

PART 2

50 REASONS THE LAST SUPPER WAS NOT THE PASSOVER

The purpose of this chapter is to list, in one location, many of the reasons why the Last Supper could not have been the eating of the Passover. While some reasons are very clear to see, others require more historical and biblical background to be fully understood. One of the strongest proofs stems from the fact that the day following this supper was *not* kept as the 15th-day great or high Sabbath. Many commentators don't seem to fully comprehend the consequences of this timing—that if the 14th-day Passover were eaten at the Last Supper, then the Crucifixion day would illegally land on this 15th-day Sabbath of the Passover Festival.

The Jewish nation revered the 15th day of Nisan, for it commemorated God delivering the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. God proclaimed that it be kept as an important Sabbath rest day, when “no work at all shall be done”; the only work allowed was preparing and eating the meals (Exodus 12:16, 17, 41, 42; Leviticus 23:7; Numbers 33:3). In the Old Covenant, He told the Israelites that “throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance” (Exodus 12:14). Even today Jews in Jerusalem celebrate this 15th day as a very special Sabbath.

Therefore, to determine which day was actually the 14th-day Passover, all we have to do is examine the events listed in the Gospels to see which day was kept as the 15th-day high Sabbath. But first let's turn to the use of leavened bread at the Last Supper as solid proof that this meal was not and could not have been the eating of the Passover.

Bread Is Good, But Not During the Passover!

The scriptures tell us over and over again that bread was eaten at the Last Supper by using *arton*, the standard Greek word for their daily leavened bread. This would have been both shocking and illegal had that meal been the Passover. According to God's commands, anyone who ate leaven at Passover or during this seven-day Festival was to be cut off from the nation (Exodus 12:15, 19). Even today observant Jews do not go around saying that they ate “bread” during Passover, but rather *matzah* (Hebrew for “unleavened”). How much more serious would this have been when Jesus lived? After all, according to the Talmud (Tract Maccoth, ch. 3, Mishna), even the high priest would be whipped for eating anything leavened during this seven-day Festival.

The truth is that the Last Supper was not the Passover, for it occurred at the end of the 13th day when bread was perfectly legal, and that is why the scriptures all say Jesus and his disciples ate bread at that supper.

It's important to understand that it was on the 13th day when the disciples asked Jesus where they should make ready for the Passover (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12), and then they ate the Last Supper that night—at the end of the 13th day. In “The Three Major Greek Keys That Unlock the Gospels,” we examined those two scriptures using the Greek dative of reference and saw that the disciples did not ask this question “*on*” the first day of the unleavened but “*with reference to* the first of the unleavened” (that is, to the soon-coming 14th day of the Passover sacrifice). The Last Supper couldn't possibly have been a Passover because under Jewish law, the 13th day would be an illegal time for the Passover.³⁰⁹

If the disciples had come to Jesus on the 14th day asking where they should prepare for the Passover, then obviously they would have eaten the Passover that night. But if that were the case, the disciples would not have done Jesus or themselves the injustice of portraying to everyone that they had eaten leavened bread at it. Jesus certainly would not have remained the spotless lamb if he had sinned before God and the nation by eating regular bread at the Passover:

1. Matthew tells of Jesus eating **bread** at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:26) without qualifying it to be *matzah*. (Had this bread been unleavened, he would have used the Greek word *azumos*.) If the Jewish readers believed that the Last Supper was the Passover, it would have been shocking to them to think that Jesus and his disciples had actually been eating bread.
2. Mark also tells of Jesus eating **bread** at the Last Supper (Mark 14:22) and does not qualify it by showing that it was actually *matzah* (unleavened), which would have been required if the Last Supper had been the Passover.
3. Luke also shows Jesus eating **bread** at the Last Supper (Luke 22:17). The disciples would not risk portraying the Messiah and themselves as committing a major sin before God by eating regular bread, had the Last Supper been the Passover.

309 The chapters “The Template Challenge” and “The Three Major Greek Keys That Unlock the Gospels” contain many proofs of this question being asked on the 13th day. When the disciples “made ready” the Passover, this did not refer to slaying and cooking the lamb, but to the Jewish ritual preparations that were required before the Passover. The scriptures that *seem* to so clearly show Jesus eating the Passover at the Last Supper are explained in “The Three Major Greek Keys That Unlock the Gospels.”

4. John also shows the disciples eating *bread* at the Last Supper (John 13:18, 19) and quotes Jesus, who was quoting Psalm 41:9 concerning himself, saying that “the one eating my bread” would betray him. In this Psalm, God anointed David to use the Hebrew word for bread (*lechem*), not the word for unleavened (*matzah*). If God had known Christ would be betrayed at the Passover, this prophecy would have said “the one eating my *matzah*.” God knew that the Messiah would be betrayed by the one presently *eating* his bread (the Septuagint and New Testament both express this in the present tense). So when Jesus gives Judas the “sop” of bread, Judas goes out to betray him (John 13:30). Had the Last Supper been the Passover, no one would have been eating bread.
5. Most Greek dictionaries (including *BDAG*, *UBS*, and *Louw-Nida*) define the Greek word (*psomion*) usually translated as “sop” or “morsel” (in John 13:26, 27, 30) as a morsel “of bread.” The Jewish scholars who translated the Old Testament into the Greek Septuagint used the same Greek word for morsel of bread several times; it was never once used as a morsel of *matzah* (Ruth 2:14; 1 Samuel 28:22; 1 Kings 17:11; Proverbs 28:21). (This is fully covered in Course 1.)
6. Then Paul, who was not present at the Last Supper, says that he received special revelation from the Lord concerning the Last Supper, and we see he understood what Jesus meant with the one bread (1 Corinthians 11:23, 10:17). Paul uses the word “bread” seven times in six different scriptures to refer to what Jesus shared and ate at the Last Supper, but never once says that it was unleavened (1 Corinthians 11:23, 26, 27, 28, and indirectly in 1 Corinthians 10:16,17).
7. At the Last Supper, Jesus held one “bread,” broke it into pieces, and then said, “This is my body.” Paul, receiving special revelation from the Lord, states that *we* (the believers) are the body of Christ, and members of the spiritual body, as represented by the pieces of the one *bread* (1 Corinthians 10:17, 12:27, and throughout 1 Corinthians chapter 12).
 Since the *pieces* of bread represent us—the members of the spiritual body who are not yet perfected—it fits typologically that the bread is leavened. If the Messiah had been eating the Passover at the Last Supper and was therefore teaching a ritual with *matzah* (i.e., unleavened), then the “bread” in this supposed Jewish ritual would also have been *matzah*

