

The Battle Over the Passover!

When should Passover be observed? Should God's Church observe the Passover itself? Is the "Lord's Supper" a replacement for Passover? When was Jesus Christ condemned to death by Pilate --- was it at MIDNIGHT? There is much more to the ongoing debate concerning the correct date for the Passover than most have remotely imagined. Here is disturbing insight into the intensifying battle over the Passover!

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Recently it has been brought to my attention that an explosive debate is secretly raging in the United Church of God, concerning the Passover. A man who knows many of the higher echelons of ministers confided to a friend that the controversy is about both how and when to observe the Passover. Although publications and sermons and doctrinal study papers published by the Church follow the traditional "party line," and attempt to justify a supposed "Passover" the night at the beginning of Nisan 14, apparently this question is far from settled.

Why do I call it "explosive"? For several reasons. First of all, can you imagine the anger and resentment among many church members who are told that they have been misled for so long? Would not a change in this observance disrupt the Church, cause chaos, and upheaval in the church? Would not all those members who believe Herbert Armstrong could make no mistake, and taught the Passover correctly, and who idolize and worship his memory, take offense and leave the Church in droves?

Nevertheless, it has been reported to me by a confidant whose identity must remain secret that such a controversy is simmering and about to boil in the secret chambers of the United Church of God. Will they become the first major church organization of the end-time Church of God to admit their mistake, to repent, and to lead their membership into the truth, putting the truth of God before human tradition?

Years ago an elder who left United largely because of my writings on Passover met with a high ranking minister in that church, Roy Holladay, who sought to persuade him to remain in United. He suggested that he keep Passover on the 15th privately, but continue with United and observe it on the 14th with the Church. He refused. Since that time, the elder passed away. However, before he died, he told my confidant that at that time Mr. Holladay let a mighty feisty cat out of the bag – that is, he told the elder that while he was alive, even Mr. Herbert Armstrong admitted that the Jews observed the

correct Passover *but he was afraid to change it!* He got this mind-blowing, bombshell information straight from none other than Roy Holladay, when being counseled about the Passover issue. Roy Holladay is now the current President of the United Church of God!

Passover Conundrum

In the meantime, a continuing debate has been stirred up by the questions raised concerning the truth of Passover between a former member of the Intercontinental Church of God (ICG), Todd Kallenbach, and a former host for them in Richmond, Virginia. Mr. Kallenbach has been researching deeply into the Passover question, and has studied our literature proving the true Passover is at the end of the 14th of Nisan, beginning of 15th of Nisan. His studies have created far-reaching ripples, and causing others to research into this issue. In his attempt to learn what various remnant churches teach on this issue, and why they teach what they do, he has corresponded with several of them, by e-mail, asking them pointed questions.

One church he wrote to was the United Church of God. He wrote to me that at least the UCG responded to his question, but was still waiting to hear from the PCG. He wrote, "I wanted to get each group's spin on this. The UCG's is as confusing as possible."

Here is the letter they sent to him. My comments about it are in brackets, to show you the weakness and paucity of their position. They make the classical error in debate – they *assume to be true* the proposition they are attempting to prove! Thus they reason around in circles, never proving anything. It's as if their thinking and reasoning processes are in a continuous loop, going around in circles, never going anywhere! Notice their response:

"Thank you for taking the time to write us with a question that is of interest to you. We are happy to respond to your inquiry.

"The critical question to be asked and answered here is what did Christ do? What example did He leave for us to follow? We are to follow His example in all things (I Peter 2:21). We should also note that just as Christ established new emblems for the keeping of the New Testament Passover, His example confirmed at what time of the day He wanted New Testament followers to observe it."

Notice here that the writer already *assumes* that there is such a thing as a "New Testament Passover!" Where is his proof? He provides none. He simply states the conclusion as if it were a fact everyone knows and accepts. But there is the rub! This is the very issue they must first of all PROVE!

Secondly, he says Christ's example "confirmed" at what time of the day He wanted His followers to observe it. How so? Which example is he speaking of? We read in the book of Luke the real example of Christ! "His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem *according to the custom of the feast*" (Luke 2:41-42). Obviously, Jesus and His parents observed the Passover "according to the custom of the feast." The Jews

observed it at the end of Nisan 14, beginning of Nisan 15! Josephus the Jewish historian of the first century and Jewish and rabbinic history proves this point. So THAT is Jesus' own example! And remember, He *never sinned* or transgressed God's Law! If He had, then He could not be our Savior!

Let's continue the letter:

“Did Christ establish new emblems? Please note Matthew 26:26-27 and Luke 22:14-19. We see from these verses that Christ did change the emblems to bread and wine from the sacrificing of the traditional Passover lambs.”

Again, notice this circular reasoning. These passages show Jesus gave us the emblems of bread and wine, all right, but say *nothing* about any *change* from sacrificing the “traditional Passover lambs.” (By the way, they were *not* “traditional.” The sacrifice of the Passover lambs was a LAW of the TORAH – the Word of God!) Nor does this passage say these new emblems have anything whatever directly to do with the “Passover”!

“When did Christ observe the Passover with His disciples, and did He mean for this to be the pattern just as the bread and wine are the new pattern) for the New Testament Christian? Let's note these scriptures: Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-14, 16; Luke 22:8, 11, 13; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.”

Well, all right – let's note these Scriptures. Read them. They talk about the “Lord's supper,” very clearly. They mention that Christ sent the disciples to “prepare” for the Passover, which they did. But the verses then simply say that after this was done, that evening they all sat down for dinner ((Matt.26:20; Mark 14:17-18). Luke adds Jesus' statement that evening, where He said, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15). Write for our free article, “The Gospel of Luke and the Passover.” What is Jesus really saying? The writer simply *assumes* that He is referring to that very dinner or meal as the “Passover.” But was He? The apostle John answers in the negative! He wrote that this final supper was “BEFORE THE FEAST of the PASSOVER” (John 13:1)!!

