

## THE LORD'S SUPPER/COMMUNION

### The Foundation

For the purposes of this study, we will use the passage from 1 Corinthians, where Paul taught the Corinthians the proper understanding of the communion service. However, before we look into the specifics, as they relate to this ordinance, it will be helpful for us to consider the chronology of events that took place on the night when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, or Communion, with His disciples. It is important to have a solid foundation upon which to build a Biblical understanding of this ordinance. We will use the account of events as recorded for us in Matthew for this part of our study:

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? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve ... And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:17-20,26-30).

In order for us to correctly understand this record of events, we must place them within their proper context, which is different from what is traditionally practiced within Christendom today.

As we look at this passage, the first thing that we can see is that the translators have added some words in verse 17 (namely, *day* and *feast of*), which, theoretically, was done in order to provide clarification of the text. However, it is not unusual for their added words to instead bring confusion and distortion to the truth of a passage – they are not always helpful. Literally, the text begins: *now the first of the unleavened ...*<sup>1</sup> By inserting the words *day* and *feast of*, the translators have led the reader to assume that this is referring to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. A quick check will clarify the matter: "In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the LORD'S passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work [laborious work] therein" (Leviticus 23:5-7).<sup>2</sup> Notice that there is a progression of time given here: the Passover is celebrated toward evening on the 14<sup>th</sup> day

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<sup>1</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT, *Bibleworks* 8.

<sup>2</sup> BDB.

of Nisan (the first month of the Jewish calendar, also known as Abib during the time before Israel's exile in Babylon<sup>3</sup>), and the first day of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan (the day after the Passover, and is a holy day like unto the weekly Sabbath). Therefore, in Matthew 26:17, Jesus could not be referring to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread because the Passover celebration had not yet taken place; for that reason, the words that the translators have added simply brings confusion as to the meaning of the text.

Both the Passover and the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread were Jewish celebrations that required all leavening to be removed from the house. The Lord's instructions to Moses were very specific in this regard, and the penalty for eating leavened bread during this time was death: "In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread [this is the time of the Passover], until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off [killed] from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread" (Exodus 12:18-20).<sup>4</sup> The prescribed day for the Passover was the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Abib), and the lamb was to be killed "between the two evenings" (*at even*), which is generally understood to mean after noon and before nightfall.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the observance of the Passover actually began in the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> (with the sacrifice of the lamb), and it would have carried right through into the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> day (the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was to be kept like unto the Sabbath – it was a holy day (Leviticus 23:7)). Bearing in mind that the Jewish 24-hour day begins at about our 6:00PM (basically, from sunset to sunset), it is evident that by the time the Passover celebration was to be observed, all of the leaven would have to be removed from the house, because there was no time between the Passover and the beginning of the holy day (Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread). As a result, the common practice was that "on the evening of the day **preceding** Passover [the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nisan] the ceremony of searching for leaven is performed by the master of the house" (emphasis added).<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, when we read *the first of the unleavened* (which is the literal translation of this first phrase in Matthew 26:17<sup>7</sup>), we must understand that to refer to the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan when it was the Jewish tradition to ensure that all of the leaven had been removed from the house. In this case, the disciples, who went ahead to *prepare* the room, would have carried out the search to ensure that no leavening was present, as well as being sure that adequate and appropriate supplies were on hand for their time together.

As we look at Matthew's account of this time, it might seem that Jesus and His disciples were looking to have their celebration of the Passover with the owner of the house (*at thy house*). During the Passover season, Jerusalem was typically filled with many Jews who came from other places, and, since hospitality was an important part of the Jewish lifestyle, it would not have been unusual for such a request to be made of a resident of Jerusalem. However, both Mark and Luke provide us with the additional clarification that the preparation was to take place within a *large upper room* – the *guest chamber* (*kataluma*) of the house (Mark 14:14-15; Luke 22:11-12). *Kataluma* is from two Greek words meaning *down* and *to loose*, thereby speaking of a room where travelling guests

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/271-abib>

<sup>4</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11933-passover>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5917-eve-of-holidays>

<sup>7</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

could set their burdens down and relax.<sup>8</sup> Being an *upper room* placed it away from the general living area of the owners of the property; therefore, we know that Jesus and His disciples kept this meal alone. It is in this large, separated area where the disciples made preparations for keeping the Passover. Not knowing what was going to soon transpire, the disciples would have been making the room ready for the Passover meal that was to be celebrated the following day (Mark 14:16).

The phrase *I will keep the Passover*, which we find in Matthew, is troublesome to many; it would seem to indicate that Jesus actually celebrated the Passover with His disciples. It appears to be somewhat contradictory since we know that the Passover meal could not be kept without the sacrificed lamb, and the lamb was not killed until the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, which, in turn, coincides with the time when the Lord Jesus died for the sins of the world. The Greek word translated as *keep* is *poieo* (*poy-eh'-o*), and can mean to do, to make, or to prepare.<sup>9</sup> A more contextually fitting translation would be, *My appointed time is near, with thee I am preparing the Passover with My disciples*.<sup>10</sup> This removes any semblance of contradiction, and provides the proper setting for the meal that Jesus ate with His disciples.

It was during this meal, eaten at the close of Nisan 13 and the beginning of Nisan 14 (in the evening), that Jesus identified the unleavened bread as being His body, which would be broken, and the cup as being His blood of the New Covenant. Jesus took of the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples with two simple commands: 1) you receive it, and 2) you eat it (Matthew 26:26). Jesus associated the bread with His body; needless to say, the disciples would have understood that this was to be taken figuratively, since the physical body of Jesus was in front of them, and the state of the bread remained unchanged. In the same manner, He took the cup, gave thanks for it, and gave it to His disciples. Jesus knew that this was to be His last meal with His disciples before He paid the price for the sins of mankind, and He took this opportunity to institute the New Covenant with them in fulfillment of the prophecy that had come through Jeremiah.

Jeremiah proclaimed the words of Jehovah: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah [a covenant that will include all of God's chosen people]: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:31-33). We are told that Jesus met with the twelve in the room that had been prepared for them (Matthew 26:20), and, even though we don't know the tribal ancestry of the disciples, we do know that they were all Jews. When Jesus established the New Covenant with His disciples, He did so with eleven men (Judas was not there) who represented a broad spectrum of the Jewish community of the day: from a tax collector, who cultivated a relationship with the oppressive Roman authorities, to fishermen, who were simple folk and formed a significant component of the Galilean economy.

It is clear that Judas Iscariot was not present when Jesus implemented the New Covenant with the disciples. Luke tells us that in the upper room, Jesus "sat down, and the twelve apostles with

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<sup>8</sup> Vine's "guestchamber."

<sup>9</sup> Strong's Online.

