “Easter” in their translation of Acts 12:4 from Anglo-Saxon translations of Scripture. The Geneva Bible had Acts 12:4 as “Passover,” interestingly enough, but the KJV translators didn’t borrow from the Geneva Bible; rather, they borrowed

from erroneous translations to craft their own. We know from David Daniell's 2003 work titled *The Bible In English: Its History and Influence* that [all 47 translators of the KJV were members of the Church of England](#). Additionally, the KJV was designed to reinforce the theology, beliefs, and practices of the Church of England (after all, it is called the "King James" Version, is it not?). Therefore, the Catholic Church is responsible for the propagation of this secular holiday, with a secular name, to the English-speaking world.

Easter is a secular holiday. Starting with its name, the word "Easter" means "dawn" or "daybreak" and was given to the Spring Equinox festival to celebrate the "dawning" of Spring. If you've ever heard of Fall Festivals, then you'll understand there were festivals for all four seasons of the year (including Spring). Spring was to commemorate "newness of life," the blooming and blossoming of creation once more after the harshness of winter, and Spring had a festival. The pagans worshipped the fertility goddess "Eastre" or "Eostre" and commemorated her "gift" to the world by celebrating Spring in festival fashion. This started with the Anglo-Saxons and Germans, and made its way into the KJV translation because Roman Catholics (then and now) endorse Easter. Perhaps the syncretized holiday was used to win Christian converts, but regardless of this, there can be no dispute that the Roman Catholic Church put its stamp of approval on Easter with the inclusion of the pagan name and word into its KJV Bible in Acts 12:4.

And because the KJV has had such a profound influence upon the English world, so has the pagan holiday that many Christians erroneously attribute or credit to Christ. Today, Christians celebrate Christ in their homes and churches while churches host Easter egg hunts, give chocolate bunnies for candy and dessert, and give kids bunny rabbits to paint and color on in coloring books, which many Christians presume is “just part of the holiday.”

Except, it isn't; it isn't normal that we just assume that tradition is right and that Easter eggs and bunnies have anything to do with Christianity and Jesus. They don't. I've pointed out in my research that some believe Easter eggs are representative of Jesus coming out of the tomb. And yet, that view is problematic because, as a Baptist Christian growing up, I never heard of Easter eggs referring to anything other than bunny rabbits who lay eggs. That was all. The “cracking of the egg” never referred to the tomb stone being rolled away and Jesus rising from the dead; I never heard that once in my house, church, and not even at a conservative Southern Baptist seminary I attended as an adult for nine years. And while Christians in defense of the “Easter” name can attempt to explain away the Easter egg and Jesus' tomb, what about the bunny rabbit or the rabbit? How does the rabbit reflect what Jesus did at Calvary? The best response I've ever gotten is found in this research: that is, that the rabbit represents purity. But even that makes little sense because rabbits multiply and produce progeny because they're animals. I could make more sense of the idea if we were talking about lambs and sheep as the animal(s) of choice; but the bunny

rabbit? Bunnies? It just seems as though Christian defenders of Easter are trying to make sense of it all because they can't admit to themselves that Easter is truly a pagan holiday.

The KJV's use of "Easter" in Acts 12:4 is out of the blue, random, and doesn't fit with the use of the word *pasxa* throughout the remainder of Scripture. Paul calls Jesus "our Passover" in 1 Corinthians 5, not "our Easter" or "our Easter lamb," etc. The fact that Paul could write to the Gentiles and use the word "Passover" shows that Paul believed the Gentiles would know what it meant. Attempts to refrain from using the word "Passover" today are done out of anti-Semitism rather than biblical fidelity. If Christ is "our Passover," then we should celebrate Passover and abandon Easter.

The Roman Catholics chose to change Winter Solstice. The pagans celebrated the Winter Season with a festival, and the Catholics decided to name the Christian Winter festival *Christ-mass*, or *Christmas*. Even if they named it as a "mass" in true Roman Catholic fashion, Protestant Christians can still appreciate the holiday because it is a season that celebrates the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, what the Catholics did to the Winter Solstice they abandoned for the Spring Equinox: they didn't rename the Spring celebration but kept it named after the German fertility goddess.

