

# STUDY OF AN ATTACK AGAINST THE PASSOVER

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This attack on the Passover presents the Sanhedrin's rules and two seemingly contradictory scriptures to claim that Jesus was taken captive, not on the Passover, but on the tenth day of the first month; and that consequentially the last meal he ate with his disciples was not the Passover meal.

Another aspect of the attack is that leavened bread was used in that meal.

## ARGUMENT #1

Here are some rules of the Sanhedrin regarding trials:

1. They could meet on any day except the Sabbath and the Holy Days.
2. Their meetings always started with the morning sacrifice and lasted until the time of the evening sacrifice.
3. To avoid any hasty condemnation (where life was involved) judgment was passed the same day only when it was a judgment of acquittal.
4. If it was a judgment of condemnation, it could not be passed until the day after.
5. For this reason, cases involving capital punishment were not tried on a Friday or on any day before a Feast Day.

The Sanhedrin's rules concerning trials show that Jesus could not have been tried on the day before a feast day. Since Thursday in the year 30 AD was a Feast day (the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Unleavened Bread) this means he could not have been tried on Wednesday, the Passover. Also, to condemn a man to capital punishment, it took two days according to their rules, so his captivity and trial should be moved back several days.

The specific day that his captivity is moved back to is the tenth day of the first month because this day coincides with the command in Ex. 12:3 to take a lamb out of the flock on the 10<sup>th</sup> day, keep it until the 14<sup>th</sup> and then kill it.

## ANSWER TO ARGUMENT # 1

This argument uses the rules of the Sanhedrin rather than the scripture account to show that Jesus must have been taken captive days earlier than the Passover. We can prove that this is not so by showing from the scriptures the events as they happened day by day before the Passover. (According to Hebrew time days begin and end at sunset)

SIX days before the Passover:

Nisan 8, Thursday, Mar 30, (30 AD) Jesus was in Bethany for a supper (Jo 12:1-8) At this supper Mary anointed Jesus' feet with very costly ointment. On the following morning he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Jn 12:12-15, Mk 11:1-10) When he entered Jerusalem he went to the temple and then went back to Bethany with the twelve just before sunset. (Mk 11:11)

FIVE days before the Passover:

Nisan 9, Friday, Mar 31, (30 AD) In the morning Jesus returned to Jerusalem (Mk 11:12) At this time he was hungry and cursed the fig tree. (Mk 11:13-14) He then came to the temple and cast out the money changers (Mk 11:15-18) He returned to Bethany again in the evening. (Mk 11:19)

FOUR days before the Passover:

Nisan 10, Saturday Apr 1, (30 AD) In the morning Jesus and the disciples returned to Jerusalem and saw that the fig tree was dried up. (Mk 11:20)

THREE days before the Passover:

Nisan 11 Sunday, Apr 2, (30 AD) Jesus returned again to Jerusalem (Mk 11:27) At the temple Jesus was questioned by the chief priests and elders about his authority (Mk 11:27-33) He continued to preach to them in chapter 12. As he was leaving the temple his disciples commented about the buildings of the temple (Mk 13:1-2, Mt 24:1) From here he went to the Mount of Olives (Mk 13:3, Mt 24:3) where he gave the prophecy about the end time and his second coming and instructions to his disciples through Mt 25. In the evening after Jesus had finished all this instruction he said in Mt 26:1 "You know that after TWO DAYS is the Passover (Mt 26:1-2, Mk 14:1) At this time the chief priests assembled together to plot against Jesus. (Mt 26:3, Mk 14:2)

*Note: Here we see that Jesus could not have been taken captive on the tenth of Nisan as is claimed since Mt 26:1 says that he was preaching to his disciples the day after on the 11<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. At this time the Chief Priests got together to plot, but Judas Iscariot had not yet covenanted with them to betray him.*

TWO days before the Passover:

Nisan 12, Monday, Apr 3, (30 AD) Judas covenanted with the Chief Priests for 20 pieces of silver and from that time sought opportunity to betray Jesus. (Mt 26:14, Mk 14:10, Lk 22:3-6)

ONE day before the Passover:

Nisan 13, Tuesday, Apr. 4, (30 AD) 1 day before Passover The disciples asked Jesus where they should prepare for the Passover (Mt 26:17-20, Mk 14:12-16, Lk 22:7-13)

## THE PASSOVER

Nisan 14, Wednesday, Apr. 5, (30 AD) Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples in the upper room which they had prepared. (Mt 26:20-29) Here he instituted the New Testament Christian Passover with the symbols of foot washing symbolizing brotherly love and service, taking of the bread symbolizing his broken body, and the wine symbolizing his shed blood.