<sup>10</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

him” (Luke 22:14); there is no doubt that as this meal began, all twelve were there with Him. However, during the meal Jesus revealed that one of them would betray Him, which made them question among themselves as to who would do this thing. John, being reclined next to the Lord, was signaled by Peter to find out who it would be. Jesus’ response was, “He it is, to whom I shall give a sop [a piece of bread], when I have dipped *it*. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave *it* to Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly ... He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night” (John 13:26-27,30). The evening meal was probably comprised of what we might call a stew, a single pot of food that had been cooked together and was eaten by scooping it up using a piece of bread as a spoon.<sup>11</sup> Within the Jewish tradition, the host would personally serve an honored guest such a morsel (bread laden with the food, or a *sop*), which is what Jesus did for Judas.<sup>12</sup> From this we can understand that it was during the meal that Jesus gave the morsel to Judas, and immediately he left the upper room to betray Jesus to the religious leaders.

The two elements of the Lord’s Supper were not taken together when Jesus established this ordinance with His disciples. “And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake *it*, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body” (Mark 14:22). It was **during** the meal (*as they did eat*) that Jesus identified the broken bread with His body. However, it was not until **after** their meal that Jesus proclaimed the New Covenant in His blood. Both Luke and Paul tell us that it was “after supper,” “when [after] he had supped,” that Jesus took the cup and declared the “new testament [covenant]” in His blood (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). These were two distinct actions taken by Jesus, and, as we will see, represent two differing aspects of the sacrifice that He made for the sins of the world.

It is also interesting to note that Jesus did not partake of either the bread or the cup. When He had blessed and broken the bread, Jesus said, “Take, eat; this is my body” (Matthew 26:26). *Take* and *eat* are both in the imperative mood (a command), active voice, and the case is second person plural: all of this simply means that Jesus is saying, “You disciples, take this bread and eat it!” Similarly, when He had given thanks for the cup, He said, “Drink ye all of it ...” (Matthew 26:27); or, to put it less ambiguously, “All of you drink from it.”<sup>13</sup> In both cases, Jesus’ instruction is for His disciples to partake of the broken bread and of the cup. Although Jesus implemented what we call the ordinance of communion, only His disciples ate and drank; clearly, since the elements (the bread and contents of the cup) are representative of His body and blood that was soon to be offered to break the power of death, and to provide cleansing from sin, He could not partake of the elements. His sacrifice was for the defeat of Satan (the death-blow promised in Genesis 3:15), and for the deliverance from sin – just as the death of the sacrificial lamb had nothing whatsoever to do with the lamb (it served a higher purpose), likewise the reason for the Lord’s sacrifice was entirely outside of Himself – it was for mankind. The elements that Jesus presented to His disciples were confirmed through His death and the blood that He shed while on the cross. The focus of His life on earth was fulfilled through the implementation of the New Covenant that took place symbolically with His disciples during their last meal together, and in reality through His sacrifice on the cross.

After giving the cup to His disciples, Jesus made this notable statement: “I will not [an emphasized negative – *never*] drink henceforth [from this moment] of this fruit of the vine, until

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/meals-meal-time.html>

<sup>12</sup> Ralph Gower, *The New Manners & Customs of Bible Times* (Student Edition), p. 195.

<sup>13</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18).<sup>14</sup> Just prior to the crucifixion, and, then later, while on the cross, we read of Jesus being offered a drink; were any of these to be considered the *fruit of the vine*, particularly the drink that Jesus accepted? The first occasion is recorded in Matthew and Mark: "They gave him vinegar [*oxos* (*oz-os*)] to drink mingled with gall [*chole* (*khol-ay*)]": and when he had tasted [test a liquid by sipping] *thereof*, he would not drink" (Matthew 27:34); "And they gave him to drink wine [*oinos* (*oy'-nos*)] mingled with myrrh [*smurnizo* (*smoor-nid'-zo*)]": but he received *it* not [an absolute]" (Mark 15:23).<sup>15</sup> The vinegar of the day was typically from the lees (dregs; settlings) of wine that had been soured into acetic acid, often by adding barley, and then diluted with water to make it somewhat palatable; it was the common drink of soldiers, and would have been on hand at the crucifixion for their use.<sup>16</sup> In this case, Matthew calls the liquid *vinegar*, while Mark refers to its source (the deposits from wine). In both cases, the liquid was mixed with a very bitter substance, which Matthew refers to by using the more general term *gall*, while Mark specifically identifies it as being *myrrh*, which stems from an Aramaic word meaning bitter.<sup>17</sup> It was common among the Jews for a condemned man to be offered a wine/myrrh (vinegar/gall) drink, which served as an analgesic that would at least dull the pain of crucifixion.<sup>18</sup> Jesus' refusal to drink of this numbing potion is evidence that He chose to bear the pain and suffering of the cross with a clear mind.

Later, while on the cross, Jesus was given vinegar (*oxos*) to drink; undoubtedly this would have come from what the soldiers had on hand for their own use. This would have been a diluted form of acetic acid, and, even as our present-day vinegar is not acceptable as a *wine*, this repulsive drink was considered to be for the poor and for soldiers.<sup>19</sup> "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar [a vessel was there containing drink for the soldiers]: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put *it* upon hyssop, and put *it* to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:29-30). This drink cannot be considered to be the fruit of the vine that Jesus spoke of earlier – a more pleasant tasting and palatable drink that was a part of the typical Jewish meal.

## The Bread

With this as a foundation, let's look at Paul's instructions to the Corinthians concerning this ordinance.

1 Corinthians 11:23 – For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread:

<sup>14</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>15</sup> Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>16</sup> Jewish Encyclopedia, "vinegar"; <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14703-vinegar>

<sup>17</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myrrh>

<sup>18</sup> <http://archive.archaeology.org/9605/newsbriefs/myrrh.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://biblehub.com/encyclopedia/v/vinegar.htm>



As Paul begins to outline the communion service for the Corinthians, he establishes that what he is about to lay out for them is not of his own determination, but that it is from the Lord. As it was with so many of the fundamental teachings of the Gospel, Paul became a key instrument in imparting the true Gospel to those who desire to follow the Lord faithfully. Peter openly acknowledged that Paul's teachings were important for our spiritual wellbeing, even though, many times, they might be difficult to understand (2 Peter 3:15-16). Therefore, as we consider this passage of God's Word, it is important that we give careful attention to what is being taught, for this is the instruction of the Lord, not man. What Paul received from the Lord, he, in turn, committed to the Corinthians, and so to us. In essence, then, our purpose for this study is to understand what the Lord established with His disciples on the night that He was betrayed, by Judas, into the hands of the religious leaders of the Jews. Although that night was packed with significant events, our first focus will be on what we call the Last Supper – Jesus' last meal with His disciples before His crucifixion.

1 Corinthians 11:24 – And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

As already noted, Jesus broke the bread, and gave it to His disciples with the commands to take it and to eat it; both *take* and *eat* are in the imperative mood and second-person plural, which simply means that He was saying to His disciples, "You take the bread, and you eat it."<sup>20</sup>

Jesus then very simply states the significance of the bread: *this is my body, which is broken for you*. Consider the context of these words: Jesus is sitting with His disciples (the eleven) having an evening meal; in the midst of that meal, He takes a piece of bread, breaks it, and distributes it to the disciples saying to them, "This is my body." Would it have been difficult for the disciples to understand that He was speaking metaphorically? After all, He was sitting with them and He did not give them parts of His physical body to eat. Therefore, we must understand this figuratively, not literally.