Therefore, as the Greek shows, Jesus was referring to the *upcoming Passover* which would be celebrated the night He would be placed in the grave, after His crucifixion! Read our free article, “When Should the Passover Be Observed?” As Strong's Concordance points out, the expression “fervent desire” in this passage is #1939, *epithumia*, and means “a longing (esp. for what is forbidden): -- concupiscence, desire, lust.” Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon says “spec. desire for what is forbidden, lust.” In other words, Jesus really desired to eat the upcoming Passover, but *knew He would not be able to – it was forbidden to Him – because He had to DIE to become our “Passover Lamb”!*

The writer *just assumes* that the “Lord's supper” and Passover were one and the same thing – *assuming* that which he is supposed to be *proving!* These passages prove no such thing! But let's go on. He writes:

“Please note that Christ, as recorded in I Corinthians 11:23-25, was observing the Passover at night (‘the same night in which He was betrayed’) with His disciples. It was at that time, night, that He had them partake of the bread and wine -- the New Testament Passover. It wasn’t at 3p.m. the next day. Obviously, Christ could not establish the New Testament symbols of bread and wine, have the Passover observance with His disciples and be crucified all at the same time.”

But wait a minute! Here we go again, *assuming* what we are supposed to be *proving*. Paul indeed mentions the bread and wine ceremony in I Corinthians 11 – but he does NOT call this ceremony the “Passover,” as so many seem to *assume*! Nowhere in I Corinthians 11 does Paul even mention the word “Passover”! He is simply giving instructions on how we should partake of the bread and wine, symbolizing Christ’s body and blood! But let’s go on:

“The Bible does refer to this New Testament practice as the Passover -- note I Corinthians 5:7 where ‘Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.’ We also see that Paul, as he was instructed by Christ, was now passing on this same teaching of when to observe the Passover to the group there in Corinth (I Corinthians 11:23).”

Indeed, I Corinthians 5:7 tells us Christ is our “Passover” lamb, sacrificed for us – but it makes no mention of the separate bread and wine ceremony and does not tie it in with the Passover observance itself! The letter writer concludes his response, saying:

“By the way, we believe that Leviticus 23 also teaches the Passover to be kept at the beginning of the 14th. Though the Jews today celebrate the Passover on the beginning of the 15th of Abib, there is a lot of evidence to show that the children of Israel (and some still in Christ’s day) kept it at the beginning of the 14th as the Church of God has traditionally taught. We have sent an extensive study paper on this subject to all our elders, and I’m sure our pastor in your area would be happy to make it available to you.”

Notice that he says “there is a lot of evidence” to show some Jews kept the Passover at the beginning of Abib 14 in Christ’s day – but provides absolutely *none*! Why? Because the truth is, there is simply *no such evidence whatsoever!!!* This is simply a flagrant misrepresentation! Apparently he *assumes* there is such evidence, but I assure you, there is absolutely NONE! History is utterly silent on this theory, or conjecture, Jewish records say nothing about it, nor do early Church records. It is simply a fabricated hypothesis made up by those today who want to invalidate the true Jewish Passover and substitute in its place their own “New Testament” Passover! But you can call a snake a rabbit, but it is still a snake, nevertheless!

The Living Church Response

This was merely one of the first letters Todd received from various churches on his Passover questions. The next exchange comes from the so-called “Living Church of God,” led by Roderick C. Meredith. One of Todd’s sisters is a member of that church. Apparently, their minister recommended Todd read Fred Coulter’s book on the Passover.

Todd wrote to me as follows:

“I thought you would find this of interest. Yesterday, while trying to talk to my oldest sister about new moons, she made a comment about Passover. She is in the Living Church. I told her she didn’t even keep Passover, which did not go over too well. Anyways, I decided to research the Living site for their teachings on this subject, and found them vague and watered down. I then decided to write directly to them and ask about this subject. I am including this exchange for your reading. I think you will be as BLOWN away as I was. P.S. -- I used a pseudonym for my own privacy.”

I was dumfounded to read the letter he received from “Living.” Here it is:

“Dear Friend,

“Thank you for your questions about the Passover. It must be observed at the beginning of the 14th just following sunset of the 13th of Nisan. That is the meaning of Leviticus 23:5 ‘On the fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight is the LORD’S Passover.’

“The 15th of Nisan is the first day of Unleavened Bread, a Holy Day. The Jews were eating their Passover on the Night to be Much Observed. *The killing of the lambs by the Jews has nothing to do with the death of Christ. There is no religious significance between the two events.*

“Jesus kept the Passover at twilight **ON** the 14th, *eating the Passover lamb* the evening of the 14th.

“If you will give us your regular mailing address, we will send you a free booklet explaining what the Bible teaches about the Holy Days. If you have further need of information, please let us know.”

Yes, that does blow my mind! Think of it! They claim there is no symbolism, no connection, between the Passover lambs and Christ! Yet the apostle Paul declared, “For indeed Christ, our PASSOVER, was *sacrificed* for us” (I Cor.5:7), and John spoke of Christ saying, “Behold! The LAMB OF GOD who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

But is this the “official” teaching of the Living Church of God? They seem to be of two opinions or minds about this subject. The letter above is from their official representative. But I subsequently got a letter from a person who read the letter above, which I quoted in the Nov-Dec. 2002 issue of *Prophecy Flash*. He wrote me, chastising and rebuking me severely. He said:

“This email is in response to your Nov-Dec 2002 Prophecy Flash where a person from Virginia sent you their comment on information they received from the Living Church of God regarding information about the Passover and the killing of lambs. According to the reply that this person got from the Living Church of God ‘The killing of the lambs by the Jews has nothing to do with the death of Christ. There is no religious significance between the two events.’ Please note that your article does not indicate that this is quoting the submitted information word for word and you also do not use quotation marks as if it were all quoted.”

