

PART I

SETTING THE TABLE FOR THE LAST SUPPER

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In “setting the table” for the Last Supper, we demonstrate that a great Jewish disconnect took place in Rome, which led to the later misunderstanding of many spiritual idioms and expressions used by the Messiah and the mostly Messianic Jewish scripture writers. Because Rome reigned as the world power at the time of Christ, certain leaders cultivated this great disconnect with all things Jewish, and the Roman Church ridiculed and eventually outright rejected the Messianic believers and their beliefs. For us to properly understand the Messiah’s words at the Last Supper, the ramifications of this Jewish disconnect must be understood.

SETTING THE TABLE I

THE JEWISH DISCONNECT AND THE FOURTEENTHERS

This chapter will clarify a major segment of Jewish history that has not been accurately told before—not by Christian sources, by Jewish encyclopedias, or Dimont’s Jewish histories. Specifically, it discusses the complete disconnect with all things Jewish that occurred when the early assemblies—with their many Messianic Jewish believers—were taken over by Rome.¹

To the Jews, these believers in Christ became “Christians” who were therefore no longer acknowledged as truly Jewish. To the Roman Christians, these people were “Judaizers”² who continued to keep their Jewish customs while refusing to go along with the new Roman teachings. Therefore neither side has told this story accurately, as both sides rejected these early Messianic believers. We will cover at least some of the story of these early Messianic Jews and the rejection and persecution they suffered, for this sets the stage for the complete disconnect.



Early Messianic Jews were derisively called “Quartodecimans,” a Latin term with a heretical sound to it; anyone with that strange name must have been a heretic, or so we have been told. However, once we translate this simple term meaning “Fourteenters” into English, it becomes evident who Rome thought the heretics were—those Jewish believers who observed the 14th day of Nisan,³ as their families had done since the time of Moses. Nisan was the Israelite month in which the Passover was to be celebrated each year—on the 14th day.

NIV Numbers 28:16 “On the fourteenth day of the first month the LORD’s Passover is to be held.”

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- 1 Emperor Constantine gave the Roman Church the power to impose unanimity of doctrine to unite the empire.
 - 2 “Judaizer” is a term for one who seeks to bring the New Covenant believer back into Old Covenant laws.
 - 3 In the Hebrew calendar, Nisan is the first month of the Ecclesiastical year (seventh month in the civil year). The Passover was to be sacrificed each year in this month, in the afternoon of the 14th day.

Throughout this discussion, I will use the English translation of “Fourteenters,” as it more accurately describes who these people were. Just as the Protestants would later be called heretics and be punished by Roman authorities, so it was with the original Messianic Jews.

Before delving deeper into this part of Jewish history, though, it is important to realize that many Jewish people were scattered from Israel to the region between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, then known as Asia. Paul spent much of his time preaching and teaching among these “Asiatics,” as they were called. Peter also wrote to these Jews of “the dispersion” (*diaspora* in Greek):

^{NAB} 1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **to the chosen sojourners of the dispersion** in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, **Asia**, and Bithynia,

Although the Asiatic assemblies were to a large degree Jewish, they also contained many Gentile believers. But from this history, we can see that Jewish concepts and customs were more prevalent among them than the traditions that would develop later in Rome.

In the book of Revelation, the Messiah directed John to write to the seven assemblies that were spread across Asia:

^{DBY} Revelation 1:4–5 John to the seven assemblies **which are in Asia**: Grace to you and peace from *him* who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits which *are* before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth

^{DBY} Revelation 1:11 saying, What thou seest write in a book, and **send to the seven assemblies**: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

Jesus understood that these believers in Asia were already facing persecution and difficulties, so he specifically directed John to write words of comfort and teaching to them. It’s worth emphasizing this point, because Rome painted these Asiatics as a fringe group of heretics, and mocked them as “Quartodecimans” for refusing to observe the rituals that had developed in Rome.

Proud Rome had taken over Israel and destroyed the Temple, so it definitely was not going to take instructions on religion from its vanquished foe. As history played out, this was how the complete Jewish disconnect occurred.

The Beginnings of the Dispute

What had begun as a strictly Jewish phenomenon—the understanding that the Messiah had come and redeemed Israel and all believers back to God—was eventually taken over by Rome and turned into something from which Jews were rejected. Rome introduced new religious dogmas, rituals, and decrees that were based on neither the true teachings of the Messiah nor on those of the Jewish apostles.