Before we consider the full extent of what Jesus was saying, let's put the Roman Catholic teaching regarding this matter to rest. With the general Evangelical shift into ecumenism, and the leading role that the Roman Catholic Church is playing in that movement, it is important to understand that the Lord's Supper, about which Paul is teaching the Corinthians, is **NOT** the Catholic Eucharist.

The word *Eucharist* finds its origin in a Greek term (*eukharistia*), which means thanksgiving or gratitude.<sup>21</sup> The word appears 15 times in the NT, and each time it is translated as *thanks*, *giving of thanks*, or *thanksgiving*;<sup>22</sup> however, none of the occurrences have any reference to the Lord's Supper. Clearly, then, there is nothing particularly inappropriate about the word itself; nevertheless, through its use by the Roman Catholic (RC) Church, it has taken on a whole new meaning. Within the RC context, it is defined as the "the source and summit of the Christian life," by which they mean: "The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of

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<sup>20</sup> Stephanus 1550 NT.

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=e&p=26&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=e&p=26&allowed_in_frame=0)

<sup>22</sup> Online Bible, Strong's #2169.

the apostolate [the bishops and priests], are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For **in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself ...**" (emphasis added).<sup>23</sup> Did you catch it? Review the words that are in bold: "**In the ... Eucharist is ... Christ himself.**" The Eucharist is considered to be the pinnacle of the seven RC sacraments, for it increases the union between the communicant and Christ, "forgives his venial [pardonable] sins, and preserves him from grave [more serious, yet still pardonable] sins."<sup>24</sup> Within RC theology, a sacrament must include three things: "the outward sign; the inward grace; Divine institution."<sup>25</sup> For the Lord's Supper, we acknowledge that it is an outward sign, and that the Lord Jesus instituted it with His disciples; therefore, the contention with the RC position on sacraments is with the *inward grace*, which they define as "the formal cause of our justification."<sup>26</sup> From this we understand that, within RC theology, participation in each of their sacraments is another step in what they consider to be the process of our justification before God. This is not a misunderstanding of their position; consider a quote from the Council of Trent (a significant document for the Catholics): "If any one saith, that by the said sacraments of the New Law grace is not conferred through the act performed, but that faith alone in the divine promise suffices for the obtaining of grace; let him be anathema."<sup>27</sup> In other words, if we say that we are saved by faith in the grace of God alone, we are accursed (*anathema*) by the RC Church, for, within their theology, it is through our participation in the sacraments that we receive grace before God. In essence, RC doctrine holds that the sacrifice that Christ made was not sufficient to provide us with full saving grace.



Francis holding a monstrance; the "consecrated" wafer is placed in the middle; notice the sun-ray design.

The RC priest, through a proper consecration of the elements of the Eucharist, is said to transform the bread and wine (or, more frequently, just the wafer) into the literal body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. They teach that "the Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration [by a duly ordained priest] and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist [as long as what has been consecrated lasts]. **Christ is present whole and entire** in each of the species [which is why they can conduct the Eucharist with only the wafer, and why they will place a wafer in a monstrance to be worshipped] and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ" (emphasis added).<sup>28</sup>

Within the RC liturgy, they consider Christ to be presiding over the Eucharist celebration (through the priests), and they see Him as being the sacrifice itself. The RC doctrine of transubstantiation teaches that the element or elements (the bread or the bread and the wine) **literally** become the body and blood of Jesus, and that they will remain as such as long as the consecrated bread and/or

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P3X.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P3X.HTM)

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P44.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P44.HTM); <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14004b.htm#IV>.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13295a.htm#IV>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Council of Trent, Session VII, Canon VIII.

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P41.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P41.HTM)

wine exists. Consequently, they introduced the monstrance or ostensorium (both terms mean *to show*)<sup>29</sup> as a holder for the wafer; they will place a consecrated wafer into the monstrance, and faithful RCs who approach it will bow in worship, for, in their minds, **the wafer is the Lord Jesus Christ**.

Although the churches that came out of the RC Church (such as the Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, etc.) do not hold to the RC doctrine of transubstantiation (the elements literally becoming the Lord), many do use the term Eucharist, and hold to a very close identity of the elements with Christ. They frequently hold to a form of consubstantiation, where the essence of the elements (the bread and wine) are not removed, but, **during the Eucharist**, the body and blood of the Lord are said to be present alongside of the bread and wine – i.e., bread-body (or, wafer-body/blood) and wine-blood.<sup>30</sup> The difference from the RC position is on two fronts: 1) the elements of bread/wine are not removed, and 2) the supernatural presence of the body/blood of the Lord is only for the time of the sacrament. Yes, for the most part among the Protestant groups, communion is considered to be a sacrament – a means of receiving the grace of God.

However, as Paul rehearses this ordinance, there is nothing to indicate that we are given grace from God for simply partaking of the elements. The instruction given by the Lord is that we are to partake of the broken bread “in remembrance” of Him (Luke 22:19); we are to call to mind what He has done for us in purchasing our freedom from the bonds of sin. This is a commemorative ordinance that Jesus set in place with His disciples; it is not another cog in the wheel that will ultimately lead to our salvation. We are to partake of the elements of the service *in remembrance* of the Lord Jesus Christ; the bread and the fruit of the vine are a means of focusing our minds on what the Lord has accomplished for us at the cross.

Jesus told His disciples, and the same words come forward to us today, that the bread *is my body, which is broken for you*. Within the Jewish tradition, the *breaking of bread* only took place within the context of a meal;<sup>31</sup> since, for the most part, the meal was a stew that was scooped up using a piece of bread, it was customary for the patriarch of the household to pronounce a blessing on the bread, then break it, thereby signifying that the meal was ready to be eaten. Therefore, within this tradition, it is with certainty that we can say that Jesus would have broken the bread at the beginning of the meal that He had with His disciples. The *sop* that Jesus’ gave to Judas was this broken bread laden with *stew* from the common pot. There is nothing to suggest that there would have been anything different about this meal. However, during this meal with His disciples, Jesus did something very different: He again took the bread, broke it, and told His disciples to eat it (not laden with the stew) because it represented His body that was about to be broken for us. At His crucifixion, Jesus endured tremendous abuse so that He was unable to carry His cross to the place of execution; being nailed to the cross, and then having it raised would have completed the breaking of His body; although none of His bones were broken (in fulfillment of prophecy), His body was broken. Isaiah prophesied: “... he hath no form [of a man] nor comeliness [majesty]; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty [appearance] that we should desire [be drawn to] him” (Isaiah 53:2).<sup>32</sup> Indeed, He would be *smitten of God* as He was pierced (*wounded*) for our

<sup>29</sup> Both terms are applied to a vessel that is used to display something, typically sacred; today, however, they are both used exclusively to describe the container displaying the wafer, or *Blessed Sacrament* as the RCs term it; <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11344a.htm>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.theopedia.com/consubstantiation>

<sup>31</sup> <http://messianicfellowship.50webs.com/bread.html>

<sup>32</sup> BDB.



sins (Isaiah 53:4-5); physically, the Lord was broken as the weight of the sins of the world (our sins) was placed upon Him.<sup>33</sup> As Jesus hung on the cross, being physically broken, He willingly committed His spirit (His life) to His Father, and died (Luke 23:46); He was not killed by crucifixion – He died willingly to break the power of sin and death. The Jews sought His execution, and the Romans carried it out, but it was for the sins of the world that He bore such punishment; He willingly relinquished His life in order to forever snatch the power of death out of the hands of Satan.