Let me interject here that the writer is wrong. I *most certainly DID* use “quotation marks” around the letter sent by the Living Church representative. The whole letter was quoted “verbatim,” with no alterations. Nevertheless, the individual continues:

“So in my endeavor to find out the truth, I requested the book ‘The Holy Days -- God’s Master Plan’ by Dr. Roderick C. Meredith of the Living Church of God. In this book the old testament and the new testament meanings are explained in detail for example on page 13 (this is exactly what is written in this book):

“God told ancient Israel that the “life of the flesh is in the BLOOD” (Leviticus 17:11). So God planned that His own Son’s blood would be shed. Christ would be the ultimate Passover Lamb-reconciling all true Christians to God the Father. ‘For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us’ (1 Corinthians 5:7). And again, ‘Much more then, having now been justified by His BLOOD, we shall be saved from wrath through Him’ (Romans 5:9).”

I wrote him back saying:

“I’m sorry you took offense at my opinion of the information LCG sent to a friend regarding the Passover lamb. I assure you, I did not misquote anything. Judging from the booklet you quoted, they seem to have two opinions -- one sent by the authorized correspondent to my friend, and the ‘official’ line in the booklet. But when was the booklet printed? The info my friend received was very recent. Have they changed their opinion? Remember, the info came from their official correspondent via e-mail from their correspondence department. Anyway, what’s your beef? I did not misquote anything -- I found their writer put it in an amazing way. If you challenge my right to disagree with him, that’s your problem. I am very honest about this. You probably are a member of LCG, right? Anyway, you agree with their teaching that Passover was on the beginning of the 14th Nisan, right? So do you think the Jews were sacrificing the Passover at the right time, at the end of the 14th? If not, do you think their Passover lambs then really reflected the symbolism of Christ? (Of course, there is no evidence any lambs were sacrificed at the Temple before the afternoon of Nisan 14 as Passover lambs!)

“Sincerely, I believe you need to study this subject much deeper. Why not visit our website and study all the articles relating to the Passover, and our special 4 Bible Study lessons on Passover? It is -- triumphpro.com.”

The Coulter Factor

Of course, that is not the end of the matter. The debate continues to rage. Todd later wrote again to the Living Church of God on the issue. Notice the tactics he says were employed by the Living Church:

“Hello once again from Va. I hope all is well with you. Thank you for answering my questions to you recently concerning the Passover. Let me please introduce myself. My name is Todd Kallenbach, and I was once a WCG member. I was baptized in 1986, and even attended AC in Big Sandy for one semester, and had to leave due to financial concerns. I started a GCG group in my parent’s home in 1992. I have always respected Dr. Meredith, as I was in his class in Big Sandy. My sister and her family still attend services with LCG in Williarnsburg Va.

“Recently, she sent me an email concerning the Passover issue. She was given information concerning the Passover topic by the local minister written by Fred Coulter. I read his literature and found it to be nothing but bovine excrectia. I was shocked to hear that your minister gave her information from another church, and my question to you is this:

“Do you and LCG support the teachings of Fred Coulter, and do you look to him for your doctrinal direction? And why was my sister referred to Coulter in the first place? I read all of the information she sent me, and from what I read, it appears he has his OWN translation of the New Testament!!!! Do you or your church, and Dr. Meredith, accept Coulter’s translation? And if not, then why did my sister, in church, receive information to study Coulter’s teachings? Please tell me if LCG is following the teachings of Fred Coulter, so I can advise my sister accordingly. Please also tell me why the LCG cannot turn to their own sources of knowledge instead of turning to outside sources for their doctrinal teachings to the local members. Is Fred Coulter a minister of the LCG ????”

“Also, please know that this ongoing discussion of this vital topic is being revealed to many brethren who came out of the WCG, and we eagerly await your candid and honest answers to these important questions.

“Please feel free to contact me at your convenience.”

Who is this individual known as Fred Coulter? Well, he wrote a book purporting to give the true history of the so-called “Christian Passover.” In his book, he claims that God never ordained that the Passover sacrifices had to be done at Jerusalem. He says that Ezra, a scribe of God, *tampered with the text and REWROTE portions of Deuteronomy 16 where Moses clearly says the opposite.* The errors in his book are far too numerous to repeat here, but suffice it to say we have several articles which expose those errors. They are free. They are “Exodus 16 and the Great Quail Question,” “Coulter’s Passover Errors Exposed,” “Ben Ha Arbayim – Between the Two Evenings,” “Luke on the Passover,” “The Passover Plot,” and “When Should the Passover Be Observed?”

Next: Persecution!

Unfortunately, to my knowledge, Todd never received any further communication from the Living Church of God. However, his sister in that church was livid with anger that he would contact her minister, and her church, bringing these embarrassing questions to the forefront!

Being persecuted for seeking the truth by a member of one’s own family can be devastating. But Jesus Christ foretold such things would happen. He declared: “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. . . For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Matt.10:34-35).

Commenting on this situation in his own family, Todd wrote:

“Just wanted to write a quick note tonight I wanted to let you know that I am going through a fierce battle here amongst my family there is much divisiveness between me and my oldest sister, who is in the so-called Living church She is the one whose minister referred her to Fred Coulter for ‘ammunition’ against you in her battle to overcome our ‘heresy’ due to our beliefs on Passover. However, this has only caused us all to draw closer together here in our group, as we expect this kind of persecution, from within and without, to dare to have the nerve to stand up for the truth it’s really funny, because the more heat I have to take from people, the more I am convinced you, and we, are right in our understanding of God’s word. If you were wrong, and no one cared, then how would

you ever know if what you were teaching was wrong?? It seems to me in my limited experience on this planet, it's ALWAYS the ones clinging to the truth who get yelled at, persecuted, and renounced as 'heretics,' as Fred Coulter would say -- No weak-willed milk toast ever caused any ripples in the pond-scum of society. But like Jesus Christ was threatened with death the first time He opened His mouth, so shall those who dare to speak truth will suffer like-wise from this self-absorbed, disgusting perverted end-time generation, and we will probably receive similar treatment.

