

PART 2

THE THREE MAJOR GREEK KEYS THAT UNLOCK THE GOSPELS

There are three Greek language keys that unlock the truth of the Gospels while solving the apparent contradiction between John and the other Gospel writers as to whether the Last Supper was the Passover or not. There is no question that the English translations of Matthew, Mark, and Luke *seem* to state that the Last Supper *was* the Passover. But one must remember that the Gospels were not originally written in English but in Greek. When Jewish idioms and Passover laws are considered along with original Greek scriptures, it's evident that the story told, after Rome disconnected from these Jewish understandings, is inaccurate. These language keys will help us get back to the truth.

The first key is the Greek *subjunctive mood*, which can imply doubt and uncertainty. The subjunctive mood is used every time Jesus refers to his actual eating of the Passover in the Greek language, but its use does not always carry over into the English translations of the Gospels. This seemingly small change has huge implications for accurately determining whether the Last Supper was the Passover or not.

The second key is the Greek *dative of reference*, which affects the meaning of Greek articles (a common article in English is “the”). In the English language, these Gospel accounts seem straightforward; yet in the original Greek language, the dative case brings additional shades of meaning. This is important because, as Greek scholar Daniel B. Wallace noted in *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, one in seven words in the Greek scriptures is an article.

The third key is the Greek *aurist tense*, which Greek scholar Buist M. Fanning suggests is like a “snapshot” that “presents an occurrence in summary.”²⁷³ We will examine how such a snapshot helps us interpret Luke 22:7 in the proper light.

I realize that many readers are not versed in Greek, but please don't think “It's all Greek to me” or assume this will be too difficult. I'll explain these concepts in ways that those without Greek training can understand. So let's start right in with the first key.

273 Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in the New Testament Greek*, p. 97.

Key 1: The Subjunctive Mood

The Greek subjunctive mood is often used when there is doubt regarding the accomplishment of an action. It can imply uncertainty—from the speaker’s point of view—regarding *the reality* of the action. Many Greek scholars corroborate this as being one aspect of the subjunctive:

A. T. Robertson, in his *Short Grammar of the New Testament*, writes that the subjunctive can be the mode “of **doubtful** assertion.”²⁷⁴

Dana and Mantey offer that “While the indicative **assumes** reality, the subjunctive assumes **unreality**.”²⁷⁵

Daniel Wallace writes, “The subjunctive thus, at times, is used for mere *possibility* or even **hypothetical possibility** (as well as, at other times, probability).”²⁷⁶

So the Greek subjunctive mood can have a range of meanings, including doubt, hypothetical possibility, or even unreality. Let’s look at a few examples of the Greek subjunctive in scriptures, with the subjunctive words emphasized in boldface.

Example 1: It is used in the following verse to convey uncertainty:

^{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.

On the day of the Crucifixion, Jewish guards wouldn’t enter the Praetorium judgment hall lest they become ritually unclean according to Mosaic law and thereby unable to eat the Passover. Probably believing that Christ would be killed by the Roman prefect Pilate, a man not known for tolerating dissent (Luke 13:1), the guards refrained from entering a structure that could contain a dead body in order that they “**might** not be defiled.” They did not enter in, so that they “**might** eat” (subjunctive mood in Greek) the Passover later that day.

Example 2: Jesus uses the subjunctive when he speaks to the woman at Jacob’s well, where he refers to “whoever **may drink**” of the water that he will give. This indicates

274 Robertson and Davis, *New Short Grammar*, p. 309.

275 Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 170.

276 Wallace, *The Basics of New Testament Syntax*, p. 201.

that the drinking is conditional and based on the choice of each individual; not all will choose to drink. Jesus does not actually have natural water to give but is pointing to spiritual drink:

^{YLT} John 4:14a but whoever **may drink** of the water that I will give ...

Example 3: The subjunctive is also used in John 6:5, when Jesus knows the disciples had nowhere near enough money to buy sufficient bread so that the great multitude “*may eat*.”

^{KJV} John 6:5–7 When Jesus then lifted up *his* eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these **may eat**? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

This is like being on a long hike with only two dollars in your wallet, coming across 5,000 hungry people, and having your friend ask you, “Where should we buy food so all these people might eat?” With no store for miles and hardly any money to buy food, the impossibility of the question would be readily apparent. However, verse 7 above shows that Jesus is only testing Philip, for Jesus knows that he himself will supply the bread. The subjunctive illustrates the unreality of the question.

Example 4: A few more scriptures in John 6 bring out the subjunctive’s aspect of unreality particularly well. One of them is verse 51, in which Jesus speaks of himself as being bread that the multitudes “*may eat*.”

^{YLT} John 6:51a ‘I am the living bread that came down out of the heaven; if any one **may eat** of this bread he shall live—to the age²⁷⁷

Jesus has been dealing with a stubborn group who received the bread that he multiplied out by the thousands the previous day, and who then return the next day wanting more. When Jesus points out that they aren’t coming to be close to where God’s spirit is moving but only to get more free bread (verse 26), they essentially tempt Jesus to be like Moses and give bread each day, as when the manna came down from heaven (verses 30–32). After he tells them that he is “the living bread that came down from heaven” (the true spiritual manna), Jesus uses the subjunctive

277 “To the age” means eternally here.

to say that they “*may* eat” of this bread—meaning that his teaching is spiritual food from heaven—and live.²⁷⁸

Subjunctive Mood Used by Jesus in Reference to Eating the Passover

Notice below how every time Jesus is quoted speaking about actually *eating* the Passover, he uses this Greek subjunctive mood (“may eat” or “might eat”) to imply doubt, uncertainty, or even unreality:

^{NAS} Mark 14:14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher says, “Where is My guest room in which I **may eat** the Passover with My disciples?””

^{GNT} Mark 14:14 καὶ ὅπου ἐὰν εἰσέλθῃ εἶπατε τῷ οἰκοδεσπότη ὅτι Ὁ διδάσκαλος λέγει, Ποῦ ἐστὶν τὸ κατάλυμά μου ὅπου τὸ πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου **φάγω**;

Had Jesus truly believed he was going to eat the Passover, he would have used the Greek indicative (the mood of certainty) above to say “will eat” instead of the subjunctive (“may eat”).

Remember that Jesus gives his disciples these directions only *after* they finally come to him asking where they should prepare for Passover. In Luke, Jesus is also quoted using the subjunctive (translated below as “may eat”):

^{NAS} Luke 22:8 And He sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we **may eat** it.”

^{GNT} Luke 22:8 καὶ ἀπέστειλεν Πέτρον καὶ Ἰωάννην εἰπών, Πορευθέντες ἐτοιμάσατε ἡμῖν τὸ πάσχα ἵνα **φάγωμεν**.

^{NAS} Luke 22:11 “And you shall say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room in which I **may eat** the Passover with My disciples?’”