(unleavened).³¹⁰ The fact is, however, that the Messiah did not mean for a ritual³¹¹ to be kept when he broke one regular leavened bread but was speaking spiritual truth instead.

8. At the Last Supper there was no mention of the three key ingredients of a Passover: a lamb, bitter herbs, and *matzah* (unleavened). However, **bread**—the one thing that must be avoided by all means at the Passover—is mentioned in the scripture 10 times in reference to what was eaten at this meal!

Commentators Attempt to Shoehorn the Passover into the Last Supper

There are some excellent commentators (like Adam Clarke) who see many of the problems associated with the day *after* the Last Supper not being a Sabbath. They see the impossibility of Jesus *slaying* a Passover on the 14th day and then *being slain himself* as the Passover the following day—yet with both days somehow still being the 14th day.³¹²

So they came up with the idea that Jesus sacrificed a Passover at the end of the 13th day (or during the night portion of this 14th day) and then ate it during this first half of the 14th day. Remember that the Jewish day ended at sundown. Thus the new day began with this dark period, just as in Genesis 1:1–5 where there was darkness (night), then there was light (day), and together this was the first day.

However, huge problems loom with this belief that Jesus sacrificed a Passover when the 14th day was just beginning, then ate it at the Last Supper. We will see in the following reasons why this double Passover option would have been impossible under the law of Moses:

9. This idea would involve Jesus and the disciples sacrificing an illegal Passover at a time other than that commanded by God. The Talmud is clear that a Passover slain before noon on the 14th day would not be valid,³¹³ and as the first-century Jewish biblical philosopher Philo

310 For more on this important history, see the chapter “The Ritual—Why Didn’t the Jewish Disciples Teach It?”

311 This is covered in the chapter “The Ritual—Why Didn’t the Jewish Disciples Teach It?”

312 See “The Double Passover Option” section in the chapter “The Template Challenge” for more proof that this option does not fit God’s commandments for this Jewish Feast.

313 Babylonian Talmud, Book 3, Pesachim, ch. 5, p. 113, <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/t03/psc09.htm>.

wrote, the Jews did not offer their sacrifices at night.³¹⁴ Furthermore, according to the Talmud, anyone eating meat from an illegal sacrifice (“piggul”) would be whipped.³¹⁵ Jesus would not have broken God’s law concerning the appointed time to slay the Passover, even if the Jewish authorities had allowed it. It is written of any man who would not offer the Passover in its “appointed time” that “that man shall bear his sin” (Numbers 9:13).

10. Jesus could not have sacrificed an illegal Passover at the beginning of this 14th day (as the 13th day ended), because leaven was not required to be removed from Israel until noon of the 14th day. This would have broken God’s strict commandment to not eat the Passover while leaven was still on hand in the nation.³¹⁶ Additionally, no Jewish historian writes of any change in the law of Moses that supposedly allowed the Passover to be sacrificed early, or of any new law that would be required for the nation to now remove the leaven early—on the 13th day—in time for early Passover sacrifices.
11. Another attempt to solve this controversy are the various two-calendar theories put forth by Anne Jaubert and others. Some of them believe Jesus used a *supposed* Pharisee calendar (slaying the Passover on its 14th day) and the rest of the Jews adhered to a *supposed* Sadducee calendar (sacrificing the Passover *the following day*, aligning with the book of John).

This idea may sound intriguing to some, but it quickly breaks down since these two supposed calendars (offset by one day) would have led to tremendous confusion around Jerusalem and the Temple as one person who carried a load on the Sabbath was accosted by the authorities, only to explain, “Oh, I keep the Sabbath of the other group.” Not to mention the fact that at Passover one group would still be eating bread because it was only *their* 13th day, while the other group was sacrificing the Passover with all leaven removed on *their* 14th day.

The idea of two 14th-day Passovers (and two 15th-day Sabbaths) in a row was never mentioned in the New Testament, the Talmud, or in the writings of Josephus, Philo, or any other early historian. This change

314 Yonge, *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, “Special Laws II,” 27:145, <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/philo/book28.html>.

315 Babylonian Talmud, Book 9, Tract Maccoth, ch. 3, p. 35, <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/t09/mac08.htm>.

