

PASSOVER AND THE APOSTLE JOHN

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[THE SEED OF ABRAHAM](#)

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INTRODUCTION

This paper will address some concerns of John 13 such as the Apostles thinking that Judas was being sent out to buy food for the Feast when it was an annual Sabbath; the contingent from the Sanhedrin not being able to go into the Praetorium because of defilement for the Passover; John referring to the meal as a “supper” instead of calling it Passover; who was “the disciple whom Jesus loved”¹ (called “the Beloved Disciple”), some thinking it was Lazarus and not John, and some thinking the Fourth Gospel was written by Lazarus and not John. I’ll also speak of John’s use of the generic Greek term for “bread,” but him not saying it was the God ordained bread for Passover Week, which is unleavened bread or matza (Jn. 13:18), and which some see as the supper not being Passover or that it was kept on Passover night.

Controversy surrounds the “supper” of John 13. Some teach it’s a memorial meal that Yeshua (the Hebrew name for Jesus) and the Apostles ate a night *before* the biblical Passover, which would make it the night of 14 Aviv.² This fits nicely into their teaching that Yeshua died at the same time the Passover lambs in the Temple were being sacrificed. This has a great theological “ring” to it because Yeshua is the (Passover) Lamb of God who has taken away our sins (Jn. 1:29, 36). The three Synoptic Gospels though, clearly contradict that narrative, presenting Yeshua as eating the Passover meal with His Apostles at the biblically correct time, the night of 15 Aviv,³ and being crucified the following morning, which is still 15 Aviv. There are only a few verses in the Fourth Gospel that lead people to think that Jesus ate a (commemorative) meal the night before the biblical Passover. John 13:1-2, 29 and 18:28 are three of them:

John 13:1-2: “Now, *before* the Feast of Passover...and *supper being ended*, the Devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him...”

John 13:29: “For some thought because Judas had the money box, that Yeshua had said to him, “*Buy those things we need for the Feast*,” or that he should *give something to the poor*.”

John 18:28: “Then they led Yeshua from Caiaphas to the Praetorium and it was early morning, but they themselves did not go into the Praetorium *lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover*.”

If Yeshua had died at the time when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed for the Passover meal, He would not have been able to eat the Passover meal at its biblically appointed time because He would have been dead a few hours earlier than the Passover meal was to be eaten. The lambs were slain at the Temple on 14 Aviv, all afternoon,⁴ and the Passover meal was eaten later that day after dark (darkness being when 14 Aviv gives way to 15 Aviv; the biblical day beginning in darkness, not sunset). Yeshua, dying when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, seems like a divine gem, but as we’ll see, it isn’t scriptural, as there is a greater reason for His death on 15 Aviv, the first annual Sabbath of the biblical year.

¹ John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20. John 21:20 specifically references Jn. 13:23 as the disciple whom Jesus loved, who leaned on Yeshua’s chest, but doesn’t name the disciple (cf. John 11:5; 13:1, 34).

² See [When Does The Sabbath Begin?](#) In the 24 hour biblical day, darkness *begins* the day. The new day begins in darkness, not sunset, which is a rabbinic tradition for when the Sabbath begins. The Hebrew phrase for when the Passover lamb was to be slain, “between the two evenings” is correctly rendered in English as *twilight* or *dusk*. The lambs were slain in Egypt at sunset on 14 Aviv. At the end of dusk the new biblical day begins; 15 Aviv. It was in the night of 15 Aviv when the Passover meal took place, with the following dawn/day still being 15 Aviv until darkness that evening, when 16 Aviv would begin. The Rabbis believe that the “day” begins in darkness, saying that the 7th day Sabbath *ends at dark* when one can see three major stars in the sky, not sunset.

³ Exodus 12:1ff.; Lev 23:4-6f.; Mt. 26:17, 18, 19; Mk. 14:12, 14, 16; Lk. 22:7, 11, 13, 15.