^{GNT} Luke 22:11 καὶ ἐρεῖτε τῷ οἰκοδεσπότη τῆς οἰκίας, Λέγει σοι ὁ διδάσκαλος, Ποῦ ἐστὶν τὸ κατάλυμα ὅπου τὸ πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου **φάγω**;

278 John also quotes Jesus using the subjunctive again in verses 53 and 54, where the eating and drinking are obviously unreal in the natural or literal sense but meant as spiritual truth.

Again, Jesus does not say that he *will* eat (indicative) the Passover, but rather he “*may* eat” (subjunctive), implying doubt or unreality. Jesus knows that he is the lamb of God—the true Passover—and therefore that he won’t be around to eat the Passover lamb:

^{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.**

Although Jesus tells his disciples he will be crucified at Passover, and he had previously mentioned his impending death a few times already, his disciples still cannot fathom that the Messiah is actually going to die:

^{NAS} Mark 9:31 For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.”

^{NAS} Mark 9:32 But **they did not understand *this* statement**, and they were afraid to ask Him.

In Luke, Jesus again expresses these things:

^{NAS} Luke 18:32–33 “For He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.”

^{NAS} Luke 18:34 And **they understood none of these things**, and this saying was hidden from them, and they **did not comprehend** the things that were said.

Since his disciples cannot bear to hear about his death at Passover, they come asking him about the all-important preparation for Passover:

^{KJV} Matthew 26:17 Now the first *day* of the *feast of* unleavened bread the **disciples came to Jesus**, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that **we prepare** for thee to eat the passover?

Because Jewish laws required leaven to be removed and the body and soul to be ritually cleansed before the Passover, the disciples are really asking “at what location do we ***ritually prepare***, so that we all might eat the Passover the following day (the 14th) at the proper time that God commanded (John 18:28)?” They are certainly

not asking at which location they should ritually prepare so they can slay an *illegal* Passover today on the 13th day and eat it *illegally* tonight at the Last Supper.

Jesus does not find it necessary to convince his disciples that he will be crucified at Passover, so he partly goes along with their idea of preparing for the Passover. Yet in every scripture he subtly uses the subjunctive mood when he speaks of his “eating” the Passover, in case anyone is willing to hear with spiritual ears. Jesus may also harbor a slight hope that God can find a way out for him, for he prays in the garden to ask that he not have to pay the eternal penalty for sin:

^{NAS} Matthew 26:39 And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

Indicative Mood Used to “Perform” the Passover

Matthew 26:18 contains the only occurrence of Jesus using the indicative mood (the mood of certainty) in the context of his keeping this Passover. However, the crucial difference in this one instance is that the Greek he uses refers to his actual *accomplishing* of the Passover (not his eating of it):

^{NIV} Matthew 26:18 He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples **at your house**’”²⁷⁹

^{YLT} Matthew 26:18 and he said, ‘Go away to the city, unto such a one, and say to him, The Teacher saith, **My time is nigh; near thee I keep** the passover, with my disciples;’

^{GNT} Matthew 26:18 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, Ὑπάγετε εἰς τὴν πόλιν πρὸς τὸν δεῖνα καὶ εἶπατε αὐτῷ, Ὁ διδάσκαλος λέγει, Ὁ καιρὸς μου ἐγγύς ἐστιν, πρὸς σὲ **ποιῶ** τὸ πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου.

The *UBS Greek-Lexicon* shows that the word *ποιω* can mean “make, do, cause, effect, bring about, *accomplish*, perform, keep, etc.” Notice that Jesus ties in “my time is nigh” to the coming Passover that he will accomplish/perform tomorrow on the 14th

279 Many English translations of this scripture portray Jesus saying he will “eat” (or keep/celebrate) the Passover at this man’s “house.” But you can see that Young’s Literal Translation of this verse is more accurate, using “near thee” instead of “at your house,” since the Greek word “house” is not in the original scripture.

day. In this one time that he uses the indicative mood, he doesn't say that he will "eat" but rather that he will "*effect, bring about, accomplish, perform*" the Passover.

Note that Matthew 26:18 does not contradict Matthew 26:2 (in which Jesus declared that he would be crucified at the Passover) because Jesus would indeed "accomplish" the Passover when he was crucified as the *true* Passover on the 14th day. As the early Messianic Fourteenthers understood, the Messiah would keep the evening portion²⁸⁰ of this 14th day with his disciples during the Last Supper and until his arrest. Then he would accomplish/bring about the fulfillment of this 14th-day Passover at his crucifixion. This occurred at the appointed time and day foreknown by God and commanded to Moses:

^{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.

In the law of Moses, a first-fruits offering to God would follow the Passover sacrifice on the "morrow of the Sabbath" (i.e., the Sunday following Passover, Leviticus 23:10, 11). Paul called Jesus the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7) and also the "first fruits" (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

Jesus knew that he would be crucified at this Passover as the true lamb of God and rise three days later as the first fruits to God on Sunday, fulfilling this typology. God, by His foreknowledge, knew the time and day that His son would be offered up as the true Passover to pay the price for our sins. God also knew the day He would resurrect him, and He commanded Moses concerning these sacrifices and offerings accordingly.

Double Negative Adds Extra Emphasis

In telling his disciples that he is going to be rejected, killed, and crucified at Passover, Jesus uses the subjunctive mood each time he speaks of his *eating* the Passover. Now, at the Last Supper, we can see that he truly does *desire* to eat the Passover with them:

^{KJV} Luke 22:15 And he said unto them, **With desire I have desired** to **eat this Passover** with you **before I suffer**:

^{GNT} Luke 22:15 καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Ἐπιθυμία ἐπέθύμησα τοῦ τοῦ πάσχα φαγεῖν μεθ' ὑμῶν πρὸ τοῦ με παθεῖν·

280 The 12-hour evening portion came first in the Jewish idiom (Genesis 1:5). For more on the early Messianic believers, see the chapter "Setting the Table 1."

The Greek emphasizes his desire to eat the Passover by structuring his words as a double positive (“with desire I have desired”). However, in the next sentence Jesus uses the double negative—the strongest form of Greek negation—to make it clear that he will *not* eat the Passover with his disciples, because tomorrow he will give his life and suffer as the true lamb:

^{KJV} Luke 22:16 For I say unto you, I will **not** any more **eat** thereof, **until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**

^{NAS} Luke 22:16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

^{GNT} Luke 22:16 λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι **οὐ μὴ φάγω** αὐτὸ ἕως ὅτου πληρωθῆ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.

Although the two English translations above contain the words “any more” and “never again” respectively, these words do not appear in the original Greek; they were added by English translators. It’s important to understand that the vast majority of Bible commentators—from the time the Roman Church gained control until the Protestant Reformation and beyond—believe that Jesus ate the Passover at this Last Supper and was then crucified the following day (on Friday the 15th day). Therefore they needed to translate these verses to fit the theology as they understood it.