316 For more on this, see the subsections “The 13th-Day Question” and “The 14th-Day True Passover” in the chapter “The Temple Challenge.”

would have been such a huge ordeal, requiring letters to be sent throughout Israel instructing that leaven be removed early from now on, and that two different calendars would now be followed for the Temple services, depending on which sect you followed. Yet this subject was never even debated by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, or those early historians. The only conclusion we can draw is that this two-calendar theory for first-century Jerusalem is a creation mostly out of thin air.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were written by a Jewish group who had withdrawn from participating in the Temple sacrifices and lived at Qumran, near the Dead Sea. These scrolls actually do portray that this group followed a slightly different calendar for some aspects of the festivals, but this has no bearing on what happened in Jerusalem, for the Temple authorities always knew when the 14th day was, in which to slay the Passover. Among Jews in Jerusalem, who carried out God's laws concerning these sacrifices, the 14th day of the month was counted from the sighting of each new moon, and there were never two different ways of counting to 14.

The scriptures clearly confirm that when Jesus lived, only one specific day existed to slay the Passovers in the Temple (then came the day to sacrifice the Passover, not then came one of the various days to slay the Passover, depending on which group you followed; 2 Chronicles 35:1; Luke 22:7).

Too Much Illegal Activity for This to Be the 15th-Day Sabbath

If the Last Supper had been the eating of the 14th-day Passover, then of course the following day would have been the 15th-day Sabbath, which the Jews always kept as a special day of rest.

Different types of Sabbaths were observed under the law of Moses. There was the standard Saturday Sabbath, but others, such as the Day of Atonement, were connected to the three annual festivals, and these could fall on other days of the week. These festival Sabbaths were strictly observed, and no God-fearing Jew in first-century Israel would violate these special rest days. In all, seven Holy Convocation Sabbaths were connected to the three annual festivals (Leviticus 23), and this 15th-day Sabbath is one of the more prominent.³¹⁷

However, as we will see below, the day *after* the Last Supper was definitely not kept as the 15th-day Sabbath, since it was filled with activities that were illegal for

317 For a complete list of these festival Sabbaths and additional information, see the subsection "The 15th-Day Sabbath" in the chapter "The Temple Challenge."

a Sabbath (proving again that the Last Supper could not have been the Passover). While it is true that various English translations³¹⁸ portray the Last Supper as the Passover, remember that they were translated by those who inherited this belief from the Roman Church.

Some commentators have accused first-century Jewish leaders of gross hypocrisy for neglecting Sabbath laws by arresting and pushing for Christ's Crucifixion on the Sabbath. However, the fact is that all these acts, such as carrying swords and clubs, took place on the 14th day—which was not a Sabbath—and therefore no such laws would have been broken. Since the Last Supper was not the eating of the Passover, but rather took place as the 13th day ended (i.e., at sundown), these activities that occurred later on that 14th day did not break any Sabbath laws.

So, had the Last Supper been the eating of the 14th-day Passover, then all these events on the day following would have occurred illegally on their 15th-day Sabbath:

12. When Judas left the Last Supper, the other disciples assumed he was going out to *buy something* needed for the Festival (John 13:29). If the Last Supper had indeed been the eating of the Passover, then the period after supper would have been *in* the 15th-day Sabbath rest (which starts at sundown); thus, going out to make purchases would have been illegal according to Jewish Sabbath law.
13. The concept that the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees would all *leave their homes* and their gathered families to go out and arrest Jesus—just after eating the Passover on this most holy night that celebrates God delivering them from Egypt—*does not fit the Jewish idiom* of this 15th-day Sabbath of the Passover, which represented being released from bondage.
14. It would have been illegal for chief priests, Temple officers, and Jewish elders to *carry swords* on the 15th-day Sabbath, yet they are pictured using them to go and arrest Jesus (Luke 22:52).
15. It would have also been illegal for these same people to *carry clubs* on the 15th-day Sabbath when they went outside the city to arrest Jesus (Luke 22:52), yet they are pictured carrying clubs.
16. The Sabbath laws would preclude these Jewish authorities from going out and *arresting a criminal* on the Sabbath, especially on the most

318 Those English translations and how they misunderstood the original Greek are covered in the chapter "The Three Major Greek Keys That Unlock the Gospels."

holy 15th-day Sabbath when God set the Israelites free from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:17, 42; 31:15; Numbers 33:3).

17. The chief priests made a covenant to pay Judas (Matthew 26:15) 30 pieces of silver—fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah (11:10–13)—to lead them to a successful arrest of Jesus. Then, *after* Judas led them to make that arrest, they *paid him* the silver. (Judas is later pictured throwing the money back to them in the Temple.) The fact that the chief priests paid Judas *after* the Last Supper shows that the Last Supper was not the 14th-day Passover, for *after* sunset of the 14th day would then have been the 15th-day Sabbath, when making such a payment would have been illegal.
18. Jewish laws were in place to prohibit exceeding the legal distance of walking on the Sabbath. If Jesus had been crucified on the holy 15th-day Sabbath, this commandment surely would have been broken by the chief priests, Temple officers, and Jewish elders as they left their homes to meet on this most holy night, then journeyed outside the city to arrest Jesus, then over to the house of Annas, then to where Caiaphas was, then to Pilate at the judgment hall, and finally back to their homes. Some suggest (and it is most likely true) that on festival days the Jewish commandment of a Sabbath-day's journey was relaxed; however, *walking all around the city* (especially while carrying torches and clubs to make an arrest and hold a trial) would take any relaxing of this law to an extreme.
19. A *fire was kindled* right in the court of the high priest (John 18:8) on this supposed 15th day, even though it was illegal to kindle a fire on the Sabbath (Exodus 35:3). While it is true that God made a special allowance for the preparation of food on this Sabbath (Exodus 12:16), it does not appear that this was the purpose of the fire in this court.
20. Under Jewish law it would have been illegal to *hold a trial* on the 15th-day Sabbath; even Roman law did not require the Jews to break the Sabbath in this way. Josephus relates that the Jews could not be compelled to go to court on the Sabbath, nor on the preparation day before the Sabbath after the ninth hour, which was around 3 PM.³¹⁹

319 Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, "Jewish Antiquities," 16.6.2, p. 536.