For example, whereas many of the believing Jews continued to observe the 14th-day Passover in some form, Rome instead held an Easter Sunday celebration. This led to disputes as Asiatics continued to celebrate the 14th day instead of obeying Roman decrees to celebrate Easter. This following quote from McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia* shows the Asiatics' refusal to convert to the new Roman decrees:

The Asiatics remained unconverted and unconvinced, and continued to observe the **14th of Nisan** as a day of mixed character, fasting till the ninth hour, and then rejoicing for the achieved work of man's redemption.⁴

Jewish Messianic believers fasted until the ninth hour (about 3 PM) on this 14th day, and the following scriptures reveal why this time was important to them:

^{NAS} Matthew 27:46 And about **the ninth hour** Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

^{NAS} John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "**It is finished!**" And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.

The Fourteenthers fasted until the time that Jesus said, "It is finished," indicating that he had finished the work (that God had called him to) by paying the penalty for sin. Although historically Jews had never fasted during the 14th-day Passover, McClintock and Strong explain that the Messianic Jews *added* this partial-day fast as a tradition to honor the fact that Jesus was on the cross during this time. They ended their fast at the ninth hour, the time that his death fulfilled the Passover:

The Western and more Catholic rule was to observe the **Friday** preceding the Easter-Sunday as a **rigid fast**, the Church identifying the apostles' sorrowing with their own, and the fast was not resolved till

4 McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 722, s.v. "Paschal Controversy."

Easter-morn; while the Asiatic Quartodecimani party regarded the **14th of Nisan** from a doctrinal point of view as the commemoration-day of man's redemption; and at the hour in which our Lord said "It is finished," i.e. at three o'clock in the afternoon, the fast was brought to an end (Eusebius Hist. Eccl. 5:23), and the day closed with the collective Agape and celebration of the Lord's Supper.⁵



This difference of opinion as to keeping the 14th day special first became evident around AD 150 when Polycarp, a prominent Fourteenther and leader in the Asiatic Assembly of Smyrna, was sojourning in Rome and met with the Roman bishop Anicetus.

In his *History of the Christian Church*, 19th-century church historian Philip Schaff discusses the early history of this dispute. This major point of contention would eventually lead to the rejection of all things Jewish, as well as to the introduction of many Roman rituals. Below, Schaff shows that Rome did not observe the 14th day (and instead had an Easter/Astarte Sun-day celebration), but that Polycarp and the Asiatics *did* keep the 14th day special:

We have a brief, but interesting account of this dispute by Irenaeus, a pupil of Polycarp, which is as follows:

"When the blessed Polycarp sojourned at Rome in the days of Anicetus, and they had some little difference of opinion likewise with regard to other points, they forthwith came to a peaceable understanding on this head [the observance of Easter], having no love for mutual disputes. For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe inasmuch **as he [Polycarp] had always observed with John, the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles**, with whom he had associated; nor did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to *observe* Gr. (τήρειν) who said that **he was bound to maintain the custom** of the presbyters (= bishops) before him. These things being so, they communed together; and in the church Anicetus yielded to Polycarp, out of respect no doubt, the celebration of the eucharist,⁶ and they separated from each other in peace, all the church being at peace, both those that observed and those that did not observe [the fourteenth of Nisan], maintaining peace."

5 McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 721, s.v. "Paschal Controversy."

6 *Eucharist* is a Greek word meaning "thanksgiving."

This letter proves that the Christians of the days of Polycarp knew how to keep the unity of the Spirit without uniformity of rites and ceremonies. “The very difference in our fasting,” says Irenaeus in the same letter, “establishes the unanimity in our faith.”⁷

So we see that Romans did not keep the 14th day special, which was fine since under the New Covenant they were no longer bound to keep the Sabbaths and the Feasts. However, Rome did begin to disapprove of the Asiatic Fourteenthers who continued to celebrate the 14th-day Passover as a “commemoration-day of man’s redemption,” as previously noted.

In the quote above, Irenaeus also mentioned a difference in the Roman fasting, which at one point lasted a full week as opposed to the Asiatic custom of fasting only until the ninth hour on the fourteenth day, the time in which the Messiah said “it is finished.”

As an aside, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* also shows that Jewish scholars of long ago believed that man’s redemption as brought by the Messiah would take place at the Passover, just as had happened with the original Passover under Moses:

What Moses, the first redeemer, did is typical of what the Messiah as the last redeemer of Israel will do (Eccl. R. i. 9). The redemption will be in the same month of Nisan and in the same night (Mek., Bo, 14);⁸

The Fourteenthers Lay Out Their Case to Rome

The dispute grew more intense in the period between AD 190 and 194, when Victor was bishop of Rome. At this time Rome dramatically escalated pressure on the Fourteenthers to drop their 14th-day Passover commemoration and to adopt Easter and other Roman rituals and doctrines instead.