This explains how the words “any more” were added to portray that Jesus *did eat* it this time, but that he would not eat it “any more.” The big problem is that you cannot simply add words that are not contained in the meaning of the original Greek scripture.

The only translation I’ve found that does not add “any more,” “never again,” etc., to this verse is the New Jerusalem Bible:

^{NJB} Luke 22:16 because, I tell you, I shall **not eat it** until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’

The actual Greek in this scripture reads, “not not *will* I eat it,” using the double negative to emphasize the negation. Greek grammar experts Dana and Mantey wrote:

When special stress is placed upon a negative proposition, the subjunctive is used with *οὐ μὴ*.²⁸¹

281 Dana and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 172.

William D. Mounce also addresses this double negative combination:

This chapter describes a fascinating combination used by the Greek language to show emphasis: it is the use of the two negatives οὐ μὴ, with a subjunctive verb to indicate a strong negation about something in the future. The speaker uses the subjunctive verb to suggest a future possibility, but in the same phrase he **emphatically denies** (by means of the double negative) **that such could ever happen**.²⁸²

This double negative with a subjunctive is the exact combination used in the Greek of Luke 22:16 above.

If Jesus had intended to eat the Passover that night before he suffered, he would instead have said something like, “I’ve greatly desired to eat this Passover with you before my suffering, and thankfully I’ll get to eat it tonight at my Last Supper, because my suffering begins in just over 12 hours. Since my suffering doesn’t start until tomorrow, I therefore *will* eat the Passover before my suffering.”

However, since his suffering would precede the eating of the Passover, Jesus would no longer be with his disciples when the time came for eating. He would be on the cross at the exact time the nation was preparing to sacrifice its lambs, so how could he possibly be present to eat the Passover? With Jesus using the strongest emphasis the Greek language allows to say he would *not* eat this Passover before his suffering, why do commentators disagree with him and say that he not only *will* but that he *did* eat this Passover before he suffered?

Key 2: The Dative of Reference

The second Greek key that unlocks the Gospels as to whether or not the Last Supper was the Passover is the “dative of reference.” We will pay particular attention to the Greek article translated as “on the” in these vital scriptures, where the disciples came to Jesus and asked him their question about preparing for the Passover:

^{NAS} Matthew 26:17 Now **on the** first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?”

^{NIV} Matthew 26:17 **On the** first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

282 Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*, p. 288.

^{YLT} Matthew 26:17 And **on the** first *day* of the unleavened food came the disciples near to Jesus, saying to him, ‘Where wilt thou *that* we may prepare for thee to eat the passover?’

Although the following King James translation of this verse does not say “on the,” it still doesn’t bring out the true meaning of the Greek dative article here, leaving the reader to think the question was actually posed *on* this day:

^{KJV} Matthew 26:17 Now the first *day* of the *feast of* unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

Furthermore, the English translations of Mark *seem* to make the exact day even clearer, saying that the disciples came to Jesus **on the** first day of the unleavened bread, **when they sacrificed the Passover** (which would have been the 14th day):

^{NLT} Mark 14:12 **On the** first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (**the day the Passover lambs were sacrificed**), Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover supper?”

^{NAS} Mark 14:12 And **on the** first day of Unleavened Bread, **when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed**, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?”

^{NIV} Mark 14:12 **On the** first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, **when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb**, Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

It’s important to know that the words “Festival,” “Feast,” and “Bread” have been added to certain English translations of Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12; these words are not in the original Greek. What the Greek says is, “the first day of the unleavened,” which was the day to sacrifice the lamb. This was also the “first” of these eight unleavened days (as is fully explained in the chapter “The Template Challenge” under the subsection “The 13th-Day Question”). However, the insertion of those words into the English translations could even change the meaning from referring to the “first day of the unleavened” (the 14th day) to the “first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread” (which could have other meanings).

It couldn't be more obvious to those familiar with first-century Jewish idioms and laws that the day to sacrifice the Passover was the 14th day of Nisan between noon and sundown (see the chapter "Between the Evenings"). Yet, if we accept these English translations as accurate, Jesus *would have* eaten the Passover with his disciples that night at the Last Supper, after sacrificing it on the proper 14th day. Jesus would then have been arrested, tried, and crucified on the 15th Jewish day—the special high Sabbath that always follows the 14th-day slaying of the Passover. This is what most commentators have accepted from the time of the Jewish disconnect in Rome. And this is some of what we wrestled with in class in the master's program in Bible college 30 years ago, as mentioned in this book's introduction. These two scriptures (along with the others now explained by the three keys in this chapter) clearly *seemed* to prove that the Last Supper *was* the Passover.

However, on the other side, more than 50 reasons exist (see the next chapter) why the Last Supper *could not* have been the Passover. An understanding of Jewish laws would prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that crucifying Jesus on the 15th-day special Sabbath would have been impossible. This special rest day commanded by God to commemorate the Jews' deliverance from slavery in Egypt was not a legal time to carry clubs and swords to arrest Jesus and then push for his crucifixion to occur (Matthew 26:55). Nor would that 15th-day Sabbath have been a legal time for his Jewish burial. Then there would be the conundrum of Jesus and his disciples eating regular "bread" at what we are told was the Passover (see Course 1).

A few of these points have been debated by scholars for years, with many coming to the conclusion that the Gospel of John (which tells of Jesus *being crucified as* the true Passover lamb) contradicts the other three Gospels that so clearly *seem* to show Jesus *eating* the Passover.

How the Dative of Reference Unlocked the Door

When the Greek is translated as originally intended in Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12 using the dative of reference, the text in both scriptures reads "with reference to the" first day. Matthew and Mark were not saying they were currently "on the" 14th day.

One day in 2002, I was in church listening to a sermon when the pastor mentioned that Westcott and Hort's literal translation (as seen in *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*) is often much better at staying true to the meaning of the Greek articles and prepositions than many other translations. I had not heard this before and had not previously been using the Westcott and Hort version in my studies, but since I was still learning Greek, I'd begun taking it to church to read along. After hearing his statement, I turned to the problem verses of this Bible controversy that I'd been studying intermittently for some 20 years to see if the *Interlinear Translation* could offer any hints as to the Last Supper being the Passover or not.

To my amazement I found that in *both scriptures* the Greek *Interlinear Translation* said “to the” first day (translating the Greek article τῇ), meaning “with reference to the” and not “on the” first day. This was the only Bible translation where I had ever seen this. I could barely stop myself from jumping out of my seat to go home and research it right away, for after all these years of study and searching I believed that here was finally a major key to solve this controversy. When my eye first saw “to the” in this translation I felt certain I had finally found the key to unlock these scriptures.

Below is the English translation given word for word directly under the Greek text in Matthew 26:17:²⁸³

Τῇ δὲ πρώτῃ τῶν ἀζύμων προσῆλθον οἱ μαθηταὶ
To the but first [day] of the unfermented cakes came toward the disciples
 τῷ Ἰησοῦ λέγοντες Που θέλεις ἑτοιμάσωμέν σοι
 to the Jesus saying where are you willing we should prepare to you
 φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα;
 to eat the Passover?