Not only do the events flow in chronological order to arrive at the Passover day, but Jesus also SAID that the meal he ate with his disciples was the Passover. Those who claim it is not the Passover make Jesus a liar.

Lk 22:7 Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed.

Lk 22:8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat.

Lk 22:9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?

Lk 22:10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

Lk 22:11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?

Lk 22:12 And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

Lk 22:13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover.

Lk 22:14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

Lk 22:15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer:

See also Mt 26:17-20 and Mk 14:12-16

## **ARGUMENT # 2**

The discrepancy in the following two scriptures shows that Jesus could not have been crucified at the third hour (9 AM) and also judged to be crucified at the sixth hour (12:00 noon). Therefore the judgment and the crucifixion must have taken place on separate days, not in one all-night trial on the Passover.

Mk 15:25 And it was the third hour (9 AM) and they crucified him.

Jo 19:10 Then saith Pilate unto him, "Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee and have power to release thee?"

Jo 19:11 Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

Jo 19:12 And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar."

Jo 19:13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew Gabbatha

Jo 19:14 And it was the preparation of the Passover and about the sixth hour: (12:00 noon) and he saith unto the Jews, "Behold your king"

Jo 19:15 But they cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said unto them, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar

Jo 19:16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

Jo 19:17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha

## **ANSWER TO ARGUMENT # 2**

We can prove that the judgment and crucifixion of Jesus did happen on the same day - the Passover by two scriptures.

Lk 22:14 And when the hour was come, he sat down and the twelve apostles with him.

Lk 22:15 And he said unto them, with desire I have desired to eat THIS PASSOVER with you BEFORE I suffer."

Jo 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar; he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.

Jo 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, FOR THAT DAY WAS AN HIGH DAY besought Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

Jo 19:32 Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with him,

Jo 19:33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.

*Note: We see here that Jesus was alive and eating the Passover meal with his disciples on the evening of the Passover day. Jesus was dead, however, before the Passover day ended at sunset and the High Day, the First Day of Unleavened Bread began.*

Let us also review the scriptures showing the sequence of events the evening of the Passover leading up to the crucifixion.

1. After Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples in the evening, he went to the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed while they slept. (Mt 26:36-46)

2. After this, Judas came with the soldiers and betrayed Jesus with a kiss. At this point he was taken captive and the disciples fled. (Mt 26:47-56)

3. After this, Jesus was taken first to the house of Annas, the Father-In-Law of the High Priest where he was questioned. (Jo 18:12-23) This is where one of the officers struck him when he answered the High Priest.

4. After this Jesus was taken to the house of Caiphas, the High Priest where the Scribes and Elders were assembled. (Jo 18:24, Mt 26:57) They tried to find false witnesses against him. This took several hours as it says there were many witnesses. (Mt 26:59-60) Finally, as the day dawned, when he said that he was the Son of God, they then said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? We have heard his blasphemy!" (Mt 26:61-68, Lk 22:66-71) Then they started beating him. (Mt 26:67-68) It was during this time, (before dawn) while Peter was in the courtyard of the High Priest, that the cock crowed - before which Jesus had prophesied that Peter would deny him three times (Mt. 26:58, 69-75)

*Note: If the Scribes and Elders were following their own rules that meetings should always start with the morning sacrifice, why were they all gathered at the house of the High Priest after Jesus was taken from Gethsamene and were hearing witnesses at night - before the cock crowed? (Mt 26:57-75)*

5. After this Jesus was taken to the Praetorium, to Pontius Pilate, the Governor (Mt 27:2, Jo 18:28-38) while it was still early. (probably about 6 AM)

6. After this Jesus was taken to Herod who was at Jerusalem (Lk 23:6-7) Herod and his troops ridiculed him, and put a gorgeous robe on him (Lk 23:8-10)

7. After this Jesus was sent back to Pilate (Lk 23:11) who said that he found no fault in him; and after washing his hands proclaiming, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man. You tend to it yourselves", he scourged Jesus, released Barabbas, and handed over Jesus to be crucified (Mt 27:24-26)

8. After this the soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium (the judgment hall), stripped him of his clothes, put a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns on him and mocked and beat him. (Mt 27:27-30)

9. After this Pilate brought Jesus out to them wearing the crown of thorns saying, "I find no fault in him" (Jo 19:4-5) and the Jews said that he deserves to die because he made himself the son of God. (Jo 19:7)

10. After this Pilate then asked Jesus one more time in the Praetorium, "Why aren't you speaking to me? Don't you know that I have power to crucify or release you?" Jesus said, "you would have no power if it were not given you from above..." (Jo 19:10-11)

11. After this Pilate led Jesus out to a place called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew Gabbatha where they were screaming, "Crucify him!", (Jo 19:13-15)

12. After this Pilate gave him over to their will and they led him away to crucify him. And carrying his own cross, he went out to the place called The Place of a Skull which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha (Jo 19:16-17)

Notice as you study all these scriptures that there is no mention anywhere that Jesus was detained for several days before his crucifixion, but rather that one event immediately follows another so that it is evident that the judgment and crucifixion took place on the Passover day.