"Anyways, I wanted to share with you a quote my father gave to me recently:

Any frontal attack on ignorance is bound to fail because the masses are always ready to defend their most precious possession -their ignorance.

-- Hendrik Willem van Loon, Dutch-American
Journalist and lecturer (1882-1944)

"Please tell everyone hello, and I hope to see you all before Passover."

That is a very impressive quotation. It something we should all keep in mind – always. And we should also remember the words of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who warned us to expect persecution from others: "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and *leap for joy!* For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets" (Luke 6:22-23).

The Intercontinental Church Enters the Maelstrom

The following is a letter written by Todd Kallenbach to representatives of the Intercontinental Church of God, a church led by Garner Ted Armstrong, and for which he was a local "host." This was a very revealing exchange of letters. Notice:

"Greetings once again from Richmond, Virginia!

"I am hoping you will have some time to help me with a question I have concerning Passover I have asked this question to George Trent in the past, but he claims I have 'doctrinal differences' with the ICG over this issue He will no longer answer my email, and has removed me from acting as the host of the Richmond ICG group here This has happened because I have been trying for many years to understand this issue, and have looked to several sources for understanding, including Mr. Armstrong.

"In a tape entitled 'Last Day ULB, Seattle', dated 04-14-01, # 0113 Mr. Armstrong makes the following statement, which I will reproduce word for word here: " 'We do not celebrate the Passover. A lot of people have called it that traditionally, but it is called the Lord's Supper by the Apostle Paul; and it was a New Testament, brand new, first time only, never before, supper that Jesus Christ conducted 17 to 24 hours before the sacrifice of the sacrificial lambs, when He took a little bit of wine, a little bit of bread – of course He washed their feet, He said take, eat, this is my body broken for you, I Cor. 11, and then said, 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.'"

Notice carefully! In a taped sermon entitled "Last Day of Unleavened Bread, Seattle," dated April 14, 2001, Garner Ted Armstrong stated unequivocally: "*We do not celebrate the Passover.* A lot of people have called it that traditionally, but it is called 'the Lord's supper' by the apostle Paul; and it was a New Testament, brand new, first

time only, never before supper that Jesus conducted 17 to 24 hours before the sacrifice of the sacrificial lambs, when He took a little bit of wine, a little bit of bread – of course, and washed their feet; He said, take, eat, this is my body broken for you.”

Finally the TRUTH IS OUT! The observance the various churches of God celebrate at the beginning of Nisan 14 is NOT THE PASSOVER! What they believe they are doing is commemorating the ‘Lord’s supper.’”

This admission is very interesting, of course, because Jesus Christ NEVER commanded His Church to commemorate or memorialize the “Last Supper” as an annual event or commanded assembly. Rather, all His life He set an EXAMPLE of observing the Passover commandment of God (Lev.23; Exodus 12; see Luke 2:41-42). This is obvious, because the Passover was commanded to be kept FOREVER (Exodus 12:14-16). Jesus kept ALL God’s commandments, setting us an example, that we should *follow in His footsteps* (I Peter 2:21; I John 2:6). As the Intercontinental Church of God and Garner Ted Armstrong admit, the Passover was to be celebrated at the close or end of Nisan 14, at the beginning of Nisan 15. They admit that the “Lord’s Supper” occurred *before* the night of the Passover, which came the evening after Jesus’ crucifixion!

But, they claim, we are to keep the “Lord’s Supper” because of the new emblems Jesus gave concerning His sacrifice, *in place of the Passover!*

But does this make any sense? Notice what the apostle Paul says in I Corinthians 11. The special “bread and wine” ceremony, which was introduced by Jesus *during* a regular meal *before* the Passover, was “not the Passover” itself (I Cor.11:20). However, this special observance of the bread and wine was celebrated during a regular evening meal. Notice also, it was to be done “AS OFTEN AS” they performed it, whenever they held a sacred fellowship meal throughout the year (I Cor.11:25-26). Notice that the expression “as often as” is the same expression used in Revelation 11:6 regarding the two witnesses who will smite the earth with plagues in the future, “As OFTEN AS they will.”

This has nothing whatever to do with an ANNUAL event, or with the Passover celebration!

If the observance which the churches have really been conducting is the “Lord’s supper,” and is admittedly NOT the true “Passover,” this brings up one huge, monumental problem: Since they are not observing the Passover, which Almighty God ordained to be observed “FOREVER” (Exodus 12:14-17; Leviticus 23:4-8; Psalms 111:7-8; Ezek.45:21), are they not in flagrant disobedience to God? Since the Passover is a “feast by an ordinance for ever” (Exo.12:14), why aren’t they keeping it today? The apostle Paul wrote, “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the Feast . . .” (I Cor.5:7-8).

Whatever happened then to the Passover?

It has it been disregarded, trampled in the dirt, and ignored, all these years. It has mistakenly been called “a night to be much observed,” a separate observance – when in reality the “night to be much observed” IS THE PASSOVER itself (Exodus 12:40)! Why have thousands been observing a phony, false, fraudulent, fictitious “Passover,” thinking they were obeying God?

This is so important, that we must emphasize it. Notice the continuing correspondence that Mr. Kallenbach had with representatives of the Intercontinental Church of God.

We must take these things seriously, and “earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). In his letter to the ICG representative, Todd goes on:

“Chris, my question to you, and Mr. Armstrong is, why doesn’t the ICG keep the Passover as instructed in Lev.23 ??? I cannot find anywhere where Christ changed anything, and know He said He did not come to change the Law or Prophets. Please help me with this critical issue, and please ask Mr. Armstrong to tell the church why we do not have to keep this most important of Holy Days.”