Schaff, in his *History of the Christian Church*, sums it up:

The Roman bishop Victor, a very different man from his predecessor Anicetus, required the Asiatics, in an imperious tone, to abandon their Quartadecimarian practice.

Against this Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, solemnly protested in the name of a synod held by him, and **appealed to an imposing**

7 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, pp. 213–214.

8 *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, p. 214, s.v. “Eschatology.”

array of authorities for their primitive custom. Eusebius has preserved his letter, which is quite characteristic.⁹

The Roman historian Eusebius (AD 263–339), mentioned above, brings this out in his own *Church History*. Eusebius makes it clear that this whole dispute and anger from Rome arose because Jewish believers continued to celebrate the 14th day rather than fasting and mourning as Rome had prescribed. The Asiatic bishops were led by Polycrates, who wrote the following letter of protest to the Roman bishop Victor, as Eusebius recorded below:

We **observe the genuine day**; neither adding thereto nor taking there from. For in **Asia** great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again in the day of the Lord's appearing, in which he will come with glory from heaven, and will raise up all the saints: **Philip, one of the twelve apostles**, who sleeps in Hierapolis ... moreover, **John, who rested upon the bosom of our Lord**, who was also a priest, and bore the sacerdotal plate, both a **martyr** and teacher; he is buried in Ephesus. Also **Polycarp** of Smyrna, both bishop and **martyr**, and Thraseas, both bishop and **martyr** of Eumenia, who sleeps in Smyrna. Why should I mention Sagaris, bishop and **martyr**, who sleeps in Laodicea; moreover, the blessed Papirius, and Melito, the eunuch [celibate] ... who now rests in Sardis **All these observed the fourteenth day** of the Passover according to the gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith.

Moreover, I, Polycrates, who am the least of you, according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have followed **my relatives always observed the day when the people of the Jews¹⁰ threw away the leaven**. I, therefore, brethren, am now sixty-five years in the Lord ... and having studied the whole of the Sacred Scriptures, **am not at all alarmed at those things with which I am threatened, to intimidate me**. For they who are greater than I have said, "we ought to obey God rather than men." ... I could also mention the bishops that were present, whom you requested me to summon, and whom I did call; **whose names would present a great number**, but who seeing my slender body consented to my

9 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, p. 216.

10 The words "of the Jews" were added by Schaff and not present in the original text. These added words could imply that Polycrates himself was not Jewish when he almost certainly was, as indicated by his words "my relatives always observed the day."

epistle, well knowing that I did not wear my gray hairs for nought,
but that I did at all times regulate my life in the Lord Jesus.¹¹

Schaff explains further that “Victor turned a deaf ear to this remonstrance, **branded the Asiatics as heretics**, and threatened to excommunicate them.”

Notice above how many of the Fourteenthers mentioned by Polycrates were killed (martyred), and yet Polycrates is not at all alarmed at those things with which “I am threatened, to intimidate me.” Clearly Polycrates’s Christ-like spirit is in marked contrast to Roman bishop Victor’s disagreeable demeanor. What was so horrible that Rome needed to excommunicate these mostly Messianic Jews for simply keeping the 14th day in a way that they felt honored the Lord?

Victor ordered synods to be held and that “**the more Catholic rule** was everywhere pronounced **to be binding**.”¹² In spite of this decree, many Asiatic believers did not yield to Roman threats but continued to keep the 14th day in accordance with their long Jewish history and custom.

These escalating Roman threats led Irenaeus, a Fourteenther and disciple of Polycarp, to see the writing on the wall, and he sought to avert a potential bloodbath by appealing for peace. He wrote to his fellow Fourteenthers who were ignoring Rome’s decrees and reprovved them for risking their lives to keep a day that was no longer required to be kept in the New Covenant:

The apostles have ordered that we should “judge no one in meat or in drink, or in respect to a feast-day or a new moon or a sabbath day” (Col. 2:16). Whence then these wars? Whence these schisms? We keep the feasts, but in the leaven of malice by tearing the church of God and observing what is outward, in order to reject what is better, faith and charity.¹³ That such feasts and fasts are displeasing to the Lord, we have heard from the Prophets.¹⁴

Messianic Jews had every right to keep the 14th day special, and yet as the danger escalated to the point where more people were losing their lives, Irenaeus appealed for peace and common ground. But other Messianic Jews wanted to draw the line in the sand with Rome and continued to honor this ancient feast and the Messiah’s fulfillment of the Passover in the way they felt was proper. They did not want Rome dictating doctrine to them, and justifiably so.

11 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, pp. 216–217.

12 McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 722, s.v. “Paschal Controversy.”

13 “Charity” is a poor English translation of the Greek word *agape*, which means “love.”