Paul catches the significance of the broken body of the Lord Jesus: “Knowing [understanding] this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed [brought to an end by replacement], that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Romans 6:6).<sup>34</sup> By faith we account ourselves to be dead to sin, so that we might be alive in newness of life unto God (Romans 6:11); our old man of sin is replaced by a “new man, which after [according to] God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).<sup>35</sup> It is by means of the broken body of the Lord that our body of sin, our inheritance from Adam, can be considered to be dead; when we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are deeming our body of sin to have been crucified with Him – on the cross He bore our sin.

As we partake of the broken bread, 1) we are remembering what Christ has done for us, and 2) we recall that it is now possible for us to account ourselves to be dead unto sin. Of primary importance is our reflection upon Christ and what He did for us, and then, what we must do for Him, namely, consider ourselves to be dead to sin, and alive unto God. This is central to living the life that God has prepared for us; we have been saved by the grace of God so that we might then live out the works of righteousness and holiness that He has pre-determined for us (Ephesians 2:10). As we consider the broken bread within our communion service, we must do so with a full appreciation for what the Lord Jesus accomplished on the cross AND accept it as a symbol of what our commitment must be to Him. It is more than simply “Jesus died”; it is that we died with Him, and we are now alive in Him so that we can live our lives in a manner that is pleasing to Him – according to what He has planned for us. “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

## The Cup

1 Corinthians 11:25 – After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.

After (*when*) they had finished eating, in a manner similar to the broken bread, Jesus took the cup, and made an announcement that changed everything: “this cup is the new testament [covenant] in my blood.” The fruit of the vine, which was in the cup that Jesus held, symbolized the blood that Jesus would, very shortly, shed upon the cross. The understanding is that with His

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<sup>33</sup> BDB.

<sup>34</sup> Friberg Lexicon.

<sup>35</sup> Strong's Online.

shed blood came a New Covenant, and, at the same time, the old Mosaic Covenant was replaced (Hebrews 8:13). The prophecy that Jehovah gave to Jeremiah was fulfilled by the Lord in these words (Jeremiah 31:31-33); the significance of these words was, I'm sure, lost on the disciples at the moment. As we read through the book of Acts and Paul's letter to the Galatians, we come to see that several of the disciples had great difficulty comprehending the full depth of the New Covenant, and the fact that it had replaced their Jewish traditions. The Law of God was not gone, but the Mosaic Law that provided the Jews with such a distinctive lifestyle, and which foreshadowed the coming of the Lord, was removed by the Lord Jesus at the cross (Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 2:13-15).

As we partake of the juice (fruit of the vine), we are to do so 1) in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ, and 2) as a participant in the New Covenant that came with His shed blood. The Lord declared through Jeremiah that the two features of this New Covenant would be 1) He would put His Law into us, and 2) He would write it (His Law) upon our hearts. When we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to provide us with the salvation of our souls, the promise of God is that His Holy Spirit will come to abide within us. As Jesus prepared His disciples for the day when He would no longer be with them in physical form, He promised to send them the Comforter (the Holy Spirit), Who "may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16); this Comforter would testify of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:26), and would be a Guide into all truth (John 16:13). Under the New Covenant, the Law of God (the Ten Commandments upon which everything in Scripture hangs – Matthew 23:37-40) is inscribed upon our hearts by the Lord, AND the Spirit of God comes to abide within us. What a change! God has given us new resources, and the means to remain faithful to Him so that we might be saved. The words that Jesus places before us today are the same as what Moses presented to the children of Israel: "I have set before you life and death ... therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

This second element of the communion service identifies the New Covenant that Jesus implemented with His disciples at the Last Supper, but it also speaks of the blood that He shed in order to establish that New Covenant. Under the Mosaic tradition, the blood of the sacrificial lamb was shed in order to provide, through faith, a cleansing from sin; likewise, Jesus shed His blood, thereby making atonement from sin available to everyone who comes to Him in faith. The old Mosaic Covenant was made with Israel (but included the foreigner who might be with them); the New Covenant is made with whoever will come to the Lord in faith. This New Covenant is entered into by faith in the Lord Jesus (John 3:16), it requires obedience to the Lord (John 14:15), it can be broken by our unbelief (Hebrews 3:12), and, once it has been broken, we cannot be restored (Hebrews 10:26-29). It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7); this cleansing is for the sins that we have committed up to the time of exercising our faith in the Lord, and for the sins that we inadvertently commit afterward, and confess to Him (1 John 1:9).

### **A Forward-looking Memorial**

1 Corinthians 11:26 – For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Moving on from the elements of the communion service, Paul now provides some general instructions regarding our participation in the service. He begins by summarizing that the bread and the cup are to be a reminder to us of the Lord's death for us.

The phrase *as often as* is taken by some to mean that this ordinance needs to be kept frequently; however, that is not the case – the Greek could be accurately translated as *whenever*. *Whenever* you keep this ordinance, you are proclaiming His death, until He should come. When He comes for us, we will be forever with Him, and this ordinance will be ended; it is for us today. For now, it provides us with a reminder of the Lord Who purchased us out of sin (it is a memorial), and, because it is temporary, it also reminds us that He will be coming for us one day (it is a memorial with a forward-looking aspect).

## Our Responsibility

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 – Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Now we come to a passage that speaks of our responsibility before the Lord as we partake of the communion elements. The potential error being dealt with is that someone should eat and drink *unworthily*, or in a manner that is careless or frivolous, and the pronounced judgement is that such a person is *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord* and brings *damnation to himself*. In other words, if someone should partake of the communion elements without any regard for what we have just looked at (i.e., the bread speaking of the body of the Lord being broken for us, and the cup of His blood that was shed for our cleansing from sin), then it is pre-determined that they are guilty of wronging the body and blood of the Lord. The elements of communion were chosen by the Lord at the Last Supper to be a memorial for us of what He would accomplish for us at the cross; if we consume the elements without any thought of what He has done, then we have participated in a manner that will bring us condemnation (*damnation*) – in essence, this is saying that the sacrifice that Jesus has made for us is without effect.<sup>36</sup> Those are serious consequences, but the reason that is given for such a harsh penalty is because this person is “not discerning the Lord's body” – they do not recognize the symbolism of the body and blood of the Lord. Rather than celebrating a memorial of what Christ has done for us, it simply becomes food to be consumed, or a ritual to be performed.

