

From Passover to Easter



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NEW PASSOVER SYMBOLS—Instead of shedding the blood of a Passover lamb and eating its roasted body, Christ commands His followers today to commemorate His suffering and death by partaking of the New Testament symbols of unleavened bread and wine.

By Randall Ricker March 21, 2020
Sabbath Church of God

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Passover in the New Testament

Matthew 26:19, 26-29

31 AD

19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the **Passover**... 26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

55 AD

6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed **Christ, our Passover**, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Passover in the New Testament

1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 33-34

55 AD

20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is **not to eat the Lord's Supper.** 21 For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you... 33 Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

Passover in the New Testament

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took **bread**; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the **cup** after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

Passover in the New Testament

1 Corinthians 11:27-32

27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

A warning in the New Testament

Jude 3-4 60's AD

3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for **the faith which was once for all delivered** to the saints. 4 For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness [licentiousness] and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Historical Accounts

Jesse Hurlbut, *Story of the Christian Church*: For 50 years after St. Paul's life, a curtain hangs over the church through which we vainly strive to look; and when it rises, about 129 AD with the writings of the earliest church fathers, we find a church **in many aspects different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul.**

Historical Accounts

By 64 AD Christians were differentiated from Jews in Rome.

To 70 AD (fall of Jerusalem) Jerusalem church kept Sabbath and **biblical festivals**.

~135 AD Jews were expelled from Jerusalem. Greek bishops came and celebrated **Easter**. (Similar arguments made for Easter and Sunday.)

Historical Accounts

Epiphanius, in his lengthy report about the controversy over the date of the celebration of Passover states:

“The controversy arose after the exodus of the bishops of the circumcision (A. D. 135) and it has continued until our time.”

The Bishop makes specific reference to the fifteen Judaeo-Christian bishops who administered the Church of Jerusalem up to A.D. 135 and who up to that time had practiced the Quartodeciman **Passover** since they based themselves on a document known as the Apostolic Constitutions where the following rule is given:

“you shall not change the calculation of time, but you shall celebrate it at the same time as your brethren who came out from the circumcision. With them observe the Passover.” **Samuel Bacchiocchi** **From**
Sabbath to Sunday

Historical Accounts

Second Century AD **Reasons for the change to Easter Sunday:**

Christians did not want to be persecuted with the Jews.

Anti-semiticism

Sun-worshipping cults became more popular.

A Biblical Account

Ezekiel 8:16

So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.

Historical Accounts

“And when the blessed Polycarp was at Rome in the time of Anicetus, and they disagreed a little about certain other things, they immediately made peace with one another, not caring to quarrel over this matter. For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated; neither could Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it as he said that he ought to follow the customs of the presbyters that had preceded him.

154 AD **Polycarp** “A question of no small importance arose at that time. For the parishes of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should be observed as the feast of the Saviour's **passover**...

“Synods and assemblies of bishops were held on this account, and all, with one consent, through mutual correspondence drew up an ecclesiastical decree, that the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord should be celebrated on no other but the **Lord's day**, and that we should observe the close of the paschal fast on this day only.” *Eusebius Church History*

Historical Accounts

196 AD “But the bishops of Asia, led by Polycrates, decided to hold to the old custom handed down to them. He himself, in a letter which he addressed to Victor and the church of Rome, set forth in the following words the tradition which had come down to him:

“We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter, who lived in the Holy Spirit and now rests at Ephesus; and, moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord...He fell asleep at Ephesus.

Historical Accounts

And Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from Eumenia, who fell asleep in Smyrna. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr Sagaris who fell asleep in Laodicea, or the blessed Papirius, or Melito, the Eunuch who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and who lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead?

All these observed the fourteenth day of the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven.

I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said "We ought to obey God rather than man." Acts 5:29. *Eusebius Church History*

Historical Accounts

196 AD Thereupon Victor, who presided over the church at Rome, immediately attempted to cut off from the common unity the parishes of all Asia, with the churches that agreed with them, as heterodox; and he wrote letters and declared all the brethren there wholly excommunicate.

Eusebius Church History

Historical Accounts

150 AD Epistle of the Apostles “You therefore celebrate the remembrance of my death, i.e., the **Passover.**”

before 190 AD Melito: **Passover** includes the death of Christ.

Council of Nicea

Dr. Arius: Christ was on a lower level than the Father, **Sabbath**,
Passover once a year on the 14th.

Nicea decree “All the brethren in the East, who formerly celebrated Easter with the Jews, will henceforth keep it at the same time as the Romans, with us and with all those who from ancient times have celebrated the feast at the same time with us.” *Historica Ecclesiastica*

Nicea formalized Trinity, Sunday, and Easter.

Summary

The change from Passover to Easter was a decision by part of the church, not Biblically based.

Reasons:

Christians did not want to be persecuted with the Jews.

Anti-semiticism

Sun-worshipping cults became more popular.

The controversy continued for 200 years, being settled at the Council of Nicea.

Summary

But was it really settled?