

Chosen by God

The Jewish Roots of Christianity

Christ's Passover

While we have only subtle clues to the timing of Christ's birth, there is little question left by Scripture about the season of His death. The gospels clearly plant the events of the final week of Jesus as the week surrounding Passover. Christians know the days leading up to and including the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as Passion Week. Of the sixteen chapters in the book of Mark, covering the three years of the public ministry of Christ, five of those chapters are devoted to the events of this one week. Passover, the central event of Jewish life, is also the turning point of the gospel story, and the central event of Christian life.

What does Paul call Jesus in 1 Cor. 5:7, to his non-Jewish audience? _____

Why do you think he made this point to them? _____

Who initiated the specific observances of Passover at its origin in Exodus 12? _____

Who orchestrated the events of this ultimate Passover observance? _____

What does this communicate about its importance to us? _____

Passover has become much more to me than a holiday for the Jews. It has become an event that causes me to sit back in awe, humbled by the sheer magnitude of events that have been ordered to the minute detail. Yes, Christ came to save, but Scripture makes it very clear that we are to understand that He came to save **as the Passover Lamb**. Apparently even the Gentiles were/supposed to understand that.

I have also come to marvel at the way God uses unknowing players in His story. The actions of those who oppose Him serve to fulfill God's words and promises. From Pilate and Herod finding the sacrificial Lamb to be without blemish, to the Muslims sealing the Eastern gate of the Temple, unwittingly confirming that God had passed through, I find great comfort in the display of God's Sovereign reign.

What does Peter say about God's involvement in the crucifixion of Christ in his speech on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:23? _____

The non biblical additions to the Passover celebration made by rabbis who did not recognize the Messiah, still serve to point to Him. The Jewish people are still living in the role of messengers of the gospel even when they themselves do not fully understand the message. And, perhaps, that is true of us as well.

INSIDE:

Passover Timeline	2-4
Puzzle Page	5
The Message Continues	6
Answers and Sources	6



Passover Timeline

I have to admit that I have, in the past, found little interest in the details and sequence recorded in the gospels surrounding the last week of Christ. It has seemed much more interesting to me to focus on the more “spiritual” elements that Christ seems to be squeezing into these last days of His earthly ministry. After all, this is His last earthly chance to instruct His followers in the really important things they will need to know in His absence. Yet, the same argument can be said for those little tidbits that are a mystery to my western mind. They have not interested me only because I was ignorant of the depth of riches to be found there! God does not waste words, so we can trust that if He says it, it matters. So here I have tried to sort a small portion of the events into the timeframe in which they were divinely constructed.

LAMB BROUGHT TO THE TEMPLE - TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

In John 11, what miracle had Jesus performed that aroused the unease of the Jewish leaders? _____

What was the prophecy delivered by Caiaphas in John 11:49-51? _____

According to John 12:1, when did Jesus arrive again in Bethany? _____

What significant act did Mary perform while He was there? _____

On what day did Jesus leave Bethany, and travel the two miles to Jerusalem? (John 12:12-13) _____

On what day were the Israelites to set aside the lamb designated as the sacrifice for Passover in Exodus 12:3

At the time of the New Testament, the custom was for the high priest to select a representative Passover lamb from the some 250,000 lambs brought to the temple for the Passover sacrifice from where they were raised in Bethlehem. They would circle around Jerusalem from the Bethlehem to the southwest, and enter Jerusalem through the Sheep Gate on the north side of the temple. Jesus approached Jerusalem from Bethany, to the east, and would have entered Jerusalem through the East Gate. With an estimated 2.5 million people in Jerusalem, there were many gathered for the occasion of the entrance of the sacrificial lambs, especially the lamb personally ushered in by the high priest. Thus, at the time of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, there were already large crowds gathered.



What did Micah 5:2 say about Bethlehem? _____

As Joe Amaral brings up in his book, *Understanding Jesus*, do you suppose the shepherds that the angels announced the birth of Jesus to were tending the flocks from which the Passover lambs would come?

THE EAST GATE

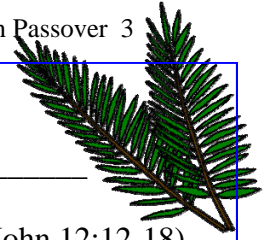
Considering the prophet Ezekiel’s words in 44:1-2, what is the significance of Jesus entering by the East Gate? _____

What is said about the “prince” in Ezekiel 46:12? _____



Because of the Jewish belief that the Messiah would come through the Eastern Gate of the temple, the Muslims sealed up the gate to prevent the arrival of the Messiah, unwittingly fulfilling the prophecy of Ezekiel. The Mount of Olives faces the east gate, and its slope is covered with a Jewish cemetery awaiting the resurrection of the dead that will come with the Messiah. A Muslim graveyard is directly in front of the gate, also awaiting resurrection.