Todd then wrote to us, saying: *“Here is the area coordinator’s reply to my question once again. I had to ask him directly to tell me why he does not keep the Passover. At least he did finally give me an answer.”*

Here is the response:

“Todd, the *reason I don’t observe Passover* is because Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. That event is over. It happened once. The Passover of Exodus happened once also.”

‘The Passover lamb eaten by the Israelites was a type of Christ. It was slain on the 14th of Nisan. It was slain in the afternoon of the 14th and eaten on the evening portion of the 15th. That Passover was a type of the Passover to come. Does it not make sense that Christ, our Passover, would be sacrificed at exactly the same time the Passover lambs were slain by the Israelites?’

Let me interrupt here. Notice two things: First of all, although they do not keep the Passover, by their own admission, yet they keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread! How ridiculous! They stand or fall together! Secondly, he admits the Passover lamb was a type of Christ. That is true, of course. But isn’t that all the more reason that we should observe it, today? *Of course! That’s what we teach!* Since the Passover lamb was a type of Christ, the Messiah, that is one very reason we should observe it! Plus, remember, God says, “And this DAY [the Passover] shall be unto you for a MEMORIAL; and ye shall keep it a FEAST unto the LORD *throughout your generations*; ye shall keep it a feast by an *ordinance FOREVER*” (Exodus 12:14).

Notice carefully the fact that God commanded the Passover AND Feast of Unleavened Bread be observed “FOREVER” (Exo.12:14-16). Do we really believe what God says? Are we really willing to OBEY God?

The minister continues in his letter:

“Now, think about these questions aside from the ‘sixth hour.’ Christ was cut off in the midst of the week. Which day is the midst of the week? Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, WEDNESDAY, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.”

Here is another error! Of course, we all know that Wednesday is the ‘middle’ day of the week. So what? No Scripture says Christ was cut off in the midst of the week. The Scripture the minister refers to is Dan.9:27. Read it carefully. Many read into it what it does not say at all! The NKJV has it: “Then he [the “people of the prince that shall come” – see verse 26] shall confirm a covenant [or “treaty”] with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to offering and sacrifice . . .” This passage does not in any way refer to the death of Christ. When He was crucified, the Jews continued sacrificing animals in the Temple for another *forty years*, until 70 A.D., when the Temple was destroyed! Rather, this verse plainly refers to the Antichrist who will stop the offerings in a middle of a future “week” of years, when the Temple of God will soon be rebuilt! *This is a prophecy for the future!*

The letter continues:

“Secondly, what was the only sign Christ gave of his Messiahship? Mat. 12:40. Three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Crucifixion and burial any other time than Wednesday afternoon, and a sunset burial would destroy this scripture. He had to have been crucified on Wednesday afternoon and buried right at sunset on Wednesday. The same time the High Priest was sacrificing the Passover lamb.”

Here is another flagrant error. As all reputable scholars admit, the “three days” and “three nights” in the Hebrew language can refer to PARTS of three days and three nights! It need not be 72 exact, literal hours at all. Write for our free article, “How Long Was Jesus in the Grave?” The evidence is overwhelming that the crucifixion was on a Thursday in 30 A.D., because astronomical evidence proves that Nisan 14 that year fell on a Thursday, not a Wednesday!

The letter goes on:

“We don’t have to continue sacrificing the lamb. Christ was the Lamb of God. He died for us. Therefore, the Passover has been fulfilled. We partake of the Lord’s Supper as a memorial of his death as outlined in I Cor.11:23-28. We partake of the bread and wine symbolizing his flesh and blood. He said unless you eat of my flesh (bread) and drink my blood (wine) you have no life in you.”

Apparently, the minister is ignorant of the fact that the bread at the last supper was ARTOS, meaning “leavened bread,” not AZUMOS, meaning “unleavened” bread. The bread eaten at the last supper was regular, leavened bread – the kind you can “dip” as a sop into broth (John 13:26-27).

I should also point out that there is no command in Scripture to observe the “last supper” in place of the Passover! The bread and wine ceremony instituted by Christ at the last supper was simply a new meaning given to an ancient Jewish custom – that of

partaking of bread and wine in a celebratory ritual dating back to the time of Abraham and Melchisedek, who, after Abraham's victory over the gentile kings, brought forth "bread and wine" (see Genesis 14:18). This custom is called the "Kiddush" by the Jewish people, from the root word *kodesh*, meaning "holy." For more information about the true observance of this commanded custom, read our article, "Are We Neglecting the Sacred Meal?" The partaking of the "kiddush" is NOT the same thing as the Passover!

The minister ends his letter with the words:

"I don't know what else to say. But I will say this. If you sincerely believe what Mr. Dankenbring is teaching, then follow him and don't be drawn between two opinions."

That is not bad advice. Certainly, it would be a mistake to waver between two opinions. Elijah warned the people of his generation, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him" (I Kings 18:21). Joshua said to the people, after they entered and took possession of the Promised Land, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

However, "sincere belief" is not enough. We are commanded by God, "Prove all things" (I Thess.5:21) and "hold fast that which is GOOD" – that is, follow the TRUTH!

Another Letter

In another letter on the subject of Passover and Jesus' last week, and the time of the final condemnation of Christ by Pontius Pilate, a minister of ICG wrote to Todd, saying:

"I did as you asked. I read the article by Mr. Dankenbring. Todd, I still consider myself to be your minister. Sometimes members get off track. You are definitely off track with this teaching of the 6th hour.

"Do you have a Companion Bible? If not, I encourage you to purchase one. Turn to John 19: 14. Read the footnote attached to this verse. Then turn to the Appendixes. Read Appendixes 144,156, and 165. These Appendixes explain every question you have. It clears up any question you may have.

"I hope you will do this. Mr. Herbert Armstrong has always said that if you start off with the wrong premise, everything you build on will be wrong. Mr. Dankenbring is way off base. If you read the scriptures I referenced above, you should see this.