14 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, pp. 217–218.

The Fourteenthers Knew the Crucifixion Day Was the Fourteenth

When one studies this history in depth, it becomes evident that the earliest Jewish and Gentile believers understood that Jesus was crucified on the 14th of Nisan and therefore could not have eaten the Jewish Passover at the Last Supper. Greek scholar and commentator Brooke Foss Westcott pointed this out many years ago:

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.¹⁵

Contrary to what almost all commentators believe today, these early Messianic followers knew Jesus *did not* eat a Passover at the Last Supper, but rather was *crucified* on the *14th day* of Nisan and thus fulfilled the Passover.

The Catholic Encyclopedia is honest in admitting that the historical evidence from writers of the first two centuries does not positively support their early point of view—that of Jesus eating the 14th-day Passover at the Last Supper—and that this early history connects the 14th-day Passover to the day of the Crucifixion:

Again, there is the problem, much debated by modern scholars, whether the Pasch which the early Christians desired to commemorate was primarily the passion or the Resurrection of Christ. Upon this point **our data also do not admit of a very positive answer**. It has been very strongly urged that the writers of the first two centuries who speak of the Pasch have always in view the Pasch *πάσχα σταυρώσιμον*, the Crucifixion day, when Jesus Christ himself was offered as a victim, the antitype of the Jewish Paschal lamb.¹⁶

Westcott also adds:

... but Photius expressly notices that two writers who differed widely on other points of the Paschal controversy **agreed on fixing the Passion on the 14th, contrary to the later opinion of the Church**, and therefore reserves the question for examination.¹⁷

15 Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, p. 347.

16 Herbermann et al, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, p. 229, s.v. "Easter."

17 Westcott, *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, p. 347.

It must be understood that this conviction held by the Fourteenters—that Jesus was crucified on the 14th day—was “**contrary to the later opinion of the Church.**” As the Church in Rome grew stronger and eventually evolved into the Roman Catholic Church, the Catholic tradition of Christ eating the Passover at the Last Supper became fixed as doctrine. Uniformity of doctrine was commanded by Roman religious leaders, and all were to believe that Jesus was crucified on “Good Friday” (the 15th of Nisan) after having eaten the Passover on the 14th. This Roman doctrine of celebrating Easter Sunday became *law* at the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.

So powerful did this Roman Church become that it saw itself as having the authority to excommunicate, punish, and even kill those who did not believe in its doctrines. Not surprisingly, having the backing of the mighty Roman military at its disposal heavily aided the spread of its doctrine.



One Fourteenter who knew this doctrine to be false was Hippolytus, whom Westcott mentions, and below we see that he also placed the Crucifixion on the 14th day. In his book *Against all Heresies*, Hippolytus wrote the following, correcting another writer who had fallen into error by believing that Christ ate the Passover at the Last Supper and was then crucified the day after the Passover, on the 15th day:

I perceive, then, that the matter is one of **contention**. For he speaks thus: Christ kept the supper, then, on that day, and then suffered; whence it is needful that I, too, should keep it in the same manner as the Lord did. **But he has fallen into error** by not perceiving that at the time when Christ suffered **He did not eat** the passover **of the law**. For **He was the passover** that had been of old proclaimed, and **that was fulfilled on that determinate day**.

Hippolytus continues:

... Now that neither in the first nor in the last there was anything false is evident; for he who said of old, “I will not any more eat the passover,” probably partook of **supper** before the passover. **But the passover He did not eat**, but He suffered; **for it was not the time for Him to eat.**¹⁸

Hippolytus agreed with the scriptures that the Passover was not to be two days in a row; this would be contrary to God’s law. He states that at the Last Supper, “the

18 Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, p. 240.

Passover he did not eat” for “it was not the time for him to eat.” Furthermore, he wrote that Jesus was the Passover “that was fulfilled on that determinate day,” which Acts 2:23 bears out as the determinate day **by God’s foreknowledge** and the reason that He commanded the 14th-day Passover 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.