The Scriptures warn us: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [unfaithfulness], in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12);<sup>37</sup> we are warned against permitting *unbelief* to creep into our hearts. Partaking of the elements of communion

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<sup>36</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.

<sup>37</sup> Strong's Online.

without any thought for the sacrifice that the Lord has made for our salvation is demonstrating a heart of unfaithfulness. However, the promise is also made that “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*” (Romans 8:1); if we are living in accordance with the leading of the Spirit of God, then we are not condemned. Therefore, if we are daily walking in faithfulness to the leading of the Holy Spirit, then we will not partake of the communion elements without a full recognition of what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross.

Sandwiched between these verses that speak of unworthy participation, is the antidote to being condemned for such an action. The command is to *examine* yourself; continually test yourself to ensure that your actions and your beliefs are in agreement (see also 2 Corinthians 13:5). Are you participating in the ordinance because you know that it is what is expected of you, or are you taking part because you want to take that moment to reflect on what the Lord has done for you? If your heart and actions are not in cinque, then you are guilty of hypocrisy, and the Lord's sacrifice has not provided you with the cleansing that the communion service symbolizes. In essence, our own hearts will condemn us for being hypocritical; we are not acting in keeping with our heart's condition – we do not believe, yet our actions tell everyone else that we do. The reality is that we are condemned before even participating in the communion service without due regard for the symbolism of the elements. If our examination uncovers our hypocrisy, then we are assured that Jesus is not abiding within us (2 Corinthians 13:5), and we must repent; if no hypocrisy is uncovered, then we are free to participate in *remembrance* of Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

### Separating the Biblical from the Pagan

Central to the communion celebration is the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the personal application of what He accomplished on the cross. As we have seen, the broken body of the Lord expresses our freedom from the body of sin that we have from Adam; his shed blood provides the cleansing from our sins, and is the basis for the promised New Covenant. It is as these two aspects of the Lord's suffering come together that we are able to account ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God (Romans 6:11). We have carefully considered the meaning of the elements of the communion service, our attitude toward them, and that Jesus intended that we participate in *remembrance* of Him. It is with this latter point that we find some considerable departures within our modern culture – both in the world, and, sadly, within the lives of those who profess to be children of God. Too often it seems that the time of remembrance that the Lord gave to us in the communion ordinance is insufficient, and “Christians” seek other ways to try to remember.

There is probably no greater example of how we have capitulated to tradition, and failed to exercise our minds in spiritual matters than in the consideration of Jesus' death and resurrection and *Easter*. Although the word *Easter* does appear in Acts 12:4 in the King James Version (KJV), it is an incorrect translation of the Greek word *pascha*, which refers to the Passover; interestingly enough, *Easter* does not appear anywhere else in the KJV (for any of the other occurrences of the Greek *pascha*), nor has it been so translated in the modern translations.<sup>38</sup> Instructed by King James to follow the pattern of the Bishop's Bible, the scholars who worked on the KJV brought this term over from that Bible, which was an earlier English version hastily produced by a number of

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<sup>38</sup> A check through thirty other translations, including the *New King James Version* and the notoriously loose *The Message*, turned up no instances of the use of *Easter* in Acts 12:4.

Anglican bishops in an effort to provide an acceptable text as an alternative to the Geneva Bible, which was perceived as being largely Calvinistic.<sup>39</sup> Even though the Bishop's Bible (1568, then significantly revised in 1572) shows the Greek word *pascha* elsewhere as *Passover* (with the additional exception of John 11:55), they used the term *Easter* here, and, for some reason, the KJV translators chose to perpetuate the error.<sup>40</sup>

The etymology of the word *Easter* shows its origin in the "O.E. [Old English] *Eastre* (Northumbrian *Eostre*) ... a goddess of fertility and sunrise whose feast was celebrated at the spring equinox."<sup>41</sup> The Roman Catholics, however, do not accept this history for the word, and declare,

The English term [*Easter*], according to the Ven. Bede [the Venerable Bede, one of their Doctors of the Church, c672-735 AD] ... relates to *Estre*, a Teutonic goddess of the rising light of day and spring, which deity, however, is otherwise unknown ... The Greek term for *Easter*, *pascha* ....<sup>42</sup>

Despite the fact that one of their own (Bede), whom they consider to be a founding father, makes the pagan connection, Roman Catholic theologians have chosen to dismiss this association, and declare *Easter* to be the correct translation for the Greek word *pascha*. However, even though they try to distance themselves from the pagan inference in the word *Easter*, and seek to defend it as a correct translation of the Greek word *pascha*, their own English Bibles do not use *Easter* (for *pascha*) in either John 11:55 or Acts 12:4. The Douay-Rheims translation, popular with the Catholics, shows the word as *pasach*, not *Easter*.<sup>43</sup> There appears to be some inconsistency among Catholic scholars as to what the correct translation of *pascha* really is.

However, the Roman Catholics are not the only ones who choose to turn a blind eye to the relationship between the word *Easter* and the pagan goddess of fertility. Gretchen Passantino, co-founder of Answers in Action, and a frequent contributor to the *Christian Research Journal*, states: "**Easter** is an English corruption from the proto-Germanic root word meaning 'to rise'" (bold in original).<sup>44</sup> She goes on: "It refers not only to Christ rising from the dead, but also to his ascension to heaven and to our future rising with him at his Second Coming for final judgment. It is not true that it derives from the pagan Germanic goddess Oestar or from the Babylonian goddess Ishtar ...."<sup>45</sup> Here is an attempt made by a fairly well-known Evangelical apologist to spiritualize the "English corruption" *Easter* sufficiently so that it might become completely acceptable. Regardless of the spiritual significance that she attempts to assign to the word *Easter*, the position that she puts forward, supposedly debunking the pagan association, is based entirely upon her own authority. She flatly denies that *Easter* is derived from the names given to pagan goddesses going back to Babylon, yet she does not provide any support for her assured declaration. On the other hand, the evidence against her, in this matter, seems quite significant. We have already seen the opinion of one etymology dictionary that is in opposition to her position. Shipley, in his *Dictionary of Word Origins*, says that the word is "from the AS [Anglo-Saxon] *Eostre*, a pagan goddess," and

<sup>39</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishops%27\\_Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishops%27_Bible) .

<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, even though the Bishop's Bible uses the word *Easter* in John 11:55 as well, the KJV translators chose to use the word *Passover* in both instances within that verse.

<sup>41</sup> Online Etymology Dictionary, "Easter," <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?l=e>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05224d.htm> "Easter."

<sup>43</sup> A search of several other Catholic Bibles shows that the word is most often translated as *Passover*.