The same dative article is used in Mark 14:12:²⁸⁴

Καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν ἀζύμων, ὅτε τὸ πάσχα
 And **to the** first day of the unfermented (cakes), when the Passover
 ἔθουον,
 they were sacrificing,

λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ Ποῦ θέλεις ἀπελθόντες
 are saying to him the disciples of him Where are you willing having gone off
 ἑτοιμάσωμεν
 we should prepare

ἵνα φάγης τὸ πάσχα;
 in order that you might eat the Passover?

The article τῇ (“to the”) is in the Greek dative case, as are the words “first” and “day.” Here, this dative of reference means “with reference to the” first day, or “concerning

283 Westcott and Hort, from the *Kingdom Interlinear*, p. 154.

284 Westcott and Hort, from the *Kingdom Interlinear*, p. 246.

the” first day; it does *not* say it was “**on** the” first day. Despite my initial excitement when I first saw “to the,” I was uncertain as to its full meaning, since the dative of reference had never been taught in any Greek class I had attended. After searching a few Greek grammar books to no avail on what “to the” might mean, I eventually found this explained in Daniel Wallace’s *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. His excellent book elaborates on this aspect of the dative under the subheading “Dative of Reference/Respect [with reference to],” where he explains:

Instead of the word *to*, supply the phrase ***with reference to*** before the dative. (Other glosses are *concerning, about, in regard to, etc.*)²⁸⁵

Here is a paraphrase of what the Greek actually means in these scriptures, using the dative of reference and considering the Jewish idioms, God’s laws, and the ritual preparations needed for this Festival:

Matthew 26:17 Now ***with reference to the*** first of the unleavened the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?

Mark 14:12 ***With reference to the*** first day of the unleavened (**the day the Passover lambs were sacrificed**), Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover?”

Or, we could just as correctly translate this dative of reference as “concerning the”:

Mark 14:12 ***Concerning the***²⁸⁶ first day of the unleavened (**the day the Passover lambs were sacrificed**), Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover?”

Translating these scriptures using “with reference to the” or “concerning the”—instead of “on the”—retains the true meaning of this Greek dative here. It was “with reference to” these Jewish ritual purification requirements that the disciples came to

²⁸⁵ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 145.

²⁸⁶ Although **Τη δε** in Matthew 26:17 is sometimes translated as “on the,” in Mark 14:12 only **τη** is in the actual Greek scripture, which can only be translated as “to the” (see the Greek of these scriptures above). Since Matthew 26:17 is the exact same context, it would mean that its correct translation is also “to the,” especially when bearing in mind the 50 reasons I give later as to why the Last Supper could not have been the Passover. Thus, both scriptures should be accurately translated using the Greek dative of reference.

Jesus asking where they should ritually prepare so that they may have a legal place to eat the Passover on the following 14th day.

Greek scholar William D. Mounce points out that “to” is the primary word when considering the meaning of the dative.²⁸⁷ So if you were trying to communicate that Sam went to the store, then “to the” would be a Greek article in the dative case. If you wanted to convey that Sam sat “on the” store, then another Greek construction would be used. And Wallace’s Greek work delves deeper by identifying the dative of reference as a separate category within the dative. Thus the dative of reference gives another nuance, such that if Sam visited the store “with reference to” his bounced check, then it would be evident that the Greek article in the dative case was bringing out that aspect of “with reference to.”

Wallace also states that the King James Version is weak regarding nuances of the Greek article:

As a side note, it should be mentioned that the KJV translators often erred in their treatment of the article. They were more comfortable with the Latin than with the Greek. Since there is no article in the Latin, the KJV translators **frequently missed the nuances of the Greek article.**²⁸⁸

Most translators follow the same belief held by the King James translators (namely that Jesus ate the Passover at the Last Supper) and therefore they translate this Greek article as “on the.”

The Greek scholar A. T. Robertson also comments on the inaccuracy of the King James Version:

The translators of the King James Version, under the influence of the Vulgate,²⁸⁹ handle the Greek article loosely and inaccurately.²⁹⁰

He continues:

The vital thing is to see the matter from the Greek point of view and find the reason for the use of the article.²⁹¹

287 Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*, p. 45.

288 Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, pp. 208–209.

289 The Vulgate is the Latin translation.

290 Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 756.

291 Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 756–757.

I would add to his statement that, when translating the Greek article, we also need to understand and accept the first-century idioms and laws of the almost exclusively Jewish writers of the Greek New Testament. If commentators believe in the tradition of Jesus eating the Passover at the Last Supper, then they would have an existing bias that would affect their English translations accordingly.

More Dative-of-Reference Examples

Now let's see this dative of reference used in other scriptures:

^{NAS} Romans 6:11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead **to sin**, but alive **to God** in Christ Jesus.

^{GNT} Romans 6:11 οὕτως καὶ ὑμεῖς λογίζεσθε ἑαυτοὺς [εἶναι] νεκροὺς μὲν **τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ** ζώντας δὲ **τῷ θεῷ** ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

In the above verses, “to sin” and “to God” are in the dative case. An even clearer translation using the dative of reference means “dead *with reference to* sin” (or “*concerning* sin,” or “*in regard to* sin”) and “alive *with reference to*” or “*concerning* God.” However, if we translate this verse the same way that many English translations have done with Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12, then it would read “consider yourselves to be dead **on the sin**” and “alive **on the God**.”

Here's another example:

^{KJV} Luke 18:31 Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets **concerning the** Son of man shall be accomplished.

^{GNT} Luke 18:31 Παραλαβὼν δὲ τοὺς δώδεκα εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Ἰδοὺ ἀναβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ, καὶ τελεσθήσεται πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα διὰ τῶν προφητῶν **τῷ** υἱῷ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

The Greek article translated as “concerning the” is in the dative case. We would not translate this verse as “all things that are written by the prophets **on the** Son of man”; the King James version translated it correctly here, bringing out the nuance of this dative of reference by saying “concerning the Son of man.” This is the same way Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12 should have been understood and translated.

What Were the Disciples Really Asking?

When Matthew 26:17 and Mark 14:12 are translated correctly, we see that the Jewish disciples find themselves a day before the Passover lamb sacrifice with still no direction from the Messiah on where they should prepare or gather at Passover to eat the lamb. The disciples are likely confused or even hurt by this, for they know how hard it is to find a suitable location at this late hour. They also need time to make preparations as required under Jewish law.

Still today many Orthodox Jews spend huge amounts of time and effort preparing for Passover—even boiling all bowls, utensils, or other items that may have had remote contact with leaven during the year. The Messiah’s disciples certainly knew the laws of Moses, the necessary ritual preparations, the bodily immersions in water, and all other requirements for this Festival.