⁴ In Yeshua’s time the lambs began to be sacrificed in the Temple beginning about 1 PM, not between sunset and darkness, due to the vast number that had to be sacrificed (about 100,000 lambs in Yeshua’s time).

John 13:29—Buy Food for the Feast

John 13:29: “For some thought because Judas had the money box, that Yeshua had said to him, “*Buy those things we need for the Feast,*” or that he should *give something to the poor.*”

Those who teach that Jesus ate a commemorative meal the night before the actual Passover ceremonial meal (whose biblical date is 15 Aviv [English: Abib], today known as 15 Nisan),⁵ say the disciples would never have thought that Judas left to buy things for the Feast because the time when the Passover meal is eaten is an annual Sabbath,⁶ and shops would be closed. Also, what beggars would be around on Passover night to give any money to? Wouldn't they all be celebrating Passover along with the rest of Israel?

Alfred Edersheim,⁷ noted 19th century Jewish-Christian scholar on Jewish and Temple affairs in the time of Yeshua, writes that despite the night of the Passover meal being an annual Sabbath (15 Aviv, the first day of Unleavened Bread; Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:6-8), shops *were open* in Jerusalem in order to buy food needed for the Feast. He states it was also a time when beggars would gather around the Temple to receive alms and so, what the disciples thought when Judas left *was appropriate for Passover night*, but interestingly enough, *not* for the night before. Edersheim writes,

“the provision and preparation of the needful food, and indeed of all that was needful for the Feast, *was allowed on 15 Nisan*⁸...the mention of these two suggestions by the disciples seems almost necessarily to involve that the writer of the Fourth Gospel *had placed this meal in the Paschal night*. Had it been on the evening before, no one could have imagined that Judas had gone out during the night to buy provisions, when there was the whole next day for it, nor would it have been likely that a man should on any ordinary day go at such an hour to seek out the poor. But in the Paschal night, when the great Temple gates were opened at midnight to begin early preparations for the offering of the *Chagigah*, or festive sacrifice” (in the morning), “which was not voluntary, but of due, and the remainder of which was afterwards eaten at a festive meal, such preparations would be quite natural. And equally so, that the poor, who gathered around the Temple, might then seek to obtain the help of the charitable.”⁹

If John had written of a commemorative meal the night before the Passover meal, the disciples would never have thought that Judas was going to buy some things for the Feast nor give funds to the poor. The very thing the disciples thought of, about why Judas left, reveals that it was the night of the biblical Passover—15 Aviv.

⁵ Exodus 12:6, 8, 12, 14-15, 17, 21-23, 29, 31-34, 37-42; 13:4; 23:15; 34:18; 16:1.

⁶ Exodus 12:16.

⁷ Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889) was a Jewish man born in Vienna, Austria who was well versed in Mosaic Law, Scripture and Talmud. He came to Christ in Pest, Hungary through John Duncan, a Church of Scotland chaplain assigned to minister to Scottish workers constructing a bridge over the Danube River. Edersheim studied theology at Edinburgh and Berlin, and became the leading authority of his time concerning Jewish practices and personages (e.g. the Pharisees) during the Second Temple period and their relationship to Yeshua and His teachings. His book, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* is a classic and “a must read.”

⁸ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 825, note 30: “The Mishnah expressly allows the procuring, even on the Sabbath, of that which is required for the Passover, and the Law of the Sabbath rest was much more strict than that of feast days” (i.e. the annual Feast Sabbaths). “See this in Appendix 17.” 15 Nisan is the same as 15 Aviv, *Nisan* becoming the name for the first biblical Hebrew month during and after the Babylonian captivity beginning in 597 BC, with the first Temple of King Solomon being destroyed in 586 BC and Judah taken from her land into captivity in Babylon.

⁹ Ibid.