<sup>44</sup> Gretchen Passantino, "Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Easter," <http://www.answers.org/issues/easter.html>

<sup>45</sup> Passantino, "Ash."



then goes on to state: “The Christian festival of the resurrection of Christ has in most European languages taken the name of the Jewish *Passover* ... in Eng. [English] the pagan word has remained ....”<sup>46</sup> He not only identifies *Easter* as being of pagan origin, but exposes the fact that the pagan term has been retained in the English language; it is also a part of the German language (*Ostern*), and the two seem to be quite unique in this regard.<sup>47</sup> The *Columbia Encyclopedia* (Sixth Edition) states: “A.S. [Anglo-Saxon] *Eastre*, name of a spring goddess ....”<sup>48</sup> Passantino’s opinion of the matter stands alone against some very significant authorities; as nice as it might be for her to think that the word *Easter* sprang directly from reference to the resurrection of the Lord, at its best it is clearly only a delusion on her part, and, at worst, it provides a support for introducing paganism into Christianity. Modern-day pagans openly profess that *Eastre* is the Anglo-Saxon goddess of fertility, and *Ostara* is the spring festival that celebrates the “renewal and rebirth of Nature ...”;<sup>49</sup> “Easter has deep roots in the mythic past. Long before it was imported into the Christian tradition, the Spring festival honored the goddess Eostre or Eastre.”<sup>50</sup>

As we consider the use of the term *Easter* within our culture, if we’re honest, we will accept the fact that not everyone is thinking of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. Nevertheless, we have to admit that, as it is applied to the events surrounding the culmination of Jesus’ earthly ministry, the word rolls off the tongue of virtually everyone today – Christian and pagan alike; however, that does not make it either acceptable or correct. We would do well to take the words of Jehovah through Jeremiah to heart, “Learn not the way of the heathen ...” (Jeremiah 10:2). This was a warning to Israel that they were to be a separate people, and, likewise, it is a warning to us to guard against being taken in by the world’s ways; yet what do we see among Evangelicals today?

This is reminiscent of the warning that the Lord gave through Moses before the Israelites entered the Promised Land: “After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I *am* the LORD your God” (Leviticus 18:3-4). What is so obvious in the Lord’s instructions to Israel (at least it should be to us, for we see it repeated many times) is that they were not to take on the pagan customs of the people of the new land, nor were they to take with them the practices of the people whom they had left behind. God desired a holy people: “... if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:5-6). We find a similar expression made for our benefit and admonition: Peter declared: “...ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Yet, what do we find today among those who claim to be God’s people? When they speak of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, they refer to it by the name of a pagan goddess of fertility whom the pagans celebrate at the time of the spring equinox. Surely Satan must laugh at the gullibility of today’s professing Christians; he has managed, while working through a corrupt branch of church history, to get English (and German) Christians everywhere to refer to the highest

<sup>46</sup> Joseph T. Shipley, *Dictionary of Word Origins*, “Easter.”

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.infostarbase.com/holidays/easter/easter1.php>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.bartleby.com/65/ea/Easter.html>

<sup>49</sup> <http://thunder.prohosting.com/~cbarstow/ostara.html>

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.witchology.com/contents/march/ostara.php>.

demonstration of God's love for mankind by the name of a pagan goddess. How could we? How dare we so profane God's righteous act of sacrifice to purchase our freedom from sin! Although we may be proud that we are not following "after the doings of the land of Canaan" (we are not following the pagan rituals of our society), we may well be guilty of bearing "the doings of the land of Egypt" (perpetuating the error of past days – pagan traditions that have been "sanitized" by the RC Church).

How did we fall into this trap of perversion? Once again, we need look no further than the budding RC Church of the fourth century. In an effort to settle what had become a rather lively dispute as to when the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord should be remembered, the determination of when *Easter* was to be celebrated was made by the Council of Nicea in the year AD 325. "These Paschal controversies ... ended with the victory of the Roman and Alexandrian practice of keeping Easter ... on a Sunday, as the day of the resurrection of our Lord."<sup>51</sup> Although the specifics of the determination do not come out in any of the canons of the Council, they did appear in a circular from the Council and Emperor Constantine to the bishops of the various churches: "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."<sup>52</sup> What is interesting to note about this determination is that it was to *never* fall on the day of the Jewish Passover, yet they had no problem aligning it with the common godless (and goddess) celebrations. At the time of Constantine, there was a strong undercurrent of anti-Semitism that was often reflected in the decisions that were made – they could practice anything except that which gave the appearance of being Jewish. Beyond comprehension, they shunned anything Jewish but had no difficulty embracing what was totally pagan – one more time, Satan could laugh at the spiritual efforts of self-righteous men. Unfortunately, this became the pattern that the RC Church followed in a twisted effort to make "Christian" celebrations the practice of the majority of the common people; the people were familiar with their pagan festivities, so the Roman Church leaders simply changed some of the names involved, and applied a thin veneer of "Christian" whitewash (Deuteronomy 12:29-31 warns against this action). With the passage of time, even sincere Evangelicals and Fundamentalists have retained the error, and have faithfully trained the next generation to perpetuate it – an error that must be particularly loathsome to our holy God.

When Joshua reached the end of his life, he spoke words of encouragement and challenge to the leaders of Israel: "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses ... that ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; **neither make mention**<sup>53</sup> **of the name of their gods** ... But cleave unto the LORD your God ..." (Joshua 23:6-8). In this he echoed Jehovah's words through Moses: "...in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect [take heed, guard]: and make no mention [remember, call to mind<sup>54</sup>] of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth" (Exodus 23:13). The Psalmist, likewise, understood the Lord's requirement in this regard: "Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that*

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<sup>51</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Volume III, p. 346.

<sup>52</sup> Schaff, *History*, Vol. III, p.346. This still holds true today: for 2009, the Vernal Equinox was March 21, full moon on April 9 and *Easter Sunday*, April 12; the Jewish Passover, on the other hand, was on April 8.

<sup>53</sup> The Hebrew word used is *zakar*, a different form of the word as used in Exodus 20:8 correctly translated as "remember;" the implication is that we are not to cause to remember, or to recall, so as to mention the name of the false gods (Strong's Dictionary).

<sup>54</sup> Strong's Online.

hasten *after* another *god*: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, **nor take up their names into [upon] my lips**" (Psalm 16:4).<sup>55</sup> Is it a small thing that the name of the goddess of fertility slips unnoticed from the tongues of Christians today as they refer to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of the world? Paul answered this with a question: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14) – the understood answer is still, "Absolutely none!"

We have just taken a close look at the Scriptures that tell us how the Lord wants us to remember Him: take the bread and the cup *in remembrance* of Him. This is the Biblically-prescribed method for remembering the Lord! *Easter* is a celebration that goes well beyond what the Lord, through His Word, has told us to do as we remember Him; add to this its pagan roots, and it should become obvious to us that we must avoid any semblance of participation in it.