21. Jesus was compelled to *carry his cross* on the day of the Crucifixion, an activity that would have been illegal had this been the 15th-day Sabbath.
22. As Jesus carried his cross through the city, a great multitude of people followed, and women openly mourned and lamented (Luke 23:27, 48). According to Jewish history, *mourning was not allowed on a festival day* because it was considered a *duty to rejoice* at the festival (Deuteronomy 16:11–15; Ezra 6:22; Babylonian Talmud³²⁰). Therefore, the Last Supper couldn't have been the Passover since this would mean that all these Jewish people—with their open mourning and lamentation (Luke 23:27)—were breaking what they considered a commandment to rejoice during this 15th-day Festival Sabbath.
23. Simon was compelled to *carry the cross* when Christ no longer could. Again, this would be illegal on the Sabbath.
24. The Jews asked Pilate for the *legs of those crucified* (but not yet dead) *to be broken* so they wouldn't escape once they were let down. According to Jewish law, the bodies could not be on the cross during the soon-coming Sabbath (John 19:31). This is total and complete proof that the day of the Crucifixion was not a Sabbath, for if it had been the Sabbath the priests would not have pushed for Pilate to put the bodies up on crosses in the first place.
25. Had Jesus somehow been crucified on the 15th-day Sabbath, it also would have been illegal to *carry his body* to the burial site, as carrying any load was illegal on the Sabbath. But since the day *following* the Crucifixion was the 15th-day Sabbath, it's understandable that the disciples were rushing to move his body off the cross and into the tomb *before* that high Sabbath arrived (John 19:31; Luke 23:54).
26. Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy Jewish man who was a disciple of Christ (but kept it somewhat quiet until the Crucifixion, John 19:38). He was said by Luke to be a good and just man (Luke 23:50, 51) and by Mark to be a prominent member of the council (i.e., Sanhedrin, Mark 15:43). Yet had the day of Christ's Crucifixion been a Sabbath,

320 Babylonian Talmud, Book 3, Pesachim, ch. 10, p. 227, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/t03/psc14.htm>.

Joseph would have been seen publicly breaking the Sabbath laws by *purchasing* and *carrying fine linen* for a Jewish burial on this day (Matthew 27:57–60; Mark 15:46; John 19:40), activities that would have been illegal on the 15th-day Sabbath.

27. Nicodemus, a Jewish man and a Pharisee said by John to also be a “ruler of the Jews,” had previously come to Jesus privately, admitting that he knew Jesus had to be from God because of the miracles he was doing (John 3:1–9). Yet Nicodemus would then be pictured breaking the Sabbath laws by *carrying about 75 pounds of myrrh* to assist in the burial of Jesus (John 19:39) on what would have been the 15th day.
28. Concerning these burial laws, the Talmud and other Jewish writings state that it would be illegal to *bury anyone* on the Sabbath. The designation of “Sabbath” also includes the seven Festival Sabbaths, which are often called Holidays (Holy days).³²¹
29. Had the Last Supper been the Passover, then this would have Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, *rolling the large rock* down to close up the tomb (after laying the body of Jesus into the burial tomb) on this most holy 15th-day Sabbath (Matthew 27:60). Moving this large rock on the Sabbath would be illegal under Jewish law.

Jesus Was Not to Be Arrested in or during the Seven-Day Feast—the Festival Called Passover

The illegal activities listed in the previous section could never have been carried out on the Sabbath, and of course the powerful Jewish Sanhedrin understood this. This is why we see them, a few days before the Crucifixion, commanding that Jesus not be arrested “during the Festival” lest there be a riot among the people:

^{NAS} Matthew 26:3–5 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill *Him*. But they were saying, “**Not during the festival, lest a riot occur among the people.**”

321 Shulman, *Gateway to Judaism*, vol. 1, p. 571.

This time period was very specific to the Jews; this seven-day Festival began just after the Passover sacrifices with the setting of the sun, which marked the entrance into this 15th-day special Sabbath.

30. It would have been unfathomable for these chief priests, elders, and Temple officers to disregard the command of the Sanhedrin given just a few days earlier by *arresting Jesus right during the Feast/Festival* (Luke 22:52). Nor would they have publicly rebelled against God's Sabbath laws in this way by *arresting Jesus on this 15th-day Sabbath*, the highest holy day of the Festival (Exodus 23:15; Leviticus 23:6–8; Numbers 28:17).
31. The Sanhedrin understood that the people would riot if such an arrest were made during the Festival. However, we see *no disturbance at all among the people* at the time of Christ's arrest, trial, and Crucifixion. This is proof that his arrest and Crucifixion happened on the 14th day (which was not a Sabbath) instead of the 15th-day Sabbath, which would have been during the Festival.
32. By establishing the time at the Last Supper—while they were eating—as “before” the Feast of the Passover, John confirms that the arrest was not in or “during” the Feast/Festival:

^{NAS} John 13:1–2 Now **before** the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And **during supper**, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, to betray Him,

33. Later John shows that *the day of Christ's arrest, trial, and Crucifixion was the 14th-day Passover* since the Jews were concerned about ritual purity so that they “might eat the Passover” later that same day:

^{NAS} John 18:28 They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might **eat the Passover**.