Westcott also included Clement of Alexandria as an early church writer who believed the Crucifixion was on the 14th day. Below we see Clement’s extremely telling words quoted in the *Paschal Chronicle*:

Accordingly, **in the years gone by**, Jesus went to eat the passover sacrificed by the Jews, keeping the feast. But when he had preached **He who was the Passover**, the Lamb of God, led as a sheep to the slaughter, presently taught His disciples the mystery of the type **on the thirteenth day, on which also they inquired**, “Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the passover?” It was on this day, then, that both the consecration of the unleavened bread and the preparation for the feast took place. Whence John naturally describes the disciples as already previously prepared to have their feet washed by the Lord. And on the **following day our Saviour suffered, He who was the Passover**, propitiously sacrificed by the Jews.¹⁹

Clement of Alexandria continues:

Suitably, therefore, **to the fourteenth day, on which He also suffered**, in the morning, the chief priests and the scribes, who brought Him to Pilate, did not enter the Praetorium, that they might not be defiled, but might freely **eat the passover** in the evening. With this precise determination of the days both the whole Scriptures agree, and **the Gospels harmonize**. The **resurrection also attests it**. He certainly rose on the third day, which fell on the first day of the weeks of harvest, on which the law prescribed that the priest should offer up the sheaf.²⁰

19 Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 581.

20 Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 581.

Notice that Clement states that the disciples asked their question on the **thirteenth** day, when they are concerned with preparing and making ready a location for the soon-coming 14th-day Passover Feast; since Christ was crucified the following day, we see that the Fourteenters were correct in understanding that he died on the Passover.

Westcott also mentions Claudius Apollinaris—bishop of Hierapolis—as one of those who understood the 14th-day Crucifixion. Consider what Apollinaris wrote around AD 150 concerning those who “err” by believing that Jesus was crucified on the 15th day:

They err, who affirm that our Lord **ate** the Passover on the 14th of Nisan with his disciples, and that he died on the great day of unleavened bread (i.e. the fifteenth). **They maintain that Matthew records the event as they have imagined it**; but **their notion agrees not with the law**; and **thereby the Gospels are made to wear a contradictory appearance**²¹

The Fourteenters understood Jewish law and knew that Jewish authorities would not allow crucifixions in Israel on this holy 15th-day Sabbath, nor could Jesus have sacrificed a Passover the day before the 14th when he was crucified. Apollinaris pointed out how this “notion” that Jesus ate the Passover and then was crucified on the 15th-day Sabbath “agrees not with the law.” Even today commentators argue that the Gospels show “a contradictory appearance,” with John portraying Christ as having been crucified as the 14th-day Passover while the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) portray him actually eating the 14th-day Passover.

Later in this book, the chapter “The Three Major Greek Keys That Unlock the Gospels” shows that the Gospels—when interpreted correctly—all harmonize perfectly, which is what we should expect.²²

Schaff includes an important additional part of this quote from Apollinaris that McClintock and Strong (above) left out:

The Fourteenth is the true Passover of the Lord, the great sacrifice, the **Son of God in the place of the lamb** . . . who was lifted up upon the horns of the unicorn²³ . . . and **who was buried on the day of the Passover**, the stone having been placed upon his tomb.²⁴

21 McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 722, s.v. “Paschal Controversy.”

22 The Three Keys chapter also examines those English translations that *seem* to clearly show Jesus eating the Passover at the Last Supper.

23 The “horns of the unicorn” is a metaphor for the cross.

24 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, p. 215.

As seen when the two parts of the quote appear together, Apollinaris plainly wrote that in misinterpreting Matthew, “they err” who believe that Jesus ate the 14th-day Passover at the Last Supper, then suffered on the 15th day; thus he clearly agrees with the Fourteenters that the 14th was the true day that the Messiah suffered and was buried.

Roman Emperor Constantine Imposes His Will on the Fourteenters

The Fourteenters knew that the 14th day was the Crucifixion, which is a major part of why they venerated it. However, as we’ve seen, Rome did not care for the Jewish details. As Schaff points out below, Roman custom was *not* based on doctrinal facts but was more ritualistic in observance:

The **Roman custom** represented the principle of **freedom and discretionary change**, and the **independence of the Christian festival system**. Dogmatically stated, the difference would be, that in the **former case the chief stress was laid on the Lord’s death**; in the latter, on his resurrection. But the leading interest of the question for the early Church was not the astronomical, nor the dogmatical, but the **ritualistic**. The main object was to secure uniformity of observance, and to assert the originality of the Christian festival cycle, and its independence of Judaism: for both reasons the Roman usage at last triumphed even in the East.²⁵

The apostles never said anything about a ritualistic “Christian festival system.” They knew that the festivals pointed to a spiritual fulfillment, as we will see throughout this book. What Schaff calls the “Christian festival cycle” was, in reality, a creation of Rome as it began linking pagan celebrations to Christian concepts.

As mentioned earlier, part of the Roman Church’s bitterness arose because it had prescribed a weeklong fast for its Easter celebration. Yet the Messianic Fourteenters fasted for only part of one day—until the ninth hour (about 3 PM) on the 14th day, marking the time Christ the Messiah said, “It is finished.”