Reminds me of another of my Dad’s sayings: “No use shutting the barn door after the cow is out!”



Passover Timeline continued

According to John 11:55, why had the people arrived early? _____

What did this great crowd do when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem? (John 12:12-18)

The Hebrew word *hosanna* means "please save" or "save now." This psalm, accompanied by the waving of palm branches was most typically associated with the Feast of Tabernacles.

Why? _____

Psalms 113-118 were sung at all of the feasts, and here the people are singing Psalm 118:26. Why would this have especially irritated the Pharisees at this particular point in time? _____

What other words of Psalm 118:19-29 are especially appropriate for this event? _____

How did the manner of Jesus' arrival in Mark 11:1-11 fulfill the prophecy of

Zechariah 9:9? _____

DRIVING OUT THE MONEY CHANGERS (Nisan 10 and 11)

Mark 11:11 records that Jesus came to the temple on Lamb Selection Day, or what we call Palm Sunday and looked around. Based on His actions on the return to the temple the next day in Mark 11:15-19, what do you think He saw there? _____

What would have been a common animal being sold as a sacrifice at that particular time? _____

Possibly, in pointing out and rejecting the corruption that had become involved in the sacrificial system at the temple, Jesus was also making the point that God had had enough of it all together, and the time had come for something new.

LAMB EXAMINED FOR FOUR DAYS (Nisan 10-14)

From Exodus 12:3-6 how long was the Passover lamb to be checked for blemish? _____

How was Jesus tested in Matt. 21:23-27? _____

How did Jesus respond? _____

Who examined Jesus in Luke 20:20-26? _____

Did He pass? _____

What did Pilate report after both he and Herod had questioned Jesus in Luke 23:4, 13-15? _____

Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, is declared worthy to be the Passover Lamb, even by those who had no idea what they were doing!

THE LAST SUPPER (After sundown Nisan 14)

According to Matt. 26:17, what seven day festival was beginning when the Last Supper was eaten? _____

Passover Timeline continued

GETHSEMANE Late in the night (Nisan 14)

Where did Jesus and the disciples spend the night during the time of testing in Jerusalem? (Luke 21:37) _____

The Mount of Olives, and the Garden of Gethsemane would have been on the way back to Bethany, so likely they returned to the home of their friends, or possibly just slept in the open. Space in, and around, Jerusalem would have been at a premium this week! The Garden of Gethsemane would have been a natural place for Jesus to pause and pray. Maybe he was waiting for the betrayal of Judas and the arrival of the soldiers who would arrest him as well.

What did He pray in Matt. 26:39? _____

Peter, at least, followed as close as the courtyard where we know he remained until morning was announced by the crowing of a rooster.

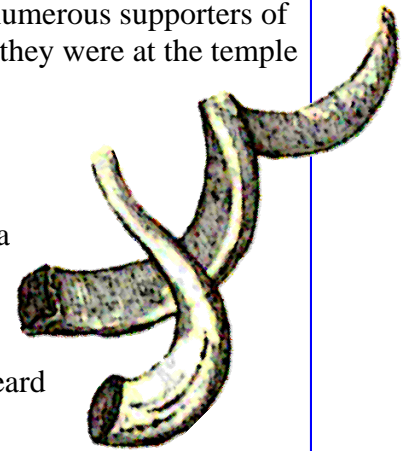
THIRD HOUR (9:00 am Nisan 14)

Remembering that the Jewish people under Roman rule began counting the hour of the day with sunrise at 6:00 am, what time does Mark say Jesus was nailed to the cross in Mark 15:25? _____

This is the time of the first of three temple services of the day, and the time of the morning sacrifice. It is significant that the events of the arrest and trial happened at night, when the numerous supporters of Jesus would have already retired for the night. The crucifixion happened when they were at the temple service. Imagine their shock and sorrow upon finding Jesus nailed to the cross!

EVENING SACRIFICES (3:00 pm Nisan 14)

Evening sacrifices at the temple were at 3:00 pm. They were announced by a blast of the shofar, which in Jewish tradition was reminiscent of the trumpet (shofar) blast heard by the Israelites when God descended on Mt. Sinai (see Exodus 19:16-19). To the Jews, the blast of the shofar was like the voice of God. Even from the cross, this call to sacrifice could be heard. Likely, Jesus heard the shofar, and knew the time had come.