Had the Last Supper been the Passover, Jesus would have been arrested “during the Feast,” and in the above scripture John would not have pictured the Jews eating the Passover the day following.

Some commentators, who rely on the English translations that portray Jesus as eating the Passover at the Last Supper, claim that John is referring to a Chagigah (or Hagigah) Festival offering instead. They are forced into this view in an attempt to explain this scripture that contradicts the idea of Jesus eating the Passover the previous night. However, the Greek word *Pascha* is correctly translated into English above as “the Passover.” Paul said Christ was “our Passover” in 1 Corinthians 5:7; he did not say Christ was our “Chagigah.”

34. Furthermore, John links Christ to the 14th-day Passover sacrifice, saying that *not a bone of his was broken* (John 19:36). Having no bones broken was a requirement of God for the Passover sacrifice only (Exodus 12:46), which would have had no meaning if Jesus had been crucified as the fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice a day late, on the 15th day of Nisan (which was *during* the Festival). If Jesus *had* eaten the Passover at the Last Supper and then been crucified the following day, he could not have been said to be the Passover, but rather Christ our “Chagigah” (as mentioned above). The requirement to not break a bone pertained to the Passovers; there was no such command for the Chagigah offerings.
35. Jesus could not have been slain as the Passover the day *after* he sacrificed and ate the Passover with his disciples. He could not slay the Passover one day, then eat it that night at the Last Supper, and then have his death fulfill the 14th-day Passover the following day. *Both of those days could not be the God-commanded 14th day* for the Passover to be slain.
36. God had Jesus in mind when He commanded Moses to slay the Passover on *this 14th day* of Nisan, which was *not* “during the Festival” (the Festival always began when the 14th day ended). Therefore it makes sense that Jesus was crucified on this 14th day just as God commanded Moses for the Passover. The scripture below says that Jesus was delivered up “by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God”:

^{NAS} Acts 2:23 this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

37. Even the *time* of day that God commanded to slay the Passovers was fulfilled when Jesus died at the proper legal time at the ninth hour (around 3 PM). Josephus states that the Jewish nation sacrificed the Passovers in the Temple from the ninth to the eleventh hour.³²² The Passovers were to be slain “between the evenings,” which meant between noon and sundown on the 14th day, and this was the exact time of the Messiah’s death. And the Passover was always sacrificed *before* the seven-day Festival, not in or during it.

The Hypothetical Last-Supper-Passover Story

As an intermission to the 50 reasons, imagine the following scenario:

Many prominent Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, including chief priests, are gathered with their relatives in their homes to partake of the Passover lamb and to tell stories of Moses bringing the Jews out of Egypt on this holy night—the 15th-day Sabbath that begins this Festival. Having eaten their Passovers, many of these Jews supposedly take up weapons and torches, and get ready to leave their families on this highly revered night to go out into the dark through the city to find this “deceiver” Jesus. First they knowingly violate God’s Sabbath laws, and then they disregard the Sanhedrin’s command that they not arrest Jesus “in the Festival.” The following hypothetical conversation arises in various Jewish homes:

Son: Father, where are you going on this most special holy 15th-day Sabbath after we have just eaten the Passover?

Father: Oh, I’m just heading out to Gethsemane with a group of chief priests, elders, and officers of the Temple to arrest that Jesus who has been causing so much trouble.

Son: But Father, will not such an activity break the meaning of this most holy Sabbath that God commanded?

Father: Listen son, don’t embarrass me in front of all the relatives. We can’t follow God’s laws all the time, and this is important.

Son: But Father, you are carrying a torch and a weapon; you always taught us against carrying such things on the Sabbath, and how much more on this most holy Sabbath when our people were

322 Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, “Jewish Wars,” 6.9.3, p. 906.

delivered from Egypt? You always told me not to lift anything that weighed more than a dried fig on this day, and now you pick up a weapon and a torch?

Father: Son, you know I have strictly kept God's Sabbaths. I even rebuked the man that Jesus healed on the Sabbath, for he carried his bed after the miracle healing. Son, you know that I have never even carried a dry fig on the Sabbath, but tonight, in front of all my Sabbath-obeying relatives, I am throwing all of those laws out the window. As the heathens say, "Sabbath be darned!"

Then Cousin Habib speaks up: Surely you know that the powerful Sanhedrin held court just the other day, and they kept commanding that this man *not* be arrested *in* the Festival, and surely you understand that having just eaten the Passover, we are now *in* the Festival, do you not?

Father: I know, I know. Multitudes of us—elders, chief priests, and Pharisees—all understood the Sanhedrin's commandments the other day, but we've decided to break God's laws concerning the Sabbath and also ignore the Sanhedrin, and go out and arrest Jesus right during the Festival. What's the big problem?

Considering God's laws and the Jews' strict adherence to these Sabbath laws in first-century Jerusalem, it could not be more obvious that such a scenario would have been impossible (had the Last Supper been the Passover). The 15th day was a holy day of rest as commanded by God, and the Jewish nation always commemorated it as a very special day. Since Jesus was arrested several hours after his Last Supper by these chief priests and Temple officers carrying clubs and torches (activities that would have been illegal on the 15th-day Sabbath that follows the 14th-day Passover), it is clear that the Last Supper was not the Passover.