Then, because of differences between the Jewish and Roman calendars, the more Jewish-leaning assemblies were sometimes rejoicing in the Feast (Deuteronomy 16:14) and the finished work of the Messiah while the Roman Church was still fasting and mourning.

Schaff addressed Rome’s bitterness over this:

25 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, pp. 212–213.

This Roman practice created an entire holy week of solemn fasting and commemoration of the Lord's passion, while the Asiatic practice ended the fast on the 14th of Nisan, which may fall sometimes several days before Sunday. **Hence a spectacle shocking to the catholic sense of ritualistic propriety and uniformity** was frequently presented to the world, that one part of Christendom was fasting and mourning over the death of our Saviour, while the other part rejoiced in the glory of the resurrection.²⁶

Jewish believers, of course, were not at all interested in the weeklong Roman fasting and mourning, or in the Easter (Astarte) celebrations. Eventually this Roman fast developed into a 40-day one, which, as Alexander Hyslop shows in his *The Two Babylons*,²⁷ originated from a different fast of the same length. This fast marked weeping and mourning for the false deity Tammuz, who was the consort of Ishtar, the spring-time goddess of fertility. (Ishtar is the same as Ashtoreth, or Astarte in Greek, which evolved into *Easter* in English.) Even some Israelites observed this ritual weeping and mourning for Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14).

In the Catholic Church, this lengthy fast (a giving up certain foods or activities) later became Lent, which starts a little more than 40 days before Easter on Ash Wednesday. During Lent, some adherents rub ashes on their foreheads in the sign of a cross to show mourning. What had begun as a true moving of God's spirit among Roman believers²⁸ was eventually taken over; thus, these spring deities were incorporated into what had previously been the Messianic celebration of Passover and the Resurrection (which also occurred during spring) to become Easter.

Jewish scriptures clearly indicated a duty to rejoice at the festivals (Deuteronomy 16:14, 15; Nehemiah 8:9–10), so Messianic Jews would not have been interested in Roman Catholic mourning. When the 15th day arrived, Messianic Jews believed they were fulfilling what God's commands through Moses *pointed to* by rejoicing in the spring Passover Festival as they always had done, only now with the Messianic understanding of the New Covenant. Since many of them had grown up with this Festival and it was deeply connected to their heritage, they wanted to continue celebrating it in some form.



26 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, p. 212.

27 Hyslop, *The Two Babylons*, pp. 103–113.

28 See Paul's letter to the Romans in the New Testament.

The fourth-century Roman Emperor Constantine was less interested in doctrine and more set on imposing standardized religious practices over the entire Roman Empire. This meant joining some Christian ideas with various pagan ones. At some point, Jesus, for example, was deliberately given the birthday of December 25, because this was understood by pagans as the day the Sun God was reborn after having died at the winter solstice. Every year on December 21 or 22, at the winter *solstice*—which means “sun standing still” in Latin—the sun completed its circuit and was in the farthest end of its cycle, where it seemed to stand still (die) for three days. Then, as the sun appeared to move again on December 25, it became “reborn.”

Many other examples exist of Rome joining pagan beliefs to what had previously been Christianity, such as seen in an ancient tile picture of Christ as *Sol Invictus* (“invincible sun”) that was found at St. Peter’s Basilica.

But certain items needed resolution at the famous Catholic Council of Nicaea in AD 325, presided over by Emperor Constantine. The first item on the docket was standardizing the Roman doctrine of the Trinity to become the “Nicene Creed,” which we will look at briefly in “Setting the Table 2: Words and Concepts Changed.”

The second item to resolve at this Council was the Paschal/Easter controversy and the Jewish Messianic Fourteenthers refusing to observe the prescribed Roman Easter Sunday celebration. In his letter to the churches after the Council of Nicaea, Emperor Constantine addressed this point, stating emphatically that Rome’s celebration should have “nothing in common with the perjury of the Jews”:

Let your pious sagacity reflect how evil and improper it is, that **days devoted by some to fasting**, should be spent by others in **convivial feasting**; and that after the paschal feast, some are rejoicing in festivals and relaxations, while others give themselves up to the **appointed fasts**. That this impropriety should be rectified, and that all these diversities of commemoration should be resolved into one form, is the will of divine Providence, **as I am convinced you will all perceive**. Therefore, this irregularity must be corrected, in order that we may no more have any thing in common with those parricides and the murderers of our Lord.²⁹

You can feel Constantine’s almost palpable anger at the Messianic Jews for refusing to observe the Roman “appointed fasts.” Under the guise of opposition to Judaism, he connected these Messianic believers (and all Jews) to the leaders in Israel who had pushed for Christ’s death, thus lumping them all together as heretics—and worse—for not following Rome. It was decreed that no one was to keep the 14th day special,