And that, along with the secular elements of bunnies and easter eggs, is the problem with Easter: to this day, some near 1,500 years after the church declared an official date of celebration for the Jesus holiday, we've still maintained the pagan elements of bunnies and easter eggs. And yet, Scripture has always warned us against adopting pagan elements into our Christian practices:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. **2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.** (Romans 12:1-2)

21 And you shall not let any of your descendants pass through *the fire* to Molech, **nor shall you profane the name of your God:** I *am* the Lord. (Leviticus 18:21)

25 You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it *is* an abomination to the Lord your God. **26** Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. **You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it *is* an accursed thing.** (Deuteronomy 7:25-26)

29 "When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, **30** take heed

to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' ³¹

You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. (Deuteronomy 12:29-31)

As people who are “a royal priesthood” and “a holy nation” to the Lord, how is it that we can continue to justify “Easter” as the name of the Jesus holiday when the goddess “Easter” is set up by the pagans as an alternative to Jesus, whom Christians believe to be the one true living God? Remember what God says in Exodus 20:3? “Have no other gods before Me,” He says. Why then, do we claim to celebrate a holiday on behalf of one God (Jesus) but then have the holiday named after a goddess (Eostre, Eastre)? Might it be that we’ve never actually given thought to the pagan roots and origin of one of the most beloved holidays of the year? I think so.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they couldn’t eat food sacrificed to idols and still partake of the communion of Christ:

¹⁴ Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the

communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

¹⁸ Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? ¹⁹ What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? ²⁰ Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. ²² Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? (1 Corinthians 10:14-22)

Let verses 18-22 sink in. When someone eats of the sacrifices given to idols, they are a partaker in idolatry; similarly, when one celebrates a holiday named after a pagan fertility goddess, he or she is also an idolater and worshipper of the fertility goddess --- even if the individual isn't aware of it. What this means is that many of us, including our parents, have been partakers of pagan ritual with bunnies and easter eggs down through the years. These are elements of German paganism, not of Christianity. Not even the Jews celebrated the fertility goddess, and we know from Scripture that God rejected the pagan gods, and thus, their pagan rituals as well. Why, then, are we guilty of profaning a holiday that we claim to be about Jesus but have named after a fertility goddess?

As Christians, we should be doing everything we can to bring everything in subjection to Christ; how much more the name of the holiday that is designed around Him, about Him, and for Him, that should bring glory to Him? Is it God-glorifying to have a “Baal,” “Ashtoreth,” or “Molech” event in the church that’s “all about Jesus?” If you wouldn’t attend a Jesus holiday named after Baal or Molech, pagan gods in Scripture, then why participate in a Jesus holiday named after a pagan goddess whose name isn’t even located in Scripture but mistakenly put there by translators?

So with all that’s been said, I have two suggestions for the current Christian Church worldwide. First, I suggest that we eliminate the bunnies, bunny rabbits, rabbits, etc., along with the Easter eggs. These are elements of Anglo-Saxon paganism and shouldn’t be used to characterize a Christian holiday that is all about Jesus, who is God above all gods. In their place, let’s add the lamb, sheep, or both. After all, Jesus is described in the Old Testament as a “sheep before shearers” (Isaiah 53:7) and John refers to Jesus as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36; Revelation 5:6; 7:17; 14:10; 15:3; 19:9; 21:22, 23; 22:1, 3), so these two animals would be more fitting for the Christian holiday than rabbits and Easter eggs. If we intend to use animals for the Jesus holiday, at least use animals that are descriptive of our Lord in Scripture. Even the lion would work for “the lion of Judah” (Revelation 5:5).

Next, as the Christian Church, we must change the name of our Jesus holiday to a name that is biblical and ultimately God-glorifying. Naming our Christian holiday after a pagan fertility goddess isn't God-glorifying. We could keep Good Friday but change "Easter Sunday" to "Resurrection Sunday"; change "Good Friday" to "Passover Friday," or call our Jesus holiday "Redemption" or "Salvation", "Resurrection," "Christian Passover," and so on. These are some names that would work for our Jesus holiday, but "Easter" is a pagan name that must go the way of the pagans --- out of the church.

My objection to Easter is not about Jesus, for I too, celebrate our Lord and Savior. My objection to Easter is not about His death and resurrection, but rather, that we ascribe His holiday, His memory, to the name of a pagan fertility goddess that is imaginary, has never lived, and doesn't exist. The whole point of the Passover and deliverance from Egypt was to show God's power over the false Egyptian gods. The same God who delivered His people to get the glory is the same God who wants the glory in the holiday that is about Him; we should honor Him by giving it a name that contains "Christ," in the same way that the Catholics created "Christ-mass" to celebrate His birth.

It all starts with acknowledging Easter's pagan origin and striving to distance ourselves from the pagan holiday and its pagan rituals. Let's reclaim *pasxa* in Acts 12:4, and let's reclaim the Christ in Christian.