The 15th-Day Great Sabbath Was the Day after the Crucifixion

As we've seen before, if the Last Supper had been the eating of the 14th-day Passover, then the Crucifixion would have been on the 15th-day Sabbath.

The Jews always observed God's commands to keep the 15th day as a special Sabbath rest, and even today in Israel the Sabbath-following Jews still faithfully observe this day. Anyone who would try to deny that the 15th day was not kept as a Sabbath does not understand Jewish history.

The Pharisees argued that this 15th day of Nisan was the Sabbath spoken of in Leviticus (23:11, 15), in which God commanded the Israelites to make the first-fruits sheaf offering (the Omer) “on the morrow of the Sabbath.” The Sadducees countered that it referred instead to the morrow of the regular Saturday Sabbath (the first Saturday after the Passover). The Pharisees had their way in this debate, at least during the time of Josephus, because we can see from his writings that this offering occurred on the 16th day of Nisan, the “morrow” of the 15th-day Festival Sabbath.³²³ The history is clear that the first-century Jews understood the 15th day to be a Sabbath; therefore, had the Last Supper been the Passover, the following day would have been kept throughout Israel as this Sabbath.

However, the Gospels establish that the 15th-day Sabbath did *not* occur on the day *following* the Last Supper. Instead this high Sabbath is seen coming at the end of the Crucifixion day, which aligns with Christ being crucified as the true Passover on the 14th day.

38. Mark shows that *Jesus was on the cross the day before the Sabbath*, not on the 15th-day Sabbath:

^{NIV} Mark 15:42 It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached,

39. John, too, shows that the *day of Crucifixion was not a Sabbath*, as the Jews rushed to take the bodies down from the crosses and move them into a tomb for a proper Jewish burial before the soon-coming Sabbath arrived:

^{NAS} John 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (**for that Sabbath was a high day**), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Jewish law would not allow for bodies to remain on the cross during a Sabbath, and therefore it makes no sense that Jesus and the other two would be crucified and put up on the cross for several hours on this hallowed 15th-day “Holy Convocation” Sabbath. The scriptures agree with Jewish law.

323 Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, “Jewish Antiquities,” 3.10.5, p. 133.

40. The women who had left the scene after seeing Christ's body put in the tomb first went and *prepared spices and perfumes*; then when the Sabbath arrived "they rested according to the commandment."

^{NAS} Luke 23:56 And they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they **rested** according to the commandment.

If the Last Supper had been the eating of the Passover, then the next day would have been the 15th-day Sabbath when no mundane work (such as preparing spices and ointments) was allowed. These women would not have labored on the 15th-day Sabbath and then rested the following day, proving again that the Crucifixion was not on the 15th-day Sabbath.

41. Luke makes it clear that the *day of the Crucifixion was not this 15th-day Sabbath*, for after Jesus's body was taken down he says, "the Sabbath was about to begin":

^{NIV} Luke 23:54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath **was about to begin**.

The chief priests would never push to crucify people on the 15th-day Sabbath, and then show concern later in the day that another Sabbath was about to begin. The fact that the day *following* the Crucifixion was the soon-coming 15th-day Sabbath fits perfectly with Jesus being crucified as the true Passover on the 14th day.

The Gospels All Agree

Much has been written about the supposed contradiction between John's Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) concerning the Last Supper and the Passover. However, since God anointed these scripture writers to give us the truth, it makes sense that they were not confused as to whether the Last Supper was the Passover or not. It should be no surprise, then, that John agrees with the other three Gospels that *the day of the Crucifixion* was the *preparation* day (*paraskeuy* in Greek) for the soon-coming 15th-day Sabbath (which begins the seven-day Festival *called* Passover, Luke 22:1).

Had the Gospel writers somehow believed that the Last Supper was the eating of the 14th-day Passover, how could they all agree in stating that the following day was one of preparation?

A Sabbath day is never mistakenly called a “preparation,” because preparation always takes place the day *before* a Sabbath. This is the day when all necessary work is done to make ready for the Sabbath (when work was forbidden). The first-century Jewish historian Josephus used this same Greek word for preparation (*paraskeuy*), stating that even the Roman authorities did not compel the Jews to appear in court on the Sabbath day “or on the *preparation* for it after the ninth hour” (Antiquities 16.6.2). Roman authorities knew that on the day *preceding* the Sabbath, the Jews would be busy in the afternoon (“ninth hour,” i.e., around 3 PM) “preparing” for the coming Sabbath.

The Jewish Encyclopedia also speaks of *paraskeuy*, indicating that it was the day before *any* Sabbath—including the Festival Sabbaths—and not just the day before the Saturday Sabbath, as many theologians have believed:

The eve of Jewish holidays is therefore not the evening of the festival, but the day preceding it; in conversation, the expression “‘ereb yom tob” is even extended to denote an indefinite period **preceding the holiday**. It is observed as a day on which is prepared (*paraskeuy*) such work as it not permitted to do **on the holiday or on the Sabbath**.³²⁴

The *BDAG Greek-English Lexicon* shows that the Greek word translated as “*preparation*” (*paraskeuy*) speaks of a definite day:

only of a definite day, **as the day of preparation for a festival**³²⁵

The *Louw-Nida Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* also bears this out:

παρασκευή, ἡς *f*: a day on which preparations were made for a **sacred or feast day** – ‘day of preparation, Friday . . .’ The identification of παρασκευή with Friday became so traditional that it eventually came to be the present-day Greek term for ‘Friday.’³²⁶

Roman theologians assumed the Greek word *paraskeuy* meant “Friday” (i.e., “Good Friday”), the day they believed Christ was crucified.³²⁷ But in first-century Israel,

324 *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, p. 276, s.v. “Eve of Holidays.”