There's nothing in the New Testament that speaks of Yeshua eating a special commemorative or memorial meal or instituting a new time for Passover, the night before the biblical Passover. This is very strange if in fact Yeshua had eaten a memorial meal the night before the Passover and had not eaten the Passover, or had made this memorial meal "the new Passover," as some think. If He had done this it would definitely have been written as such by John in his Gospel, and others, somewhere in the New Testament so that all Christians would know about it, and then also be able to honor Him, imitating what He had done, in an annual special memorial meal the night before the biblical Passover, but nothing like this exists. This "silence" reveals that Yeshua didn't eat a memorial meal the night before Passover and die when the Passover lambs died in the Temple, on 14 Aviv.

Yeshua ate the Passover meal at the correct biblical time, as Edersheim adroitly explains, a few hours after the Passover lambs had been sacrificed in the Temple in the afternoon of 14 Aviv. Yeshua didn't die when the Passover lambs died, but died on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 Aviv, the first annual Feast Sabbath (Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:6-8). God's reason for this is because Israel didn't leave Egypt when the Passover lambs were slain, but on 15 Aviv, in the morning, after they had eaten of the Passover meal the night before (also on 15 Aviv). In other words, Israel's actual salvation from Egypt didn't occur on 14 Aviv, after they had sacrificed the Passover lamb, but on 15 Aviv, after they had eaten the lamb, and so the Second Passover in Jerusalem follows the First in Egypt. This also reveals why 14 Aviv, when the Passover lambs are sacrificed, isn't an annual Sabbath, but 15 Aviv is. This is the day that God commemorates the deliverance of His people Israel on.

John 18:28—The Praetorium and Ritual Defilement

John 18:28: "Then they led Yeshua from Caiaphas to the Praetorium and it was early morning, but they themselves did not go into the Praetorium *lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.*"

The Fourth Gospel speaks of the Chief Priests and Scribes bringing Yeshua to Pilate, but not wanting to enter the *Praetorium*, Pilate's residence in Jerusalem,¹⁰ for fear of defilement, which meant they couldn't "eat the Passover." The heretical "day before memorial" teaches that Pilate was a Gentile, and so they would have become ceremonially defiled and could not have eaten the Passover meal that evening.

David Stern notes that their understanding of being defiled by entering a Gentile's home was a "rabbinic addition"¹¹ and that it's not specifically found in Torah (the Law of Moses), but anyone knowing Jewish law realizes the understanding was justified because Pilate was a pagan Gentile and he wasn't following God's regulations prohibiting leavened bread in one's home and territory during Passover—the Feast of Unleavened Bread.¹² Even Peter in Acts 10, about nine years after the Resurrection, told Cornelius that Jews weren't to associate with Gentiles at any time (due to God's commandments):¹³

Acts 10:28: "Then he said to them, "You know how *unlawful* it is for a Jewish man to *keep company with or go to one of another nation*, but God has" (just!) "shown me that I should not call any *man* common or unclean."¹⁴

¹⁰ R. V. G. Tasker, Author and General Editor, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: John (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 204.

¹¹ David Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992), p. 206. The rabbinic law or "addition" came out of cites where God spoke of not mingling with the Gentiles (Ex. 23:32; 34:15; Lev. 20:22-26; Dt. 7:3-4; 23:6; Josh. 23:1-13; Ezra 9:1-10:44) because they worshipped other gods and would lead Israel into idolatry and disobedience to God.

¹² See Exodus 12:14-15, 18-20; 13:6-7; Dt. 16:14 for why they would be defiled.

¹³ Ex. 23:32-33; 34:12, 15; Lev. 20:22-26; Dt. 7:3-11; 23:6; Josh. 23:1-15; Ezra 9:1-10:44; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-28.

Jesus had modified this barrier, but didn't completely do away with its commandments, that Jewish salvation might be proclaimed among the pagan Gentiles. God used Peter to break down the *divine* barrier that God had set up between Israel and the pagan Gentile world. Ben Witherington III notes that the Gentiles were *primarily unclean* because they worshiped false gods. Eating unclean foods, although sin, fell below their worship practices in terms of their being "off limits" by God for Israel. In other words, the worship and sacrifice to idols is what truly made the Gentiles unclean. Witherington writes,

"Jews believed that the *chief* source of Gentile impurity was their contact with "the defilement of idols," not their contact with non-kosher food."¹⁵

James, the half brother of Yeshua, wrote that the Gentiles were to learn God's Way of living for them by going to the synagogues, on the Sabbath day (Acts 15:21, cf. 1st Cor. 4:16-17; 11:1).