### **Evaluating the Good Friday-Easter Sunday Tradition**

The ultimate travesty comes when we blindly follow the *Good Friday-Easter Sunday* tradition that has been handed down to us. As we consider *Good Friday* (commonly thought, by Evangelicals, Fundamentalists and Liberals alike, to be the day of Christ's crucifixion), it is important that we understand the timing of events surrounding Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. Today's calendar shows a day called *Good Friday* followed by a regular Saturday, and then *Easter Sunday*. Typically, the understanding is that Jesus died on Friday, and was raised to life on Sunday; this fits nicely with our Gregorian calendar, and the way that *Easter* is celebrated today (using the term with the full understanding of its pagan origins). To quote from Hank Hanegraaff, director of the Christian Research Institute, and host of the *Bible Answer Man* radio program, "In Matthew 12:40 Jesus prophesies that He would be dead 'three days and three nights.' The fact of the matter is he was dead for only two nights and one full day."<sup>56</sup> Is he accusing the Lord Jesus Christ of lying? He justifies this blatant contradiction of Jesus' own words by saying that the Jews counted any portion of a day as a whole day. However, Jesus' words to the Pharisees, which Hanegraaff so casually dismisses, seem very clear, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Why would Jesus, the eternal Word, Who framed the first evening and morning (Genesis 1:5), say "three **days** and three **nights**" if He meant only one day and two nights? Furthermore, specifically stating "three days and three nights" would rule out counting a portion of a day as the whole day; Jesus is very specific about the number of days and nights that would be involved. Counting from Friday to Sunday will never permit the fulfillment of these words of Jesus, yet this is rationalized away, and the average Evangelical today, including the so-called "Bible Answer Man," carries on without giving the matter another thought. What is even more surprising is that very vocal Fundamentalists, who are openly critical of Evangelicals for many things, have joined the mindless in "going along" with the crowd in this matter, rather than seeking the truth, and then doing their part to make that truth known. It is way too late to stem the slide, but it's never too late to stand for the truth.

<sup>55</sup> Brown Driver Briggs.

<sup>56</sup> Hanegraaff, Hank, "Three Days and Three Nights," Statement CP1402.

[http://www.equip.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=mul1LaMNJrE&b=4126497&content\\_id=%7B10478DBB-A024-42B1-9CAC-741D7B50DCB9%7D&notoc=1](http://www.equip.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=mul1LaMNJrE&b=4126497&content_id=%7B10478DBB-A024-42B1-9CAC-741D7B50DCB9%7D&notoc=1)

In light of the terrible desecration of calling our Lord's death, burial and resurrection by the name of a pagan goddess, it is important that we give careful consideration to the timing of the events of Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection so that we do not add thoughtless heresy to blasphemy. To begin with, it is important that we understand that the Jewish method of keeping time is not the same as what we practice in our culture today. As we've already noted, the Jewish day begins at about six o'clock in the evening, and is in keeping with the Genesis account of creation where God declared the "evening and the morning" to be the day (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). We need to keep this firmly in mind when viewing the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection, lest we arrive at conclusions that are based on an incorrect premise.

Leviticus 23:5 tells us that "in the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the Lord's passover." The first month in the Jewish calendar is called Abib or Nisan (the latter was primarily used after the Babylonian captivity, and seems to be rooted in the Assyrian word *nisannu*, meaning "beginning"<sup>57</sup>). This is in the spring of the year, and is the month in which the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt. For ease of looking at the details of the days surrounding the Passover<sup>58</sup> as they unfolded at the time of Jesus' death and resurrection, it is of value to plot them into a chart format so that they can be observed clearly and chronologically.

The Timing of Events Surrounding Jesus' Death and Resurrection		
Jewish Calendar	Event	Modern Day of Week
13 <sup>th</sup> Nisan	Peter and John prepared the room for the Passover meal (Luke 22:8). This is traditionally the time when the dwelling is searched to ensure that all leaven has been removed. <sup>59</sup>	Tuesday before 6:00 PM
14 <sup>th</sup> Nisan	Jesus and His disciples ate the "Last Supper," which was <b>not</b> the Passover meal. He desired to eat the Passover with His disciples, because He knew what lay ahead, but openly declared that He should "no more no not eat" (an emphasized double negative – <i>ouketi ou me phago</i> ) of the Passover "until it [should] be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:14-16). <sup>60</sup> John 18:28	Tuesday after 6:00 PM

<sup>57</sup> Easton's Revised Bible Dictionary, "Nisan," Online Bible edition.

<sup>58</sup> *Passover* (in Greek *pascha*) is used in Scripture in several ways: 1) it can refer to the whole festival, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Luke 2:41), 2) it can refer to the specific celebration (Matthew 26:2), 3) it can refer to the lamb being sacrificed (Mark 14:12), and 4) it can also refer to the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7).

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=528&letter=E&search=evening> "Eve of Holidays."

<sup>60</sup> Strong's Online; Strong's Dictionary, *ESword*.

14 <sup>th</sup> Nisan (1 <sup>st</sup> Hour) <sup>61</sup>	Matthew 27:1-2 indicates that the Jewish leaders delivered Jesus to Pilate “when morning was come,” which would have been the beginning of the business day, or about 6:00 AM.	Wednesday 6:00AM
14 <sup>th</sup> Nisan (3 <sup>rd</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> Hour)	Jesus is crucified. Mark 15:25, John 19:14 <sup>62</sup>	Wednesday 9:00 AM – 12:00PM
14 <sup>th</sup> Nisan (6 <sup>th</sup> to 9 <sup>th</sup> Hour)	Darkness came over the land until the 9 <sup>th</sup> hour. Matthew 27:45 <sup>63</sup>	Wednesday 12:00 – 3:00 PM
14 <sup>th</sup> Nisan (9 <sup>th</sup> Hour)	Jesus died as the fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice, at the prescribed time of the killing of the Passover lamb. <sup>64</sup> Matthew 27:46,50	Wednesday 3:00 PM
14 <sup>th</sup> Nisan (11 <sup>th</sup> Hour or so)	Jesus was buried before the end of 14 <sup>th</sup> Nisan; sunset was the beginning of 15 <sup>th</sup> Nisan, a holy day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31; Leviticus 23:5-7). <sup>65</sup>	Wednesday before 6:00 PM

<sup>61</sup> The Jews, at the time of the Lord's ministry, used the Roman method of counting the hours of the day. The Romans would mark the passage of time by ringing a bell in the forum or public square: the first ringing was at the first hour (our 6:00 AM), and marked the beginning of the business day; the bell was rung again at our 9:00 AM to mark the third hour, at noon to mark the sixth hour and announce the lunch break; at 3:00 PM it was rung to mark the ninth hour and the return to business, and then at 6:00 PM to mark the close of business. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonical\\_Hours](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonical_Hours)

<sup>62</sup> John says that it was “about the sixth hour” when Jesus was crucified, which indicates an approximation – literally, “nearly” (Strong's Online). Crucifixion was not a quick process, and tracking time was not a precise science. With the Roman practice of ringing the bell to announce the beginning of each period of three hours, Mark (“it was the third hour”) could well have tied his reference to the beginning of the crucifixion, after the second-watch bell had rung (the third hour had been announced), and John more toward the end of the process, nearer to the noon bell.