29 Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 48.

because this was connected to Jewish history and therefore was to be rejected. He continued:

An orderly and excellent form of commemoration is observed in all the churches of the western, of the southern, and of the northern parts of the world, and by some of the eastern; this form being universally commended, **I engaged that you would be ready to adopt it likewise, and thus gladly accept the rule** unanimously adopted in the city of Rome, throughout Italy, in all Africa, in Egypt, the Spains, the Gauls, the Britains, Libya, Greece, in the dioceses of Asia, and of Pontus, and in Cilicia, taking into your consideration not only that the churches of the places above-mentioned are greater in point of number, **but also that it is most pious that all should unanimously agree** in that course which accurate reasoning seems to demand, and which **has no single point in common** with the perjury of the Jews.³⁰

The Roman emperor closed his letter to the churches by letting them know that **whatever** Rome decreed **was** the “Divine will,” and all had better submit to it:

Briefly to summarize the whole of the preceding, the judgment of all is, that the holy Paschal feast should be held on one and the same day; for, in so holy a matter, it is not becoming that any difference of custom should exist, and it is better to follow the opinion which has not the least association with error and sin. This being the case, receive with gladness the heavenly gift **and the plainly divine command**; for all that is transacted in the holy councils of the bishops is to be referred to **the Divine will**. Therefore, when you have made known to all our beloved brethren the subject of this epistle, **regard yourselves as bound to accept** what has gone before . . .³¹

In the following, Constantine set the tenor for the Roman-controlled Church. It was now “our holy religion” that would have nothing in common with the Jews, who were to be rejected as “parricides” (quoted earlier) and as “our adversaries”:

By rejecting their custom, we establish and hand down to succeeding ages one which is more reasonable, and which has been observed

30 Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 48.

31 Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 48.

ever since the day of our Lord's sufferings. Let us, then, have nothing in common with the Jews, **who are our adversaries**. For we have received from our Saviour another way. A better and more lawful line of conduct is inculcated **by our holy religion**. Let us with one accord walk therein, my much-honoured brethren, studiously avoiding all contact with that evil way.³²

A short time after the Council of Nicaea, these Messianic Jewish Fourteenthers were

“... universally regarded as heretics **and were punished as such**: The Synod of Antioch, 341, excommunicated them.”³³

From then on, all Messianic Jews who kept their customs and disobeyed the Roman practice of weeklong fasting and mourning at Easter were considered to be heretics and Judaizers. Sadly, the truth of this history is still not understood even today, as Fourteenthers (Quartodecimans) are still written off by most commentators as a fringe group of heretics. However, if that were really the case, the Roman emperor presumably would not have felt the need to hold the Council of Nicaea and write letters to all the churches merely to address a minor aberrant group.

McClintock and Strong mention that the Fourteenthers were being taunted by Rome for honoring the 14th day:

The Asiatics commemorated the Lord's death on the 14th of Nisan, being guided by the day of the Jewish month, as the more general practice followed the day of the week on which Christ died. **They were taunted for the Judaizing practice, though the Church of Rome in its ritual and liturgy had more perhaps in common with the synagogue than the churches of Asia.**³⁴

A few years later at the Council of Laodicea (AD 364), the Jewish people were again lumped together as heretics by the Catholic Church, as evidenced by the following Council canons:

29. Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but **must work** on that day, rather honouring the Lord's Day; and, if they can,

32 Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 47.

33 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, p. 218.

34 McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 721, s.v. “Paschal Controversy.”

resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema³⁵ from Christ.³⁶

One of the following canons from the same Council deals with phylacteries, which were small leather boxes containing a few Bible verses. Many Jews wore a phylactery, believing that the words of Moses (i.e., in Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18; Exodus 13:9, 16) were to be taken literally. Jesus wore tassels on his garments, as did many Jews (Numbers 15:38, 39), and “tassel” is usually translated into English as “hem” or “fringe” (Matthew 9:20; 14:36). So it is possible that Jesus would have also been thrown out of the new Roman Church for his Jewish ways:

36. Forbids the clergy dealing in magic, and directs that **all who wear phylacteries be cast out of the Church.**

37. **Forbids fasting with Jews** or heretics.

38. **Forbids receiving unleavened bread from Jews.**³⁷

The Messiah’s heart for his people was diametrically opposed to these Council rules—such as throwing out those who wore a phylactery:

^{NAS} John 6:37 “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me **I will certainly not cast out.**”

So although the Messiah told the apostles to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Rome decided to do the opposite of what the Messiah wanted. Rome rejected as adversaries all Jews (including those Fourteenthers who believed in the Messiah) who did not follow Roman decrees. Because of this and many other factors, the Messiah became falsely portrayed as someone who had rejected and forsaken the Jews and all things Jewish.