Some English translations bring out this aspect of making ready for Passover:

^{NAB} Luke 22:8 he sent out Peter and John, instructing them, “Go and **make preparations** for us to eat the Passover.”

This was not akin to eating a pilgrim Thanksgiving dinner where “prepare fixin’s” would mean to cook the dinner, so we should be careful not to interpret this text as “cooking the Passover.” The disciples were not asking, “Where should we prepare and cook the Passover lamb for supper tonight?” for they knew the sacrifice and roasting would happen tomorrow, on the 14th day. Instead, their question addressed the need to find and then sanctify a location and themselves. They may have also needed to purchase certain items and have them ready at that location.

This is why they came to Jesus on the 13th day to ask their question that was *with reference to* the first of the unleavened days, (i.e., the 14th day when the Passover was to be sacrificed, which also was the first of those eight unleavened days). They then asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations” (Matthew 26:17 NIV). As Jews under God’s laws, certain ceremonial cleansings in body and heart were needed before one was prepared for Passover:

^{NIV} John 11:55 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their **ceremonial cleansing** before the Passover.

We see the same phenomenon in King Hezekiah’s day, where a revival of sorts was occurring and letters were written to all in Israel to come and celebrate the Passover. Although it was extremely important that preparations were carried out as prescribed by God, many Israelites had not made the appropriate consecrations and purifications:

^{JPS} 2 Chronicles 30:17 For there were many in the congregation that **had not sanctified themselves**; therefore the Levites had the charge of killing the passover lambs for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the LORD.

^{JPS} 2 Chronicles 30:18 For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, **had not cleansed themselves**, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it is written. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying: ‘The good LORD pardon

The disciples who asked Jesus their question were concerned with these same things, as well as the need for the removal of all leaven, which they would have fully completed after the Last Supper (at which they ate regular leavened bread). The quotes from historians in the Talmud²⁹² showed that the Jews understood all leaven needed to be banished at the start of the sixth hour (11 AM) on the 14th day, because the legal time to begin the Passover sacrifices was *after* noon, as commanded by God. They knew this was the time to remove the leaven because of the scriptures given by Moses, where God directed for no leaven to be on hand when the blood of the Passover was being shed:

^{DBY} Exodus 34:25 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left over night until the morning.

The Gospels Do Not Contradict Each Other

The dative of reference has helped show that the Gospels do not contradict each other; therefore we should not be surprised that these anointed scripture writers were also in perfect agreement that the day of the Crucifixion was the 14th day.

The Greek scholar Brooke Foss Westcott points out that all four Gospels agree that the day Jesus was crucified was the day of preparation (*paraskeuy* in Greek).²⁹³ Westcott adds that although many scholars think that *paraskeuy* is the Greek word for “Friday,” there was also a preparation day (*paraskeuy*) before each of the seven Festival Sabbaths and depending on the year, these could fall on any day of the week—not just Fridays. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* also makes clear that *paraskeuy* is

292 As seen in the subsection “The 13th-Day Question” in the chapter “The Temple Challenge.”

293 Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, p. 343.

not only the preparation day before Saturday Sabbaths, but also the preparation day before any of these festival (holiday/holy day) Sabbaths:

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 is not permitted to do **on the holiday or on the Sabbath**.²⁹⁴

The writers of the four Gospels agree that the Crucifixion day was a *paraskeuy* (Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 19, 31, 42), and therefore it definitely could not have been the 15th-day high Sabbath (that always follows the 14th-day Passover). The 15th-day Sabbath rest would *never* be called the “preparation” for a Sabbath, for it was itself one of the most revered Sabbaths in Jewish history, a day God commanded to be kept in remembrance of His bringing Israel out of Egypt.

Since these Gospel writers all agree that the day following the Last Supper was the *paraskeuy*, they could not possibly have confused the Last Supper with Passover. After all, had the Last Supper been the Passover, they would have known the following day would be the 15th-day Sabbath—and they never would have called it a “preparation” day.²⁹⁵

The *BDAG Greek-English Lexicon* also shows that the Greek word translated as “**preparation**” in those scriptures speaks of a definite day:

“only of a definite day, **as the day of preparation for a festival**.”²⁹⁶

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

67.201 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.’²⁹⁷

294 *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, p. 276.

295 More information about the above scriptures on the *paraskeuy*, where these verses are written out, can be found in the chapter “50 Reasons the Last Supper Was Not the Passover,” in the section “The Gospels All Agree.”

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

297 Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, p. 654.

Roman Catholic theologians and others have argued that *paraskeuy* means “Friday” in these scriptures and that Jesus was therefore crucified on “Good Friday.” By being unaware that this Jewish day of preparation happens before *any* Sabbath (not just the day before the Saturday Sabbath), they have misguidedly taken this Greek word as proof that Jesus was crucified on Friday. All seven of the special high Sabbaths connected to the Festivals—including the Day of Atonement—are preceded by a day of preparation.

To continue, Liddell and Scott’s *A Greek-English Lexicon* states how the Jews use this Greek word *paraskeuy*:

among the Jews, the day of Preparation, the day before the sabbath of the Passover,²⁹⁸

The following verses from John fit perfectly with Liddell and Scott’s definition, showing that the Crucifixion day was not just any *paraskeuy*, but the preparation for (the 15th-day high Sabbath of) the Passover:

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

^{GNT} John 19:14 ἦν δὲ παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα, ὥρα ἦν ὡς ἕκτη. καὶ λέγει τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις, Ἴδε ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑμῶν.

^{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.²⁹⁹

^{GNT} John 19:31 Οἱ οὖν Ἰουδαῖοι, ἐπεὶ παρασκευὴ ἦν, ἵνα μὴ μείνη ἐπὶ τοῦ σταυροῦ τὰ σώματα ἐν τῷ σαββάτῳ, ἦν γὰρ μεγάλη ἡ ἡμέρα ἐκείνου τοῦ σαββάτου, ἠρώτησαν τὸν Πιλάτου ἵνα κατεργῶσιν αὐτῶν τὰ σκέλη καὶ ἀρθῶσιν.

298 Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1324.

299 For those who may not be familiar with the timing of this scripture, it is occurring on the day of the Crucifixion, and the 15th-day high Sabbath is soon coming and begins at sundown.

The following scripture bears this out as well, showing that this 14th-day Crucifixion was the day before the (15th-day festival) Sabbath, where the preparation was *pro-sabbaton* (προσάββατον), meaning “before Sabbath”:

^{NAS} Mark 15:42 And when evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,³⁰⁰

^{GNT} Mark 15:42 Καὶ ἤδη ὀψίας γενομένης, ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευὴ ὃ ἐστὶν προσάββατον,

To recap, the dative of reference shows that the disciples came to ask Jesus their question on the 13th day (Wednesday that year) and that he was crucified on the 14th day (Thursday). This 14th day was the preparation day (*paraskeuy*) for the 15th-day high Sabbath (Friday that year), which was shown coming at the end of this Crucifixion day. When the original Greek in these scriptures is understood correctly, we see the four Gospels are in complete agreement, as we should expect.