How then do we explain the discrepancy that the crucifixion took place the third hour in Mk 15:25 and the sixth hour in Jo 19:10-17. Some explain the discrepancy by saying that more than one day was involved. This results in saying that the meal Jesus and his disciples ate took place days earlier. But the sequence of the events according to the scriptures does not support this theory. Also, when you think about it, the several-day theory does not make sense. Jesus could not have been crucified on one day at 9 AM and led out to be crucified on another day at 12 Noon. Was he crucified twice??? No, of course not. So we must look for the answer to the problem somewhere else. James, Fausset, Brown Commentary says the following:

*"Mark 15:25 says the crucifixion took place at 9 AM which is what we should naturally conclude from the progress of the events. Two expedients have been resorted to for clearing up the difficulty, (of the two crucifixion times) neither of which appears to be quite satisfactory. One is to adopt the reading third instead of sixth hour. But the evidence for this reading is so weak that it seems like a tampering with the text. The other way is to suppose that Mark used the Hebrew method of time and John adopted the Roman method of computation and means that it was about 6 AM according to our reckoning. But as there is no ground to suppose that in other cases John adopts the Roman division of time, so the hour which that reckoning brings out here can hardly be the right one for it must have been considerably later than 6 in the morning when the crucifixion took place. It remains then to understand John to refer to the two broad divisions in the day so familiar to the Jews, the third and the sixth hours and to suppose that as the event occurred between the two, (about 10:30 AM) the one evangelist specified the hither terminus while the other takes the further one."*

The last option, I think, is the best explanation for the discrepancy. The way Mark and John thought about time was different than what we are used to. They did not have wristwatches to look at. So when they referred to the third or sixth hour, they were thinking about a broader spectrum of time than we do today. Notice here the article in Smith's Bible Dictionary under the subject, 'Hour':

*"The ancient Hebrews were probably unacquainted with the division of the natural day into twenty-four parts, but they afterwards parceled out the period between sunrise and sunset into a series of divisions distinguished by the sun's course. The early Jews appear to have divided the day into four parts (Neh 9:3), and the night into three watches (Jgs. 7:19). Even in the New Testament we find a trace of this division in Mt. 20:1-5. At what period the Jews first became acquainted with the division of the day into twelve hours is unknown, but it is generally supposed they learned it from the Babylonians during the captivity. It was known to the Egyptians at a very early period. They had twelve hours of the day and of the night. There are two kinds of hours, viz. (1) the astronomical or equinoctial hour, i.e. the 24<sup>th</sup> part of a civil day, and (2) the natural hour, i.e. the 12<sup>th</sup> part of the natural day, or of the time between sunrise and sunset. These are the hours meant in the New Testament, John 11:9, etc., and it must be remembered that they perpetually vary in length, so as to be very different at different times of the year. For the purpose of prayer the old division of the day into four portions was continued in the temple service, as we see from Acts 2:15; 3:1; 10:9"*

### **ARGUMENT # 3**

The following two scriptures (coupled with rules of the Sanhedrin) show that Jesus' trial did not start until daylight. Therefore there is simply not enough time for all the events to have taken place before he was crucified at 9 AM. This is additional evidence showing that the captivity and trial took several days.

Lk 22:66 And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together and led him into their council saying, "Art thou the Christ, tell us"  
Mk 15:1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus and carried him away and delivered him to Pilate

### **ANSWER TO ARGUMENT # 3**

The rule of the Sanhedrin that meetings always started at the time of the morning sacrifice along with two scriptures, Luke 22:66 and Mark 15:1, are pointed out, to show that the trial of Jesus did not start until the morning. Thus, they claim, there would not be enough time for all the events to take place before an alleged 9 AM crucifixion on the same day.

It is necessary to compare Luke 22:66 and Mark 15:1 with all the other scriptures to show the sequence of events. After the scribes and the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin heard all the false witnesses through the night in the house of Caiphas the High Priest; then immediately in the morning they formed a council to put him to death. They led him into the Sanhedrin where they condemned him to death and from there led him away to Pilate when it was still early. If you take Luke 22:66 and Mark 15:1 out of context, it appears that the entire examination started at

dawn. But this is not so. The examination started in the house of Caiphas hours earlier. What we are seeing in Luke 22:66 and Mark 15:1 is the END of the examination when they finally found reason to condemn him because he said he was the son of God.