"I don't want to try and argue over the scriptures. But I do feel it is my responsibility to point you in the right direction when I see you going off course. If you have made up your mind, so be it. I remain your friend and will be here to serve you in any way I can.

"Give my regards to your family. I hope the baby is growing and in good health."

That is a very nice letter, but unfortunately, it is based on a very bad case of research and reasoning. Let's examine the evidence and sift through it patiently. First of all, what about the Companion Bible? What does it say about the "sixth hour" when Jesus appeared to be judged by Pontius Pilate (John 19:14)?

On page 1567, discussing this verse in John's gospel, Bullinger states plainly, "the preparation: i.e. the day *before* the Passover was eaten 'at even' on the 14th Nisan. All four gospels state that our Lord was entombed on the Preparation Day." How clear, then, that this event occurred BEFORE the Passover was celebrated! So the various churches who observe the "Passover" at the beginning of Nisan 14, are a day early! It was still the "preparation" of the Passover when Christ was before Pilate, the day after the "Lord's supper"!

Bullinger's Error on the "Sixth Hour"

Bullinger then goes on, concerning the expression "the sixth hour.." He states, "i.e. midnight. The hours in all the Gospels are according to Hebrew reckoning: i.e. from sunset to sunset." He then adds, "Some have thought that the events from 13.1 could not be crowded into so brief a space, but the Jews were in deadly earnest to get all finished before the Passover, and in such a case events move quickly."

There are several mistakes here. First, Jesus plainly said "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" (John 11:9). He was clearly speaking of the daylight portion of the day, between sunrise and sunset, because He went on, "If any man walketh in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him" (John 11:9-10).

Thus the daylight hours are divided into twelve. This would put the "sixth hour" of John 19:14 as being TWELVE O'CLOCK, HIGH NOON! Bullinger is sadly mistaken when he applies this to *midnight!* The Jews did not divided the night into twelve hours, as they did the day. Rather, the "night" was divided into "WATCHES." We read in Matthew's gospel of Jesus coming to the disciples while they were in a boat, on the Sea of Galilee: "And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea" (Matt.14:25). Mark's gospel also says this occurred "about the fourth watch of the night" (Mark 6:48). Thus the *night* portion of the "day" was not divided into "hours," but into "watches," each one equivalent to about three hours.

A "Midnight" Trial?

Secondly, can you imagine the Jews – even if they were quite desirous of accomplishing all these things before the Passover – that they would be able to roust the Roman Governor out of a sound night's sleep, and get him out of bed, at MIDNIGHT, to conduct a life-and-death TRIAL?

To hold court in the middle of the night was illegal, by both Jewish and Roman law! That would make the time frame of events all wrong, because we read that the Sanhedrin itself did not condemn Christ until "early" in the "morning" (see Matt.27:1-2; Mark 15:1). This was BEFORE they took Christ to appear before Pilate the first time (Matt.27:2)). After this, Pilate sent Him over to king Herod (Luke 23:1-11).

When was this? This occurred not at night, but during the "day," for we read: "And the same *day* Pilate and Herod were made friends together" (Luke 23:12). Herod then sent Him back to Pilate (Luke 23:11-14). This was the final appearance of Christ

before Pilate – at which time it was “about the sixth hour” (Luke 23:13-24; John 19:13-16).

Can you imagine it?

According to Bullinger in the *Companion Bible*, Jesus was taken from the Garden of Gethsemane soon after the “Lord’s supper” (Matt.26:30-57), then interrogated by the high priest Annas (John 18:13), and then by Caiphas (John 18:24; Matt.26:57), and then He was brought before the whole Sanhedrin (Matt.27:1), and THEN they took Him to Pilate, then to Herod, and then back to Pilate! All this before MIDNIGHT???

INCREDIBLE!

But of course it never happened that way! Jesus is clearly stated to have been brought before the Sanhedrin, AFTER appearing before Annas and Caiphas, and BEFORE they took him to Pilate. And the appearance before the Sanhedrin occurred “when the morning was come” (Matt.27:1). Therefore morning came BEFORE the first appearance of Christ before Pilate! His final appearance before him therefore had to be “about the sixth hour” OF THE DAY – that is, NOON TIME!

How abundantly clear! Even a child could understand it! So why can’t these MINISTERS who profess to know God and to teach His truth, see it, and admit it? Is it because they have a secret “agenda,” which is to keep the tithes of God’s people pouring in, and to maintain their standing in the Church, so they feel they must never admit such a colossal mistake?

There is simply no way that both Pontius Pilate and king Herod would have allowed themselves to be roused out of bed in the middle of the night, to hold “court” for the sake of the Jews, because of their desire to accomplish everything before Passover!

Bullinger is correct, however, concerning the time and crucifixion of Christ. He relates in Appendix 156:

“It follows, therefore, that the Lord being crucified on ‘the preparation day’ could not have eaten of the Passover lamb, which was not slain until the evening of the 14th of Nisan (i.e. afternoon). On that day the daily sacrifice was killed at the 6th hour (noon) and offered about the 7th hour (1 p.m.). The killing of the Passover lambs began directly afterwards. Thus it is clear, that if the killing of the Passover lambs did not *commence* until about four hours after our Lord had been hanging upon the cross, and would not have been concluded at the *ninth* hour (3 p.m.) when ‘He gave up the ghost’; no ‘Passover lamb’ could have been eaten at the ‘last supper’ on the previous evening” (Appendix 156, page 180).

To paraphrase an old limerick by Ogden Nash, and applying it to Bullinger, “When he’s right, he’s very, very right, and when he’s wrong he’s horrid.”

Bullinger is sadly mistaken in suggesting the final trial of Jesus occurred before Pilate at midnight! But he’s absolutely right in saying that the “last supper” was NOT the Passover, no Passover lambs were slain before then or eaten at that time, and the whole

Passover panoply occurred in the afternoon of Nisan 14, at the very time Christ Himself, our Passover Lamb, was being put to death on the cross!

