

CHAPTER 4

THE TIMING OF YESHUA'S PASSOVER

*With fervent desire I have desired to eat this
Passover with you before I suffer.*

—Yeshua

YESHUA TAUGHT HIS disciples to keep Passover and all of God's feasts. The teaching and keeping of God's festivals is one marked difference between the true apostolic church of God and most churches that proclaim Jesus Christ today. When it comes to the law, most churches do not teach or practice what Jesus taught and did. This is as He said it would be (Matt. 24:5–6). Jesus kept and taught His Father's Law, but He knew that misguided imposters would proclaim His name, while they themselves lived and taught a different and lawless gospel (Matt. 24:5–6, 11). But Christ said He did not come to do away with the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17).

As Yeshua Messiah (Jesus Christ) kept and taught His disciples about Passover, it is interesting to note that it was still common for many Sadducees and Jews to prepare and keep their own Passover at home on Abib 14—independent from the temple Passover, which was being kept one day later. There is record of Jesus and His disciples eating the Passover meal and Jesus instituting new Passover symbols on Abib 14 in John 13. Yet John recorded that many Jews were still planning to eat the Passover the next day (John 18:28).

It is particularly interesting to note Jesus' command to His disciples to go, kill a lamb, and prepare the Passover meal (called the *Pesach Seder*) and prepare for the service on Abib 14 did not incite any questions from anyone regarding why they were killing a lamb themselves or why they were keeping Passover one day earlier than the then-current temple practice (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:10–13). Apparently their Abib 14 Passover did not garner any notable concern from the Pharisees, Sadducees, disciples of Christ, or the masses of Jews. Nor did this practice raise any curiosity from the man from whom the disciples rented the room, though he knew the date and purpose of the rental was for the Passover, one day sooner than that at the temple (Matt. 26:18–19). Clearly there must have been many others with the same understanding of God's Word who were also keeping these same ancient practices on Abib 14, independent of temple Passover services. Otherwise this would have stood out, bringing comment and criticism. This is especially

so, given the scrutiny Jesus was accustomed to receiving for anything He did or taught that was contrary to the tradition of the Jews. Surely the Pharisees and Sadducees would have jumped on this practice if it were unique. But, in fact, this was not a unique practice for many Jews of Jesus' day. The Sadducees themselves believed Passover fell at the beginning of Abib 14, but as this was primarily a personal matter—not a Temple matter—it was not of notable concern.

Indeed many historians have concluded that many or most of the Sadducees remained true to the Abib 14 Passover Seder—specifically one that took place in the evening as the 14th commenced. Notice the article “Pascal Lamb” from the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*:

“The Pharisees and Sadducees had a dispute as to the time when the slaughtering [of the lambs] should take place; the former held it should be in the last three hours before sunset [at the end of the fourteenth day], the latter between sunset and nightfall [and thus at the beginning of the fourteenth day].”¹

The words of the notable historian and priest Josephus, who lived during the days of the apostles, are also interesting to consider in this light. Notice he still clarifies the Passover *service* preceding the Feast of Unleavened Bread by one full day:

In the month of Xanthicus, which is by us called Nisan, and is the beginning of our year, *on the fourteenth day of the lunar month*, when the sun

is in Aries, (for in this month it was that we were delivered from bondage under the Egyptians,) the law ordained that we should every year slay that sacrifice which I before told you we slew when we came out of Egypt, and which was *called the Passover*; and so we do celebrate this Passover in companies, leaving nothing of what we sacrifice till the day following. *The feast of unleavened bread succeeds that of the Passover, and falls on the fifteenth day of the month, and continues seven days*, wherein they feed on unleavened bread; on every one of which days two bulls are killed, and one ram, and seven lambs. Now these lambs are entirely burnt, besides the kid of the goats which is added to all the rest, for sins; for it is intended as a feast for the priest on every one of those days. But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them.²

Jesus knew the twilight time between dusk and dark was about an hour or so. Notice Luke 22:14–15: “When *the hour* had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, ‘With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer’” (emphasis added).

Luke records “the hour” that Passover came. After keeping Passover with His disciples, Jesus was given over to the Romans by the Jews, where He suffered all night long at the hands of the Gentiles. The Gentiles then put Him on the cross the next day, and there He died for the sins of all humankind.

WAS THE TIME OF CRUCIFIXION PROOF OF A NISAN 15 PASSOVER?

Many noting Yeshua's death on the cross took place in the latter hours of Passover day (about 3:00 P.M. on Abib 14), and thus claim the timing of His death lends support for the Passover lambs being killed at the end of the fourteenth. I like the sound of that. Who wouldn't? The only problem with it is that it is not biblical! Let's see from God's Word when Jesus died and when He became our Passover.

To begin our research, let's remember just as the Passover lambs were chosen ahead of time (Ex. 12:3), so Jesus was chosen ahead of time, since He was called by God a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). He was the chosen Passover Lamb of God from before the foundation of this world (1 Peter 1:19–20). God knew we would sin and thus would need a Passover Lamb, so He provided a propitiator for our sins in advance of our needs. So when did Yeshua become the Passover Lamb of God? Yeshua became our Passover on the day the Father ordained it so—before the foundation of the world!

But when was His official act of being our Passover carried out? Jesus was captured and beaten for our faults from shortly after the Passover Seder with the addition of the new Passover symbols (in the evening which began the fourteenth of Abib) until the light of the next day—still the 14th. His sacrifice became “official” with the first blows He absorbed on our behalf. But He did not die in the evening. He died at about 3:00 in the

afternoon (Luke 23:44–46). Jesus was dead and buried well before the end of the fourteenth, well before the “evening” of the high day of Unleavened Bread on the fifteenth (John 19:31). Therefore the timing of Yeshua’s death at 3:00 in the afternoon is in no way reflective of when we are to keep the Passover Seder.