Before we move on to the third key, one more point should be clarified, because it can get confusing in English. Many translations use the word “prepare” for what Jesus and his disciples were speaking about on the 13th day:

^{YLT} Luke 22:8 and he sent Peter and John, saying, ‘Having gone on, **prepare** to us the passover, that we may eat;’

^{NAS} Mark 14:15 “And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished *and* ready; and **prepare** for us there.”

The Greek word translated as “prepare” (*etoimazo*³⁰¹) in these scriptures is different from “preparation day” (*paraskeuy*). This *etoimazo* is not the Greek word used for preparing for a Sabbath but a more generic word for getting things ready. On the 14th day many Jewish people would have been at the Temple for the morning offering and the incense and prayers that would accompany it. Then, when the Temple

300 The Greek word translated into English as “evening” above actually means “late,” i.e., late in the Jewish day, which ended at sunset.

301 The *BDAG (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed.) defines *etoimazo* as “to cause to be ready, put/keep in readiness, prepare” (p. 400).

doors re-opened at noon, they would be busy arriving with their washed Passover lambs. Many things would have been made ready in advance—on this 13th day—so the people could focus on the Passover sacrifice and roasting the following day. The 14th day was not a Sabbath, and the word translated as “prepare” in these scriptures was *etoimazo* (not the *paraskeuy* day that occurs before a Sabbath).

As was mentioned, the disciples are also concerned about becoming ceremonially clean to enter the Temple for tomorrow’s Passover sacrifice and preparing the location (possibly also beginning the process of removing leaven).

^{NAS} Mark 14:16 And the disciples went out, and came to the city, and found *it* just as He had told them; and **they prepared the Passover.**

^{NAS} Mark 14:17 And **when it was evening** He came **with the twelve.**

In saying that they prepared (*etoimazon*) the Passover, verse 16 could imply to some that Peter and John sacrificed and cooked an illegal Passover on this 13th day, then went out to be with Jesus and the others during the remainder of that day (supposedly leaving the roasted Passover on the table). Then in verse 17, all of them came back later to the Passover that had been “prepared” and roasted earlier and was supposedly cold and waiting for them on the table.

However, this is not what these Greek words convey here; they only mean that Peter and John prepared the location and had certain things in order, possibly including their own required ceremonial cleansings for tomorrow’s Passover sacrifice. After Peter and John finished these preparations, they went to where Jesus and the others were gathered, and sometime toward the end of that day, they all returned to that location for the Last Supper.

Key 3: The Aorist Tense

One final verse needs to be explained for the scriptures to harmonize with the Jewish feast template and to align with the many proofs that the Last Supper was not the Passover. That verse is Luke 22:7:

^{NIV} Luke 22:7 **Then came** the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

^{GNT} Luke 22:7 Ἦλθεν δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα τῶν ἀζύμων, [ἐν] ἧ ἕδει θύεσθαι τὸ πάσχα·

In the English above, the aorist “ἤλθεν” has been translated as “Then came.” In English this implies that the day “then came,” and that the disciples sacrificed the Passover that same day, and ate it that night at the Last Supper.

The Greek aorist tense unlocks this important verse so we can correctly understand it. Buist M. Fanning offers this explanation:

Instead, the aorist tense “**presents an occurrence in summary, viewed as a whole from the outside, without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence.**”³⁰²

In other words, the aorist tense in Greek can set forth a major statement “without regard for the internal make-up” as to the *timing* “of the occurrence” in the narrative by presenting the “occurrence in summary” and then going backward in time to fill in the details.

We can do this in English as well. For example, let’s say Grandpa died on Christmas day, and a week later at the memorial service, his son Joe is speaking to a large group of friends and relatives who already know the details of Grandpa’s passing. Joe could first give a summary statement and then backfill the details, which all those gathered would understand:

Then came that fateful Christmas day when Grandpa died. All you friends and relatives came from far and wide to spend time with Grandpa and celebrate Christmas. The kids were so excited as we drove through the country picking out the tree, and then we decorated it while Grandma was baking up batches of cookies. At Christmas Eve dinner, all the family rejoiced to be together with Grandpa. As we grown-ups stayed up late making the final preparations and wrapping gifts, the kids lay in bed, dreaming of opening the toys that Santa left for them. As we awoke and shared breakfast, and then later as the children began opening presents, none of us thought that this would be Grandpa’s last day.

So you see that Joe gives the initial summary statement (“**Then came** that fateful Christmas day when Grandpa died”), then goes back in time to fill in the details (picking out a tree, decorating, Christmas Eve dinner, etc.) that had taken place *before* the day came that Grandpa died. Since the audience already knows the timeline of Christmas events, they are not confused. They are not thinking that since Joe started with, “Then came that fateful Christmas day when Grandpa died,” that he

302 Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, p. 97.

was suggesting Grandpa died *before* all those other things had happened (picking out a tree, etc.). “Then came” is the aorist tense at work, “without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence,” as Fanning stated above.

Along this same line, here is a quote from Wallace’s excellent *Greek Grammar*:

The aorist normally views the action *as a whole*, taking no interest in the internal workings of the action. It describes the action in summary fashion, **without focusing on the beginning or end of the action specifically**. This is by far the most common usage of the aorist, especially in the indicative mood. The constative aorist covers a multitude of actions. The event might be iterative in nature, or durative, or momentary, **but the aorist says none of this**.³⁰³



Before we reconsider the meaning of this aorist tense in Luke 22:7, let’s look at some other examples in scripture. We see the same Greek aorist construct in the famous account of Josiah’s Passover, which first-century Jews would have been very familiar with from the Greek Septuagint:

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:1 Then Josiah **celebrated** the Passover to the LORD in Jerusalem, and they **slaughtered** the Passover *animals* on the fourteenth *day* of the first month.

^{LXT} 2 Chronicles 35:1 καὶ ἐποίησεν Ἰωσίας τὸ φασεχ τῷ κυρίῳ θεῷ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔθυσαν τὸ φασεχ τῇ τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτῃ τοῦ μηνὸς τοῦ πρώτου

Notice the way the English translation words this aorist: “Then Josiah celebrated the Passover... and they slaughtered the Passover... on the fourteenth day.” Although both words “celebrated” and “slaughtered” are in the aorist tense, these two events did not happen sequentially or simultaneously in verse 1. As in the Grandpa story, the summary statement comes first (verse 1 above), followed by verses relating the preparations and other activities that actually took place *before* the celebration and slaughter of the Passover lamb:

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:2 And **he set the priests in their offices** and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD.

303 Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 557.

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:3 He also said to the Levites who taught all Israel *and* who were holy to the LORD, “Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel built; it will be a burden on *your* shoulders no longer. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel.

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:4 “And **prepare yourselves by your fathers’ households in your divisions**, according to the writing of David king of Israel and according to the writing of his son Solomon.