The *Praetorium*, where Pilate lived when in Jerusalem, originally meant, "the general's tent."¹⁶ F. F. Bruce reveals that,

"The term "praetorium" denotes the headquarters of a Roman military governor (as the governor of Judea was). In a Roman camp the praetorium was the commander's headquarters in the *center* of the camp.¹⁷ The Roman governor of Judea normally resided at Caesarea, where the palace built by Herod the Great for himself was available as the praetorium (cf. Acts 23:25). When the requirements of public order brought him to Jerusalem (e.g. when the city was overflowing with [Jewish] visitors at the great pilgrimage festivals), the building where he took up temporary residence would be his praetorium."¹⁸

"It appears that entering a Gentile house at this time would have conveyed defilement, perhaps because of the presence of leaven, but remaining outside in the colonnade did not."¹⁹

The Jewish group that led Yeshua to Pilate believed that entering his abode would make them defiled or unfit for the Passover, which seems to be speaking of the Passover meal on the night of 15 Aviv. Ederheim though, sheds light on this too, saying that *if* it had been the day before when the Passover lambs were slain (i.e. 14 Aviv), with the Passover meal that night, *there would have been no concern on the part of the Jewish group about ceremonial defilement* because their defilement would have ended at darkness, and therefore, they would have been able to eat the Passover meal that night, on 15 Aviv.

Edersheim states that it wasn't the Passover meal the Jewish authorities were concerned about, but rather the special sacrifice for the *first day* of the Feast of Unleavened Bread called the Chagiga (festive sacrifice), which took place in the morning of 15 Aviv (Num. 28:16-25), after the Passover meal had been

¹⁴ See [Law 102](#) to understand why Peter's vision didn't do away with the Mosaic Dietary Laws, but was the precedent of God bringing the Message of Life in Yeshua through Peter to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 11:18). Also, see [Common—Acts 10:14](#) for what Peter meant when he spoke of not calling any man "common or unclean."

¹⁵ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), p. 462.

¹⁶ Marcus Dods, D.D., Author; W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, M. A., LL. D., *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. one: *The Gospel of St. John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 850.

¹⁷ Yahveh, the King of Israel, dwelt in the midst or center of the Camp of Israel in the Wilderness in the Tabernacle of Moses. See my 7 CD and 8 original diagrams presentation of [The Tabernacle of Moses—A Reflection of Heaven](#). Also, Scripture says that King Saul slept in the *middle of the camp*, with the army encamped all around him, when he sought to murder David (1st Sam. 26:5). The middle of the camp was the most protected area.

¹⁸ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), p. 348.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

eaten the night before. Edersheim writes that,

“The “Praetorium,” to which the Jewish leaders, or at least those of them who represented the leaders—for neither Annas nor Caiaphas seems to have been personally present—brought the bound Christ was (as always in the provinces) the quarters occupied by the Roman Governor. In Caesarea this was the Palace of Herod, and there...Paul was afterwards a prisoner. But in Jerusalem there were two such quarters: the fortress Antonia, and the magnificent Palace of Herod at the north-western angle of the Upper City. Although it is impossible to speak with certainty, the balance of probability is entirely in favour of the view that, when Pilate was in Jerusalem with his wife, he occupied the truly royal abode of Herod, and not the fortified barracks of Antonia.²⁰ From the slope at the eastern angle, opposite the Temple Mount, where the Palace of Caiaphas stood, up the narrow streets of the Upper City, the...procession wound to the portals of the grand Palace of Herod. It is recorded that they who brought Him would not themselves enter the portals of the Palace, “that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.””