What does Jesus do and say at 3:00 according to John 19:28-30? _____

At what time does Matthew say Jesus “breathed his last” in Matt. 27:46-50? _____

What events took place at this time according to Matt. 27:51-54? _____

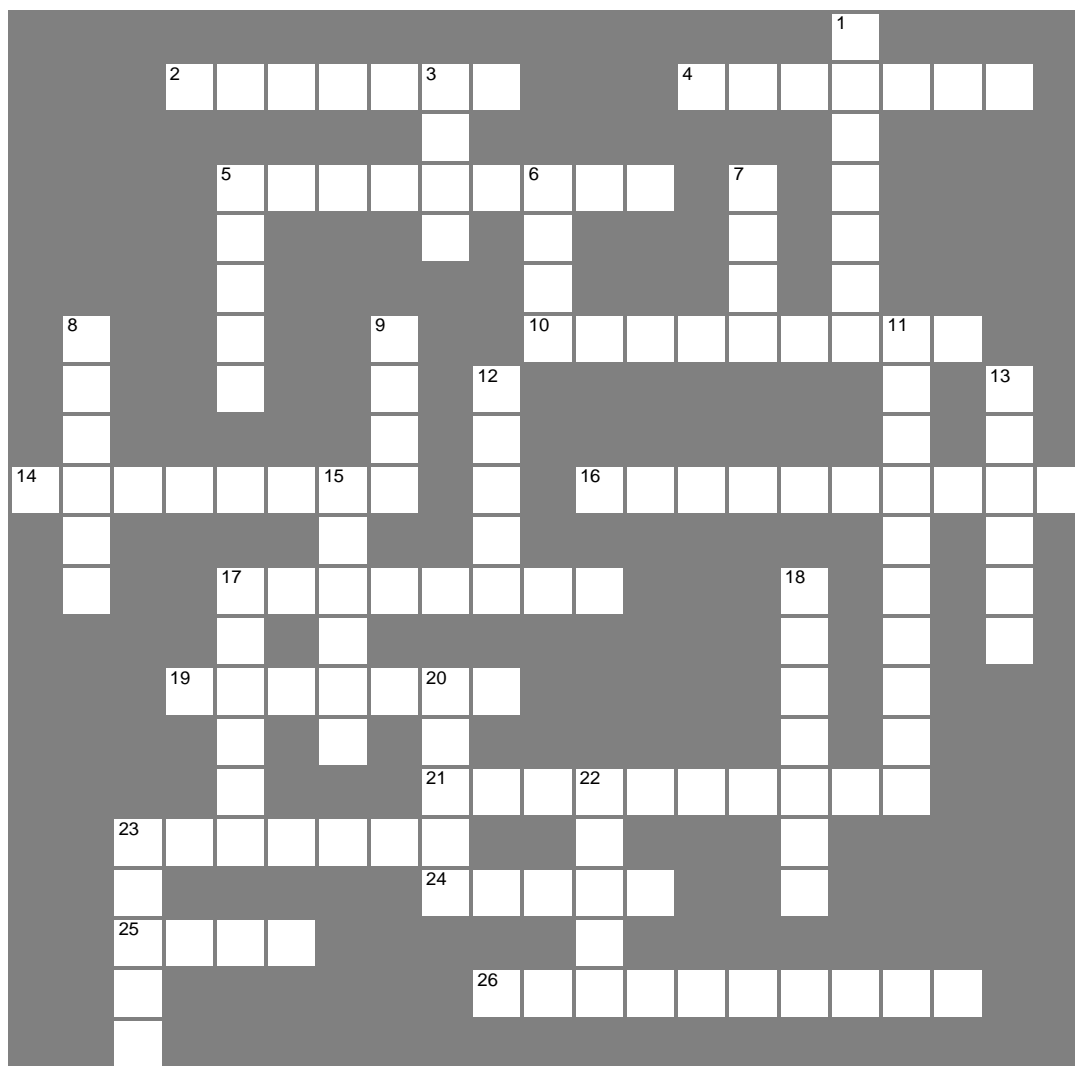
What is the interpretation of this event given by Heb. 10:19-22? _____

THE BURIAL

According to John 19:31, what was the hurry in making sure Jesus body was taken off the cross before 6:00pm? _____

If any of the feasts of the Lord happened to fall on a Sabbath day, it was to be celebrated a day earlier, so would begin on Thursday evening, and be completed by sundown (6pm) on Friday evening which was the beginning of the Sabbath.