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:5 “Moreover, **stand in the holy place according to the sections of the fathers’ households** of your brethren the lay people, and according to the Levites, by division of a father’s household.

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:6 “**Now** slaughter the Passover *animals*, sanctify yourselves, and **prepare for your brethren to do according to the word of the LORD by Moses.**”

So down here in verse 6, the Passover has *still not been slaughtered*, even though in verse 1 we were *seemingly* told it was already slaughtered (i.e., if we erroneously force the aorist to mean past tense in the “internal workings of the action” without other considerations).

The scriptures that follow in this same chapter show that, again, the people still haven’t actually slaughtered the Passover:

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:7 And **Josiah contributed to the lay people**, to all who were present, flocks of lambs and kids, all **for the Passover offerings**, numbering 30,000 plus 3,000 bulls; these were from the king’s possessions.

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:8 **His officers also contributed** a freewill offering to the people, the priests, and the Levites. Hilkiyah and Zechariah and Jehiel, the officials of the house of God, gave to the priests for the Passover offerings 2,600 *from the flocks* and 300 bulls.

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:10 **So the service was prepared, and the priests stood at their stations** and the Levites by their divisions according to the king’s command.

By now we’re way down in verse 10 and the Passover has still not been sacrificed. But we can look back at the summary statement in verse 1 as just that—a summing up

of events “without regard for the internal make-up of the occurrence,” as Fanning described earlier.

Finally in verse 11, what was described in verse 1 actually happens:

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 35:11 **And they slaughtered the Passover animals**, and while the priests sprinkled the blood *received* from their hand, the Levites skinned *them*.

The Passover is now slaughtered and we’re taken into the time frame within the narrative. Some could try to argue that—according to the English—the Passover had already been slaughtered in verse 1, but the Greek aorist clearly did not mean that in this passage.

Another excellent example of this particular usage of the aorist tense is Matthew 10:4, where Jesus is calling his 12 disciples to follow him. As Matthew lists them, he mentions the betrayal of Christ by Judas:

^{NAS} Matthew 10:4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, **the one who betrayed Him**.

^{GNT} Matthew 10:4 Σίμων ὁ Καναναῖος καὶ Ἰούδας ὁ Ἰσκαριώτης ὁ καὶ παραδοῦς³⁰⁴ αὐτόν.

Here with Jesus first calling the 12, we are given a summary picture of the betrayal that doesn’t actually take place until a few years after the time related in this verse. What’s critical to note is that “betrayed” is aorist, and in this instance it means past time *from the writer’s perspective*, not past time within the narrative. If we erroneously forced the aorist to mean past time *within* the narrative (as the English could imply), it would incorrectly state that Judas had *already* betrayed Jesus when in fact the betrayal happened much later. Matthew could have used the future tense, saying “the one who years from now will betray him,” but the Greek aorist tense was also a perfectly good way to express his point. Thus, the aorist tense often sets up the narrative and leaves the reader to properly put together the events and timing.

The Aorist Tense in Luke 22:7

Let’s consider again how the aorist tense works in Luke 22:7. The English translations *seemingly* make it obvious that the day before the Crucifixion was the day the Passovers had to be sacrificed, with Jesus therefore eating the Passover later at the Last Supper as that *supposed* 14th day ended:

304 Note that *παραδοῦς*, translated as “betrayed,” is aorist.

^{NIV} Luke 22:7 **Then came** the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

^{GNT} Luke 22:7 Ἦλθεν δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα τῶν ἀζύμων, [ἐν] ἧ ἔδει θύεσθαι τὸ πάσχα·

The English translation of this aorist “Then came” plainly implies that it is now the 14th day, the day to slay the Passover. However, we know that on the following day—the day of the Crucifixion—the Jews need to stay ritually pure so that they might eat the Passover, and God’s commandments don’t allow for a Passover two days in a row. Remember from our discussion of the subjunctive mood in Key 1 that the Jewish guards did not enter the Praetorium on that day, lest they be defiled and unable to eat the Passover:

^{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**.

Let’s make sure we understand the context of Luke 22:7, since no scripture occurs in a vacuum. The following points demonstrate that this verse does *not* mean that the Jews were *currently* in the day of sacrificing the Passover (the 14th day). For one thing, the next two verses of Luke show that they’re still in the 13th day—the day when the disciples asked Jesus where they should go and prepare (as we saw in Key 2)—and when Jesus told them to make the preparations:

^{NAS} Luke 22:8 And He sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we **may eat** it.”

^{NAB} Luke 22:9 They asked him, “Where do you want us to make the preparations?”

Back in Key 1, we saw that Jesus—by using the double negative—emphasized that he would *not* eat the Passover before his suffering (Luke 22:15–16), so Luke 22:7 cannot mean it was the day to sacrifice the Passover. Otherwise Jesus *would have* eaten the Passover that night *before his suffering*. If Jesus and his disciples were actually *in* the day to slay the Passover, this would have Luke writing of a preparation day occurring *after* the day to slay the Passover (i.e., on the 15th-day Sabbath), which makes no sense since the preparation day always precedes a Sabbath:

^{NAS} Luke 23:54 And it was the **preparation** day, and **the Sabbath** was about to begin.

Notice how Luke shows that this Crucifixion day was the preparation day (*paraskeuy*). As we covered earlier, this *paraskeuy* was the 14th day; it was the preparation for the 15th-day Sabbath. Therefore the events in Luke 22:7–9, which occurred on the previous day (i.e., 13th) before the Last Supper, could not have meant that they were then in the 14th day. The time frame of verse 54 is the Crucifixion day, and as the other Gospels show, they are rushing to get the body of Jesus down from the cross and into the tomb *before* this 15th-day high Sabbath begins.

Most commentators argue that Jesus ate the 14th-day Passover following Luke 22:7 (Last Supper), and that Luke 23:54 (the Crucifixion) occurred on the 15th day. However, this high Sabbath, which always came the day after the 14th-day Passover sacrifice, would never be considered a “preparation” day in the Jewish realm. And this is just one final proof that the aorist tense used by Luke in 22:7 doesn’t mean that the day to slay the Passover *had actually come* right then in that context, just as the aorist tense of Matthew 10:4 wasn’t saying that Judas betrayed Christ in the time frame of verse 4. Remember that the Gospel of Luke was written years after the events took place (as were the other three Gospels), so many events are portrayed as aorist because they are past time *from the Gospel writer’s perspective*.

The English translation of Luke 22:7 says that the day “came,” but the aorist tense isn’t stating that it had actually come at that point. Rather, it’s making a summary statement that the most amazing day in history was now before them—the fulfillment of God’s plan of the ages concerning the true Passover. Then Luke goes back and relates the events that actually happened *before* the Passover sacrifice occurred.