We should be willing to give credit where credit is due. But we should follow no man into error, when we spot the error, and prove it to be error. Indeed, the apostle Paul warns us to “PROVE all things” (I Thess.5:21), and to “Study to show yourself approved by God’ (II Tim.2:15).

The Passover Dispute Continues

In ongoing correspondence, Todd wrote to Chris Cumming, the minister in personal correspondence, for ICG, saying:

I have just finished compiling multiple emails that you, and George Trent have emailed me recently concerning my questions on why you insist on not keeping the Passover. I have also emailed Mr. Armstrong directly the same question, and have two tapes in my possession in which he states dogmatically that ICG does NOT keep the passover. He has not responded to my questions. I have tried repeatedly to give you a chance to answer my question, Chris, of why you state we do not have to keep the passover as listed CLEARLY in Lev 23 as a Holy Day. Since neither you, nor George Trent, or Mr. Armstrong can provide me with anything even remotely resembling an answer to my question, I must assume you do not have an answer. Therefore it is my duty to tell you that I have turned to other knowledgeable sources who WILL talk to me, and give me scriptural-based answers to this question, and I have sent every email and response to Mr. William F. Dankenbring for comment. You may find that some of these emails may have been published in his worldwide publication "Prophecy Flash" magazine, where your name or GTA's name may be mentioned. I feel it is my duty as a Christian to stand up for the truth, and I feel your equivocation on this topic is inexcusable, and you and the ICG needs to be held accountable before God and man as a witness of how not to handle doctrinal questions. I tried repeatedly to look to you, George Trent, and Mr. Armstrong for an answer, but all I got was removed as a host from the ICG.

“Pleased also know that many people here are following this exchange of information, and feel the same as I do. I have many emails to prove my point. In the interest of fairness, I will wait 72 hours from tonight before I release this email to the general public, if you will answer the same questions I asked many times before:

“1. Why do you not keep the passover as listed in Lev. 23??

“2. When is the sixth hour mentioned in John 19: 14. .???

- a. midnight
- b. six AM
- c. 12 noon

“3. Why do you accept and teach the postponements established by Hillel II in 358 AD..??

“It is now 1: 12 AM EST, Dec 18, 2002. If I do not receive your answer in three days that explains in detail the answer to these questions, this email will go out to Mr. Dankenbring, as well as the Journal, and to as many people here as will listen to this discussion.

“As Paul said, we need to prove all things what will you do, Chris ???”

After this letter, Todd got another response from ICG. He wrote to me, saying, “Finally after almost having to kick the door down at ICG, both a leading minister and GTA himself have responded candidly to my questions. I find their answers rather confusing and even bizarre in a way. I am sending this to you because your name is mentioned and I feel out of fairness you should have a chance to see it. . . I thought you would like to know how the battle is going so far.”

Todd got another email from Chris Cumming who had heard from Garner Ted Armstrong on the issue. Ted wrote as follows, giving the official response of ICG on the matter. He said:

“God’s church has observed what we have traditionally called ‘The Passover,’ from time immemorial. The term “Passover” is even printed on our Holy Day Calendar. We have always followed Christ’s command, ‘THIS DO, as I have done unto you,’ concerning the foot washing, bread and wine, taken WHEN CHRIST TOOK THEM, on ‘the night in which he was betrayed,’ which was the night of the beginning of the 14th. Those faithful who continued to observe this New Testament custom were called ‘Quartodecimans’ for many centuries, not ‘Quintodecimans.’ My booklet, which I believe is listed on our web site ‘The Passover -- Is It For Christians?’ represents our doctrinal statement on the subject, and clearly shows that ‘Christ OUR PASSOVER is sacrificed for us’ . . .

“Personally, I had always thought Bill Dankenbring believed and taught the same doctrines we do; had no idea he taught otherwise. He used to work on the staff of our magazines, and was a writer and researcher. I have not read his several books, nor ever seen his materials, but would be inclined to believe he remains a Sabbath keeper and believer in God’s laws.

“So far as the ‘sixth hour’ debate, the church knew the truth about this decades ago. We did not receive the truth from Dr. Bullinger; my father never heard of Bullinger, and never possessed a Companion Bible. That Dr. Bullinger agrees with the truth the church had discovered much earlier is purely coincidental. However, Dr. Bullinger’s explanations concerning the final six days of Christ’s life prior to the so-called ‘crucifixion’ is absolutely accurate, *as is his explanation of the ‘sixth hour. . .’*”

Very interesting, don’t you think? Ted’s suggestion that the early church dispute over the “Quartodeciman” controversy rather than the “Quintodeciman” controversy somehow proves anything is a straw man type of argument. “Quartodeciman means “fourteenth” and “quintodeciman” means fifteenth. So what? Read my article “When Did the Early Church Observe Passover?” The Passover was observed *by the early church*, as Polycarp, a disciple taught by the apostle John, *on the fifteenth day of the month at the very same time as the JEWS observed it, with no variation, changes, or alterations.* Of course, in the Roman world, the day was reckoned from midnight to midnight, so a festival that fell after sunset ending Nisan 14, therefore being on Nisan 15, Jewish time, would still be considered the “fourteenth” by Roman reckoning.

Whether Herbert Armstrong ever believed Christ appeared before Pontius Pilate at midnight, to be judged, as Bullinger declared, I don’t know. However, I was indeed a writer and editor of Worldwide Church of God publications and attended Ambassador College, receiving both a bachelor of arts and masters degree in theological journalism. I remember quite clearly in First Year Bible, where we went through the Gospels, that

Roderick C. Meredith plainly said that the “sixth hour” in John 19:14 was *Roman time* and meant 6:00 am in the morning! This was what we were taught in Ambassador, and in the Church. I graduated from Ambassador in spring of 1963.