325 Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (BDAG)*, 3rd ed., p. 771.

326 Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, p. 654, s.v. “παρασκευή, ἡς.”

327 See the section “The Roman Catholic Option” in the chapter “The Template Challenge.”

the day before the Saturday Sabbath was known as the sixth day of the week (the Jews did not call it Friday), and this sixth day was always a preparation day for the Saturday Sabbath. In contrast, preparation for the 15th-day Sabbath of the Passover could fall on a different day of the week each year.

Our discussion here focuses on this preparation day for the high 15th-day Sabbath of the Passover. The following scriptures show that all four Gospels agree that the Crucifixion day was the preparation day (*paraskeuy*):

42. Matthew shows that the day Christ was crucified was called the **preparation**, where we see the chief priests and Pharisees gathered the day **after** his death:

^{NAS} Matthew 27:62 Now on the next day, which is *the one* after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate

43. Mark agrees with Matthew, showing that the day Christ was crucified was the **preparation**, and that this preparation was the day **before** the Sabbath:

^{NIV} Mark 15:42 It was Preparation Day (that is, **the day before** the Sabbath). So as evening approached,

44. Luke agrees with Matthew and Mark that the day of the Crucifixion was the **preparation**, and he also states that the Sabbath was about to begin:

^{NIV} Luke 23:54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

45. John gives us the added information that the day of the Crucifixion was not just the preparation for any Sabbath, but that it was specifically the “preparation of the Passover”:

^{NAS} John 19:14 Now it was the day of **preparation** for **the Passover**; it was about the sixth hour.³²⁸ And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!”

328 The controversy as to this being called the sixth hour is explained in the section “What Does John Mean by the Sixth Hour?” in the chapter “Between the Evenings.”

This was the preparation for the great or high³²⁹ Sabbath (depending on the translation):

^{YLT} John 19:31 The Jews, therefore, that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, since it was the **preparation**, (for that sabbath day was a **great** one,) asked of Pilate that their legs may be broken, and they taken away.

^{NAS} John 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the day of **preparation**, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a **high day**), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.

Then John writes that because it was the day of preparation and the Sabbath was soon coming, they put Jesus in the nearby tomb:

^{NAS} John 19:42 Therefore on account of the Jewish day of preparation, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

So while some commentators argue that the Gospels are at variance, what we really see is that all four Gospels are in perfect agreement³³⁰ when the Greek is fully understood. For more on the Greek word *paraskeuy* and on the different preparations, see the chapter “Three Major Greek Keys that Unlock the Gospels.”

The Third Day Since

When we take all of the scriptures into account and consider the Jewish idioms for this Festival and the meaning of the original Greek, here is what we see. The church tradition of Jesus eating the Passover at the Last Supper on our Thursday evening and being crucified on “Good Friday” does not fit either the Gospels or the Jewish template for this Festival, as the following reasons show:

329 The Greek word translated “great” and “high” in these verses is *megaly*, which is the same Greek word John uses for another of the seven Holy Convocation Festival Sabbaths—the Sabbath of the eighth day of the Festival of Tabernacles (John 7:31).

330 Credit is due to Brooke Westcott (*Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, p. 343) for seeing that all the Gospel writers harmonize as to this preparation day, and that they all use this Greek word *paraskeuy* for the preparation day on which the Crucifixion occurred.

46. Beginning in Luke 24:1 is the account of Jesus walking with the disciples on the first day of the week (Sunday) after the Resurrection. God had withheld their eyes from recognizing Jesus, whom they told of “these things” that happened concerning Christ, such as his being delivered up to death and being crucified:

^{KJV} Luke 24:20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

And they said that it was now “the third day since these things happened”:

^{NAS} Luke 24:21 “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, **it is the third day since** these things happened.

As per Catholic Church tradition, if Jesus had sacrificed a Passover on Thursday, eaten it that night at the Last Supper, and then been condemned and crucified on “Good Friday,” then Saturday would have been the “first day since” these things happened (i.e., him being delivered up, condemned, and crucified). Following on from that, Sunday would only be the “second day since.”³³¹

However, since the Last Supper was *not* the Passover and Jesus was instead crucified on Thursday (the 14th of Nisan that year, AD 30), then Friday (the 15th-day Sabbath) would have been the “first day since” he was tried, condemned, and crucified. The Saturday Sabbath would have been the “second day since,” and Sunday would have been the “third day since these things happened,” just as the scripture says in Luke 24:21.