As an aside, these historical facts are in no way meant to impugn Catholic believers today; I know many honorable Catholic people and my goal is not to create animosity or contention toward them. These facts of history are considered only so we can

35 “Anathema” means “accursed.”

36 Schaff and Wace, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 14, p. 148.

37 McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, vol. 5, p. 237, s.v. “Laodicea, Council of.”

determine what the Messiah's true intentions were and see how they became confused in Rome. Only by doing this can we see how the various churches came to believe in the doctrines they hold today, and what changes are needed to do God's will.

The Roman Catholic Church has always referred to these Fourteenthers as heretics for continuing their own Jewish heritage and not following Rome's Easter celebrations. Catholics and even other Christian commentators have continued this error, either purposely or accidentally, as seen here in this passage from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*:

In the early days of Christianity there existed a difference of opinion between the Eastern and Western Churches as to the day on which Easter ought to be kept, the former keeping it on the fourteenth day and the latter on the Sunday following. To secure uniformity of practice, the Council of Nicaea (325) decreed that the Western method of keeping Easter on the Sunday after the fourteenth day of the moon should be adopted throughout the Church, believing no doubt that this mode fitted in better with the historical facts and wishing to give a lasting proof that the Jewish Passover was not, as the **Quartodeciman heretics** believed, an ordinance of Christianity.³⁸

The Catholic Encyclopedia's statement that these "Quartodeciman heretics believed" that keeping the 14th day special was an "ordinance of Christianity" is totally false, as is much of the historical disinformation about these believers. The Messianic Jews kept this 14th day special as their *custom* (not by ordinance) because they knew it was the day Jesus finished the work that God had called him to and that it therefore fulfilled the Passover, which was a deep part of their Jewish heritage and which they honored as such. No evidence exists that mainstream Fourteenthers believed everyone should follow this as an ordinance, and they certainly were not celebrating Easter on this 14th day.

Protestant commentators, too, have accepted the Catholic view that these Fourteenthers were heretics or just a fringe group of Judaizers, when in reality they were the main body of the original Messianic Jews. When we read these histories, we must understand that Roman Catholics were mainly concerned that all should celebrate Easter on Sunday in a unified manner—they did not like the confusion caused by these Fourteenthers not observing the Easter celebration.

The following quote from Schaff makes this clear:

The council of Arles in 314 had already decreed, in its first canon, that the Christian Passover be celebrated "**uno die et uno tempore**

38 Herbermann et al, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, p. 480, s.v. "Epace."

per omnem orbem,³⁹ and that the bishops of Rome should fix the time. But as this order was not universally obeyed, the fathers of Nicaea proposed to settle the matter, and this was the second main object of the first ecumenical council in 325. The result of the transactions on this point, the particulars of which are not known to us, does not appear in the canons (probably out of consideration for the numerous Quartodecimanians), but is doubtless preserved in the two circular letters of the council itself and the emperor Constantine. The feast of the resurrection was thenceforth **required to be celebrated everywhere** on a Sunday, and **never on the day of the Jewish passover**, but always **after** the fourteenth of Nisan, on the Sunday after the first vernal full moon. The **leading motive** for this regulation was opposition to Judaism, which had dishonored the Passover by the crucifixion of the Lord.⁴⁰

As we see in the quote above, Rome wanted all Jewish influence removed so that the new Roman religion could bring in its own doctrines and rituals unchallenged, and this was done under the guise of opposition to Judaism.

To summarize, the history covered here explains how what began as *a strictly Jewish phenomenon* in Israel—with a Jewish Messiah and Jewish disciples—could become something from which the *Jews were seen to be unwelcome*. This evolution completed the Jewish disconnect and was the devil’s plan to exclude Jews from their own promised New Covenant (see Course 10).

This clear history of the Messiah’s Crucifixion on the 14th day is crucial for properly understanding the parables he taught the previous night at the Last Supper, and how these figurative teachings were later misunderstood to be a new ritual, as we will soon see.

We have now laid the groundwork for understanding how such a complete Jewish disconnect could occur, and how the powerful Roman Church assumed a very different stance from what the Messiah wanted or taught. As we’ve already started to see, this sheds light on how doctrines were changed and new rituals were created that were not based on the original foundation of the Jewish Messiah and his Jewish disciples.

In the next chapter, we will take this a step further and explore important words and concepts that were misunderstood and changed to fit into the Roman practices.

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39 The Latin *uno die et uno tempore per omnem orbem* means “on the same day and at the same time throughout the world.”

40 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 3, p. 405.