#### **ARGUMENT # 4**

In the three scriptures where it says that Jesus took bread and blessed it and gave it to his disciples, (Mt 26:26, Mk 14:22 and Lk 22:19) the Greek word is artos (Strong's # 740) which means a raised loaf of bread. This shows that the meal Jesus ate with his disciples was either not the Passover meal but a regular meal days before the Passover, or that the Passover should not be taken with unleavened bread, but with regular bread. Eating unleavened bread should be done for 7 days only beginning with the First Day of Unleavened Bread as commanded by God, not for 8 days beginning with the Passover.

#### **ANSWER TO ARGUMENT # 4**

This is the assertion that the bread which is used for the Passover is leavened bread. Is this so? It is true that the command in Lev 23 states that we are to eat unleavened bread for seven days beginning with the 15<sup>th</sup>, not the 14<sup>th</sup>. Also it is true that in the accounts of the New Testament Passover in which Jesus took bread and blessed it, that the Greek word for bread is artos, but this is a general word for bread not indicating that it is unleavened. So how do we know that unleavened bread was used for the Passover rather than leavened bread? Notice these two scriptures:

Mark 14:12 And the first day of Unleavened bread when they killed the Passover  
Luke 22:7 Then came the day of Unleavened bread when the Passover must be killed.

These scriptures tell us that the Passover day when the lamb was killed was a day of unleavened bread as well as the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread following. This is really not enough evidence for us to eat unleavened bread with the Passover. But notice these scriptures:

Ex 23:18 Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread.

Ex 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 until the morning.

Lev 2:11 No meat offering which ye bring unto the Lord shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering of the Lord made by fire.

Deut 16:2 Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the Passover unto the Lord thy God of the flock and the herd in the place which the Lord shall choose to place his name there. Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread.

These scriptures give a direct command concerning the Passover that leaven is not to be eaten with it. If we eat the Passover with leavened bread we will be breaking the Lord's command. Now we can know for sure that the bread Jesus and the disciples ate representing his body must have been unleavened. Jesus would not have broken this commandment.

## CONCLUSION

How important is keeping the Passover to our salvation? Jesus Christ, our Passover said in Jo 6:53-56, "*Except you eat of my flesh and drink of my blood, you have NO LIFE in you.*"

Without the Passover we cannot have eternal life! This is why there are so many false doctrines which attack the Passover. False doctrines are like the flaming sword which God placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden which turned every way to keep the way of the Tree of Life lest they should eat and live forever. (Gen 3:24) In order to obtain eternal life we must enter in through the narrow gate, for broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there be which go in thereat. But narrow is the way to life and few there be that find it. (Mt 7:13-14) Rev 22:14 also tells us that we if we keep God's commandments we shall have the right to the tree of life.

Therefore we need to keep the Passover according to God's commandment. It DOES matter WHAT we call this service. It is called the PASSOVER as Jesus called it, not the Catholic Last Supper or Communion.. It matters WHEN we keep this service. It is kept once a year according to God's commandment for the Passover, not every week. It is not kept on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan as the Jews do, but according to the example of Jesus who kept it at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan with his disciples. It is important HOW we keep this service - with the New Testament symbols that Jesus instituted, the foot washing, the unleavened bread and the wine. And it especially matters, with what ATTITUDE of heart and mind we keep it this service. In 1Co 11:27-28 we are warned to examine ourselves lest we keep the Passover in ANY way unworthily.

It is possible that the Passover will become a significant issue for us in the end time. Dan 7:24-25 tells us about a man who shall arise and wear out the saints who shall be given into his hand for three and a half years. He shall think to change times and laws. How shall he do this? Dan 9:26-27 speaks of a prince who shall confirm the covenant with many for one week (seven years), and in the midst of the week he shall cause THE SACRIFICE AND OBLATION to cease and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it (the sacrifice and oblation) desolate. Causing THE SACRIFICE to cease could be causing the true Passover which is THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST to cease. The Passover confirms the New Covenant which we have made with God year by year. So this false leader, under the guise of 'confirming the covenant' shall somehow change the LAW of the Passover or the TIME when it is observed and destroy it!

By staying close to the commandments of God and the example of Jesus Christ, we can overcome any and all false doctrines which seek to pervert the truth and deprive us of eternal life. Let us be faithful to the end and keep the Passover with true love in our hearts for Jesus Christ, our great savior who died for us. May God bless you as you love him and keep his word.