Additional Scriptural Proofs

47. Right along with this point is the declaration by Jesus that he would be in the tomb three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40). The Thursday Crucifixion fits this perfectly, but the church tradition of Jesus eating the Passover at the Last Supper and being crucified on Good Friday

³³¹ See the sections “The Early Roman Catholic Option” and “Sunday the Third Day Since” in the chapter “The Temple Challenge” for more on why this option does not fit.

allows him to be in the tomb only *two* nights—Friday and Saturday—because he was resurrected early Sunday morning before sunrise. Some try to shoehorn this as well, but you cannot make two nights be three nights.³³²

48. Luke also quotes Jesus using the Greek double negative (the strongest negation in Greek³³³) to say that he would *not* eat this Passover *before his suffering*, even though he greatly desired to do so. Jesus is speaking of the soon-coming Passover that would be sacrificed during the “afternoon” of what was the 14th Jewish day. The Last Supper was not the Passover, otherwise Jesus *would have* eaten the Passover before his suffering (Luke 22:15, 16). For Jesus to *refuse* to eat it (had the Last Supper been the Passover) would have been a sin before God and the nation; being in Jerusalem and refusing to partake of the Passover was not an option (Numbers 9:13).
49. Also, if Jesus really planned to be there to eat the Passover, why does he use the Greek subjunctive mood—which often implies unreality or doubt—*every time* he speaks of his *eating* of the Passover? In Greek, the indicative mood is used to make a statement that you are certainly going to do something; yet when Jesus refers to his *eating* of the Passover that year, he always uses the subjunctive mood. And the single time he uses the indicative (the mood of certainty), he does not say that he will “eat” the Passover but that he will “perform, accomplish” the Passover.³³⁴
50. Jesus said he would be crucified at the Passover:

^{DBY} Matthew 26:2 Ye know that after two days **the passover takes place**, and the Son of man is **delivered up to be crucified**.

If he understood that he was the true Passover as God intended, and he meant the 14th-day Passover, then he could not have sacrificed a Passover the previous day for the Last Supper. He obviously meant and understood that he himself would be crucified on the 14th day, which

332 As covered in the section “Sunday the Third Day Since” in the chapter “The Template Challenge.”

333 For more on this Greek double negative, see the chapter “The Three Major Greek Keys That Unlock the Gospels.”

334 For more on this, see the chapter “The Three Major Greek Keys That Unlock the Gospels.”

was called the Passover in the Israelite scriptures (Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:5; 28:16, Joshua 5:10; 2 Chronicles 30:15; 35:1; Ezra 6:19, Ezekiel 45:21) and which was the legal time to slay the Passovers.

Jesus intended the more traditional sense of the word “Passover” (the 14th day). He would not have meant the 15th day, which was also sometimes *called* Passover.³³⁵ He would have known the impossibility of being crucified on the 15th-day Sabbath since all Jewish laws forbade such a thing (John 19:31). He also would have known it was impossible to be crucified at any time during the seven-day Festival called Passover, for this would cause a riot among the people, according to the Sanhedrin. He surely knew that he was the 14th-day Passover in type, and from the prophecies in Daniel³³⁶ and elsewhere, he knew that his time had come. This is part of why he knew this 14th-day Passover (Matthew 26:2 above) was his last day, as John also shows:

^{DBY} John 13:1 Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus, **knowing that his hour had come** that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end.

Extra-Credit Reasons

The following evidence strengthens the findings that Jesus did not eat the Passover at the Last Supper.

51. The history is clear that the Messianic believers living in Asia (to whom John wrote in Revelation 1:4) continued to keep the 14th of Nisan as a special time to commemorate the day Christ finished the work. Called “Quartodecimans” (a Latin word meaning “Fourteenters”) by Rome, these Asiatic believers fasted on this day *until* the ninth hour (the time Jesus was on the cross); then *at* the ninth hour—the time of Christ’s death—they rejoiced in the fact that Christ’s finished work had provided redemption (see “Setting the Table 1”).

These early Jewish followers knew that Jesus died on the 14th day and could not have eaten a Passover at the Last Supper. They continued to

335 This is explained in the subsection “The 14th-Day True Passover” in the chapter “The Temple Challenge.”

336 Daniel shows that the Messiah was to be cut off in the midst of the week (meaning a week of years), and Christ was crucified after a 3½-year ministry.

observe the 14th day of Nisan—regardless of which day of the month it fell—as their Jewish day of the Passover and especially to commemorate the day of the Crucifixion, when Christ fulfilled the Passover.

52. Renowned biblical and Greek scholar Brooke Foss Westcott states that the earliest church history is nearly unanimous in agreeing that the Last Supper was *not* the Passover, but that Jesus was crucified on the 14th day:

“Now, as far as it appears, early tradition is **nearly unanimous** in fixing the **Crucifixion on the 14th**, and in **distinguishing the Last Supper from the legal Passover**. This distinction is expressly made by Apollinaris, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Irenaeus, who represent very different sections of the early Church.”³³⁷

53. Even the Talmud says Christ’s death was on the 14th day: “on the eve of the Passover Yeshu [the Nasorean] was hanged.”³³⁸ “Yeshu” is the shortened form for Yeshua (Jesus), and “hanged” refers to being hung upon a tree (or any wooden plank) in Deuteronomy 21:23. It is clear from *The Jewish Encyclopedia* and the Talmud that the “eve of Passover” is the 14th day, so the Talmud agrees with all the other timing we have seen in the scriptures.
54. God bringing darkness over the land from noon until 3 PM (Matthew 27:45) fits perfectly with Jesus being slain on the 14th day, for at noon the legal time began to sacrifice the Passovers. It also may have been a sign that God would no longer look upon or accept the Passover sacrifices or any of *the animal sacrifices*. This also fits with Amos 8:9–10 where God said that in that day He would make the sun go down at noon and “make the earth dark in broad daylight.” (For more on this period of darkness, see the following chapter “Between the Evenings.”)

337 Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, p. 347. See “Setting the Table 1” for more on this.

338 The Soncino Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin, Folio 43a, http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html. In this source, next to “Yeshu” is a footnote that says, “Ms.M. adds ‘the Nasorean.’”