One Additional Possibility for Luke 22:7

Another possibility for Luke’s intended meaning in 22:7 is as follows. The Greek word translated as “Then” (in “Then came”) can just as easily be translated “And,” making it “And came.” The BDAG *Greek-English Lexicon* shows that this Greek word connects two clauses and thus can be translated as “now, then, **and**, so,” etc.³⁰⁵ Adding to this, since this Greek word ἦλθεν (translated as “came” in English) is in the third person, it can mean he, she, or “it came.”

The following scripture from Acts contains an example of this exact same Greek word translated into English as “**it came**”:

305 Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (BDAG), 3rd ed., p. 213.

^{NAS} Acts 11:5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and **it came** right down to me,

Therefore, when we use the *BDAG Lexicon*’s accepted meanings in Luke 22:7 and if we connect this with the previous verse (6), we see that Judas is seeking a good opportunity to betray Jesus (“And it came”):

^{NAS} Luke 22:6 And he consented, and *began* seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the multitude.

Luke 22:7 **And it came** the day of unleavened on which the Passover had to be sacrificed.

So in this perfectly acceptable Greek translation option, Luke shows how Judas was seeking a good opportunity to betray Jesus, “And it came” on the very day it was necessary to sacrifice the Passover (i.e., in the first half of this 14th day—the night period). In this option, Luke subtly connects Christ’s betrayal to the Passover sacrifice. Whether we translate this as “And it came” or “Then it came,” either way could fit this option and still have the same meaning. This is not to say that Greek is totally plug-and-play, where one can take any definition found in any Greek language lexicon and directly apply it, because each context is important and other considerations must be taken into account. But in this case, “And it came” is a totally acceptable translation of what Luke wrote.

Going from one language to another often presents difficulties, and as we’ve seen, many Greek words have nuances that do not always precisely translate to a single English word. In an English translation of Luke 22:7, a real difference can exist between “Then” and “And.” “*Then* it happened” would indicate a fixed time aspect, whereas “*And* it happened” could be more open-ended, not necessarily meaning it happened right then before the next thing mentioned. Similarly, if someone wrote, “Sally was joyful, *and* she got married,” a slightly different meaning could be read into these words than if it said, “Sally was joyful; *then* she got married,” implying that perhaps her attitude changed after the marriage. So when we examine English translations, we must always keep these nuances, however slight, in mind.

More Greek Grammar and Hermeneutics as Applied to Luke 22:7

Biblical hermeneutics deals with the methods for properly interpreting scripture. One such guideline is that if you have a majority of scriptural facts that point to one truth, you do not overturn that solid truth because of one obscure verse but rather

you interpret that obscure verse in light of well-established scriptural truth (such as interpreting the aorist in Matthew 10:4 correctly). These rules have been used and accepted by a wide range of scholars, from Talmudic writers to Christian researchers.

In this same spirit I would like to offer one final option for Luke 22:7 that is geared more for students of biblical Greek. The *Greek-English Lexicon* by Louw and Nida brings out an additional aspect the Greek aorist *ἤλθεν*, translated as “Then **came**” in Luke 22:7. This Greek word has a dictionary form of *ἔρχομαι*, which they say “involves a highly generic meaning of **movement** from one place to another, **either coming or going**.”³⁰⁶ Louw and Nida categorize it as a verb of “linear movement,” explicitly stating that the “lingual subdomain” to which it belongs is “without any special reference to a point in space.”³⁰⁷

Many Greek words involve concepts that do not correspond exactly to English words. For example, our English word “came,” when used by itself, does not imply linear movement but rather something that arrived and is finished moving; this is not the same meaning as “coming or going.” If Luke is focusing on this linear movement, he would then be picturing this most important day in history moving on toward its fulfillment and then backfilling the details to set the stage for this momentous Passover. In essence, the aorist tense of Luke 22:7 would then have the shade of meaning that the day in which the Passover must be killed “approached.”

One example of this is when Nicodemus “came” to the tomb to bring items for the burial:

^{NAB} John 19:39 Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night, also **came bringing** a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds.

This verse also uses the same Greek aorist word translated as “came” in Luke 22:7, but here he **came bringing** the myrrh and aloes. This essentially pictures him “approaching.” In contrast, if you already “came” (past tense), you could not still be “bringing” (present tense participle).

Louw-Nida gives other examples of the Greek aorist tense that imply this movement from one place to another, and not as a fixed point. One example given is Luke 3:3 (NAS), where it says Jesus “**came** into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” The Greek word for “came” uses the same Greek aorist tense as in Luke 22:7, and here it clearly has movement attached to it.

306 Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, 15.7, p. 183.

307 Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, p. 181.

Regardless of the best translation for Luke 22:7, proper hermeneutics require that we interpret it in light of the well-established facts that the Last Supper could not have been the Passover.

In “The Template Challenge” chapter, we saw a verse that Talmudic writers explained with hermeneutics. God had commanded not to have any leaven present during the seven-day Festival (Exodus 12:19), and in another verse He commanded to remove all leaven on the “first” day (Exodus 12:15). The writers explained that although the Hebrew word used in that verse *normally* means “first,” here it conveyed the lesser-used meaning of “preceding” the Festival; otherwise the Israelites would be breaking scriptural law by having leaven still present on the first day of the feast.



I have shown a few possibilities as to how Luke 22:7 could be translated while still fitting in with the myriad of other proofs that confirm it cannot mean that the 14th day had already come. A translator must understand the overall picture and not translate any verse in a vacuum, but always consider the laws of hermeneutics and use proper Bible interpretation. If many solid, logical proofs exist that a scripture cannot mean what it may *seem* to on the surface, one does not throw out the strong evidence and accept the single translation that seems contrary to well-established truth. Instead, one investigates if there is a way to interpret the one scripture in light of many other proofs so that the scriptures harmonize.

Using the intended Greek grammar, we now understand that Luke 22:7 employs the aorist tense in a summary fashion and not to show that the day had *actually* come at that time in the narrative. Anyone who refuses to consider this and forces Luke 22:7 to occur on the 14th day (thus having Jesus eat the Passover at the Last Supper) would have to explain why the Jewish nation forgot to keep their 15th-day high Sabbath the day after the Last Supper. They would need to explain why Jesus broke God’s laws by eating regular bread at what they say was the Passover (see Course 1). They would also have to explain how Jesus could be crucified on the 15th-day Sabbath, and they would have to fit their doctrine into the Template Challenge and somehow answer to the multiple proofs listed in the chapter “50 Reasons the Last Supper Was Not the Passover.”

Given the huge Jewish disconnect that took place in Rome³⁰⁸ and how the English translations appear to make it obvious that the time frame before the Last Supper was the 14th day (the day to slay the Passover), it’s not surprising that this doctrine has been so confused. However, when we examine it against other proofs and

308 See the chapter “Setting the Table 1: The Jewish Disconnect and the Fourteenthers.”

understand the original Greek words used by Luke, it's easy to see that the true way to interpret Luke 22:7 is aorist in summary; it did not mean that the 14th day had actually come.

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