<sup>63</sup> This period of darkness is referred to by the secular writers of the day. Phlegon, whose writings have disappeared, is quoted by other historians as stating: “...during the reign of Tiberius Caesar there was **a complete solar eclipse at full moon** from the sixth to the ninth hour; it is clear that this is the one. But what have eclipses to do with an earthquake, rocks breaking apart, resurrection of the dead, and a universal disturbance of this nature” (emphasis added) ([http://www.textexcavation.com/phlegon\\_testimonium.html](http://www.textexcavation.com/phlegon_testimonium.html)). Note: it is impossible to have a solar eclipse at full moon, nor does a solar eclipse last for three hours, which simply confirms that this darkness was a supernatural act of God as Jesus bore the sins of the world.

<sup>64</sup> The Passover lamb was slain after the evening sacrifice was performed, typically 3:00 in the afternoon (*Jewish Encyclopedia* “Passover Sacrifice,” [http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view\\_page.jsp?artid=99&letter=P&pid=0](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view_page.jsp?artid=99&letter=P&pid=0)). Josephus marks the time of the killing of the lambs as being from the ninth to the eleventh hour, *The War of the Jews*, 6.9.3 <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/josephus/war-6.htm>

<sup>65</sup> Here is the error that plagues modern calculations (which are really a capitulation to the Roman Catholic tradition). The day following Jesus' crucifixion was a holy day, but not the seventh-day Sabbath.



15 <sup>th</sup> Nisan Sunset to Sunrise – this is a holy day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a day to be kept like unto the Sabbath	Jesus in the tomb – 1 <sup>st</sup> night	Wednesday 6:00 PM to Thursday 6:00 AM
15 <sup>th</sup> Nisan Sunrise to Sunset – still a holy day, to be kept like unto the Sabbath	Jesus in the tomb – 1 <sup>st</sup> day	Thursday 6:00 AM to Thursday 6:00 PM
16 <sup>th</sup> Nisan, Sunset to Sunrise, this was a day like unto any other day	Jesus in the tomb – 2 <sup>nd</sup> night	Thursday 6:00 PM to Friday 6:00 AM
16 <sup>th</sup> Nisan, Sunrise to Sunset. <sup>66</sup>	Jesus in the tomb – 2 <sup>nd</sup> day.	Friday 6:00 AM to Friday 6:00 PM
17 <sup>th</sup> Nisan, Sunset to Sunrise – this is a holy day, the regular seventh-day Sabbath	Jesus in the tomb – 3 <sup>rd</sup> night	Friday 6:00 PM to Saturday 6:00 AM
17 <sup>th</sup> Nisan, Sunrise to Sunset – the regular Sabbath	Jesus in the tomb – 3 <sup>rd</sup> day	Saturday 6:00 AM to Saturday 6:00 PM
18 <sup>th</sup> Nisan Sunset – after the end of the Sabbath day	Jesus rose from the dead “early the first <i>day</i> of the week” (Mark 16:9) <sup>67</sup>	Saturday after 6:00 PM
18 <sup>th</sup> Nisan Sunrise	Women go to the tomb on the first <i>day</i> of the week, <i>at the rising of the sun</i> . (Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1).	Sunday 6:00 AM
18 <sup>th</sup> Nisan	Jesus appears to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus (7½ miles from Jerusalem) (Luke 24:13,29-33)	Sunday 3:00 PM or so
18 <sup>th</sup> Nisan evening (toward sunset – the end of the day)	Jesus appears to the disciples locked away behind closed doors (Luke 24:36; John 20:19). Thomas was not with them (John 20:24).	Sunday 3:00 – 6:00 PM

<sup>66</sup> This is likely the day when the women purchased spices for the final burial processes (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55-24:1), since they arrived at the tomb to apply the spices at the rising of the sun on the first of the week (Mark 16:2), which would have been the time businesses were just opening up.

<sup>67</sup> Notice the difference between Mark 16:2 – the women arrived early “at the rising of the sun,” and Mark 16:9 where Jesus rose “early the first *day* of the week.” In the former case the *early* is qualified to indicate a specific application of the term; in the latter case it simply marks the beginning of the first day, which starts at 6:00 PM Saturday, within our time context.

26 <sup>th</sup> Nisan, probably toward evening again.	Jesus appears again to the disciples locked away behind closed doors, this time Thomas was with them (John 20:26). <sup>68</sup>	Monday 3:00 – 6:00 PM
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Incredibly, by taking the time to read the Scriptures carefully, it is not difficult to determine that Jesus fulfilled His statement to the Scribes and Pharisees that He would be in the earth three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40). It is not necessary to rationalize Jesus' words away, or to manipulate the text, in order to see that His words were fulfilled with great precision. For the purposes of this part of our study, it is important to recognize two truths that have failed to hit the radar of Evangelicals and Fundamentalists alike: 1) the Lord Jesus Christ did not die on "Good Friday," but rather on Wednesday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, as our Passover Sacrifice (1 Corinthians 5:7), and 2) He did not rise on "Easter Sunday," but rather at the end of the Sabbath, our Saturday evening. If we have eyes to see, we can see that the Scriptures completely discredit the modern concept of "Good Friday" and "Easter Sunday," which are nothing more than the product of zealous RC leadership to "Christianize" pagan celebrations. The Word of God is clear: "Learn not the way of the heathen ..." (Jeremiah 10:2), and "... what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14); the former being a "thus saith the Lord" to which we would do well to give heed.

## Summary

We have given consideration to two aspects of the sacrifice that Jesus made for the sins of the world. The first dealt specifically with the celebration and remembrance of His death that we call communion; in the second we examined the world-wide tradition of celebrating the death of the Lord during the springtime *Easter* season. If we are honest, we will recognize that there is only one celebration of the Lord that has His approval, and that is our communion ordinance; we follow the pattern that Paul laid out for us, and we do so *in remembrance* of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). Our *remembrance* must include the price that He paid for us on the cross, without overlooking the fact that it is through His shed blood that He put the New Covenant into place, and that we will continue to celebrate all of this to the day that He will return to catch us away to be with Him forever. If we truly understand this ordinance as we should, we will quickly recognize the travesty of the Easter celebration, which has absolutely no foundation in Scripture. Even a cursory examination will uncover its paganism; error continues to be error no matter how long it has been accepted as the truth. If we are truly concerned with celebrating the Lord Jesus Christ, then we will seek to understand the tremendous truths within the communion ordinance, and separate ourselves from celebrations that are, at the very least, pagan and blasphemous. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not [do not

<sup>68</sup> It is important to note the timing of this appearance by the Lord, and it is very interesting that the Spirit of God has included this detail that so many today seem to miss, or do not have eyes to see. Those who would seek to shift the Sabbath from the seventh day to Sunday (or call Sunday the "Christian Sabbath," or whatever similar argument may be propounded), like to use the fact that, after His resurrection, Jesus met with His disciples on Sunday (John 20:19), but what they will always choose to ignore is the fact that Jesus did exactly the same thing on a Monday ("eight days later"). This reveals their flawed argument and undermines one of their primary defenses for seeking to justify the change (and their total disregard for the seventh-day Sabbath).

hold or cling to] the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you ...” (2 Corinthians 6:17).<sup>69</sup> We are called to separation from all that is *unclean*; in our obedience to the Word of God, may we not fail at this point.

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<sup>69</sup> Gingrich Lexicon.