Puzzle Page



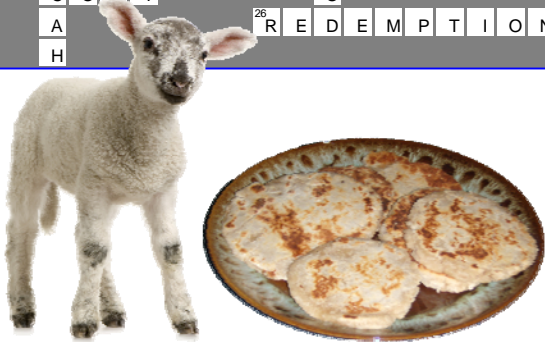
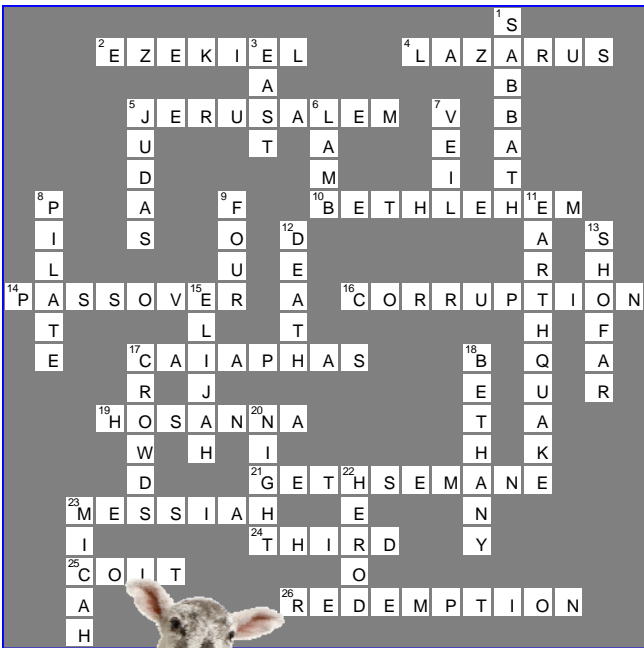
Across

- 2 prophet who wrote about the closing of the East Gate (7)
 4 raised from the dead shortly before Passover (7)
 5 Jesus entered this city on the same day Passover lambs were chosen (9)
 10 town where lambs were raised (9)
 14 turning point of the gospel story (8)
 16 a common attribute of temple worship (10)
 17 Jewish leader who delivered a prophecy John 11:49-51 (8)
 19 what the people called out to Jesus John 12:12-18 (7)
 21 place of prayer (10)
 23 East Gate sealed by Muslims to prevent His arrival (7)
 24 hour in which Jesus was nailed to the cross (5)
 25 Zechariah prophesied the arrival of the Messiah on this (4)
 26 expected at Passover (10)

Down

- 1 body had to be removed from the cross before this (7)
 3 gate through which Jesus entered Jerusalem (4)
 5 betrayed Jesus (5)
 6 what Paul calls Jesus in 1 Cor. 5:7-8 (4)
 7 torn in two at the time of Christ's death (4)
 8 found Jesus without fault (6)
 9 days that the Passover lamb was to be tested and watched (4)
 11 at the time of death (10)
 12 happened at the time of the evening sacrifice (5)
 13 announced the evening service (6)
 15 the Seder's empty chair is for him (6)
 17 large ones were gathered in Jerusalem (6)
 18 where Jesus stayed with friends (7)
 20 time of day Jesus was arrested (5)
 22 found Jesus without fault (5)
 23 old testament book with prophecy about Bethlehem (5)

Puzzle Answers



The Message Continues

Even elements of the Passover Seder that do not appear in Scripture, but have been added by the rabbis through the centuries seem to point toward Jesus Christ as the Passover lamb.

Part of the traditional Passover Seder still practiced today includes a separate cup and empty chair for Elijah. Additionally, at the end of the supper a child will open the door to see if Elijah might be standing there. This is a custom initiated by rabbis based on the words of Malachi 3:1, and 4:5. Because Elijah did not die, but ascended into heaven (2 Kings 2:11), it was thought that he would one day return to announce the coming of the Messiah.

What did Jesus say about John the Baptist in Matt. 11:13-15? _____

Where does Mal. 3:1 say that the Lord the people are seeking will come? _____

To the Jew, Passover is not only a time to celebrate their redemption from slavery and death, but also a time that they expect redemption to come again. At the time of Jesus, expectation was high.

What did John the Baptist say about Jesus in John 1:29-31? _____

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