When writing for the *Good News* magazine in the late ‘60s or early 70’s, I wrote an article on the Passover, in which I wrote that the “sixth hour” was twelve o’clock, noon, getting this from the margin of a Bible. My statement was queried by Robert C. Boraker, head of Personal Correspondence in England, at that time, who asked where I got that conclusion, as the Church taught it was 6:00 am. I told him in a written response, and never thought any more about it, until recent years, after studying further into the Passover controversy.

However, as I have already shown, the idea of the “sixth hour” meaning “midnight” is preposterous, no matter who says it! Nevertheless, this is the position of the Intercontinental Church of God.

Unanswerable Questions

After quoting GTA’s response, Chris Cumming added several comments, finally asking Todd,

“Where do you get that the meaning of ‘sixth hour’ in Matthew, Mark and Luke means ‘noon’? Those verses merely say ‘sixth hour’ too. You clearly are not getting the meaning ‘noon’ from the word ‘hektos’ – are you? We are telling you that we are getting ‘midnight’ from John 19:14 in the same exact way – from the context.”

Todd fired back an unequivocal response, in which he said:

“I really did appreciate your latest rounds of email. I can tell you are taking much valuable time to reply. . . .

“Above I quote from your latest email. I want to have perfect understanding on your position: you are categorically stating that John 19:14 is midnight, I deduce from your voluminous emails, and I have the understanding that GTA, and Mr. Trent both claim the same thing. I am just re-iterating this information so I can get it all on one page here, as I get that message clearly from your information. You support Bullinger in this understanding.

“Chris, please explain the following:

“How could Christ be before Pilate at midnight, pitch dark, when the following verses make it clear He was not:

1. Matt 27:1 – ‘When morning came’
2. Mark 15:1 – ‘Immediately, in the morning’
3. Luke 22:66 – ‘As soon as it was day’
4. John 18:28 – ‘Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning’

“You are aware, aren’t you Chris, that Christ was brought to:
Annaias

Caiaphas
Pilate
Herod, and the second time,
Pilate

“How could Christ have dinner after dark, go to Gethsemane, pray three times, for several hours, get apprehended late that night, and have all of the above happen before midnight? You see Chris, I am the one trying to interpret the bible from scripture, and letting it alone tell us the story of that last fateful night.

“There is NO way you can now email me back, and make those four scriptures about it being DAYLIGHT, mean midnight. You need to admit you are wrong, and ask God for understanding. This is the information I want shared with as many people as possible, God's truth, as explained to me by Mr. Dankenbring, and no one else. You are STUBBORNLY clinging to outdated false teachings of the past. Frankly, I am embarrassed for you that you would actually try to convince me John 19: 14 was midnight. That dog just won't hunt, as they say here in the south, The real fear for you, I am sure, is if this is true and it DOES mean noon, then your entire theological system of beliefs will have to change, and I have found out it can be very painful. So Chris, be courageous and do not fear this truth. Let God lead you, as I feel He has led me to this knowledge. It is not about you being right, or me being right, or anyone else, but it is about God's truth being right, and us changing to live by that truth.

“I told you it wasn't going to be easy.”

What About YOU?

And so it stands. When confronted with these serious questions, involving obedience to the laws and commandments of Almighty God, where do you stand?

Thousands in these “last days” are being misled, hoodwinked, deceived, and taken into spiritual “bondage” because of false teachings concerning the Passover, the “Lord's supper,” the bread and wine celebration, and great confusion has resulted, causing massive disobedience to the laws of Almighty God!

When will we all get it straight? How long will people continue in error?

Human or church “tradition” will NEVER replace the eternal LAWS of Almighty GOD! What must God think in heaven when He sees men, purporting to serve and obey Him, lead thousands of people astray with their ungodly, antinomian, unfaithful teachings and perversions of His truth?

David once wrote, “Indignation has taken hold of me because of the wicked, who *forsake Your law*” (Psalm 119:53). Replacing divine law with human tradition is *SIN!* Those who accuse the Catholics and Protestants of doing this very thing, and then do the same thing themselves, are *doubly guilty!*

David also declared, “Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart” (Psalm 119:34). He asserted, further, “O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me” (verses 97-98).

This was a very emotional thing to David. He wrote, “Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law” (verse 136). He declared with urgency and passion, “It is time for You to act, O LORD, for they have regarded your law as VOID” (Psalm 119:126).

“Void”!

Isn't that really what these men and so-called “ministers” are doing? They are making VOID THE PASSOVER COMMANDMENT! They have exchanged it for a weak sister gobbledegook insipid supine replacement! They have exchanged gold for tin; jewels and pearls for rocks and sand! They have taken down the law of the Passover, and substituted in its place their own foolish traditions of men! Woe unto them!

Jesus Christ declared, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition” (Mark 7:9). “And in vain they worship Me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (verse 7).

As Elijah said, and as the minister with ICG said, it is wrong to waver between “two opinions.” “How long will you falter between two opinions?” (see I Kings 18:21). Prove the truth! And cling to the truth! As the apostle James wrote, “for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”(James 1:6-8). These things are serious. They could well involve eternal life and salvation itself!

Isaiah was inspired to write, “Just as they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations, so I will choose their delusions, and bring their fears on them; because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke they did not hear; but they did evil before My eyes, and chose that in which I do not delight” (Isaiah 66:3-4, NKJV). God goes on, “Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified. But he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed” (verse 5, KJV).

God declares, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Prov.14:12).

How important is truth, righteousness, and obedience to God – to you? Do you desire to observe God's Law with your whole heart? (Psalm 119:34). Have you received “the love of the truth,” that you might be saved? (II Thess.2:10). Do you love God's Law and meditate on it day and night? (Psalm 119:97). David declared, “Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165). What are you going to do about the “battle over the Passover”?

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