*“Few expressions have given rise to more earnest controversy than this. On two things at least we can speak with certainty. Entrance into a heathen house did Levitically render impure for that day—that is, till the evening. The fact of such defilement is clearly attested both in the New Testament (Acts 10:28) and in the Mishnah, though its reasons might be various (Ohol. 18.7; Tohar. 7.3). A person who had so become Levitically unclean was technically called *Tebhul Yom* (“bathed of the day”).”*

“The other point is that, to have so become “impure” for the day would *not* have disqualified for eating the Paschal Lamb, since the meal was partaken of after the evening and when a new day had begun. In fact, it is distinctly laid down (Pesach 92a) that the “bathed of the day,” that is, he who had been impure for the day and had bathed in the evening, *did* partake of the Paschal Supper, and an instance is related when some soldiers who had guarded the gates of Jerusalem “immersed” (and then in the evening) “ate the Paschal Lamb.”²¹ It follows that those Sanhedrists *could not have abstained* from entering the Palace of Pilate because by so doing they would have been disqualified *for the Paschal Supper.*”

In other words, if one believes that Jesus had eaten a memorial meal the night before Passover, and so was “before Pilate” on 14 Aviv, when the Passover lambs would be sacrificed in the Temple, they would have only been “defiled” for that day. They could have bathed and been “clean” to eat the Passover meal that night, on 15 Aviv. Also significant is the fact that the “cause” for defilement, upon entering Pilate’s “home” would not have been there as 14 Aviv is not part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and so Pilate, having leavened bread in his abode would not have defiled the contingent. Edersheim continues, saying,

“The point is of importance because many writers have interpreted the expression “the Passover” as referring to the Paschal Supper, and have argued that, according to the Fourth Gospel, our Lord did not on the previous evening partake of the Paschal Lamb, or else that in this respect the account of the Fourth Gospel does not accord with that of the Synoptists. But as for the reason just stated, it is impossible to refer the expression “Passover” to the Paschal Supper, we have only to inquire whether the term (“Passover”) is not also applied *to other offerings*. And here both the Old Testament (Deut. 16:1-3; 2nd

²⁰ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 865, note 4: As “the Palace of Herod undoubtedly became (as all royal residences) the property of the State, and as we have distinct evidence that Roman Procurators resided there, and took their seat in front of that Palace on a raised pavement to pronounce judgment (Jos. War 2.14.8; comp. Philo, ad Caj. § 38), the inference is obvious that Pilate, especially as he was accompanied by his wife, resided there also.”

²¹ *Ibid.*, note 6: “Jer. Pes. 36b, lines 14 and 15 from bottom.”

Chron. 35:1, 2, 6, 18) and Jewish writings²² show that the term *Pesach* or “Passover” was applied *not only to the Paschal Lamb, but to all the Passover sacrifices*, especially to what was called the *Chagigah*, or festive offering (from *Chag* or *Chagag*, to bring the festive sacrifice, *usual at each of the three Great Feasts*).”

“According to the express rule (Chag. 1:3) the *Chagigah* was brought on the first festive Paschal Day”²³ (which would be in the *morning* of 15 Aviv; the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover meal having been eaten the night before on 15 Aviv). “It was offered immediately after the morning service and eaten on that day—probably some time before the evening... We can therefore, quite understand that *not* on the eve of the Passover, but on the first Paschal day” (the first day of Unleavened Bread; 15 Aviv) “the Sanhedrists would avoid incurring a defilement which, lasting till the evening, would not only have involved them in the inconvenience of *Levitical defilement* on the first festive day, but have actually prevented their offering on that day, the Passover festive sacrifice or *Chagigah*. For we have these two express rules: that a person could not in Levitical defilement offer the *Chagigah*, and that the *Chagigah* could not be offered for a person by someone else who took his place (Jer. Chag. 76a, lines 16 to 14 from bottom). These considerations and canons seem decisive... There would have been no reason to fear “defilement” *on the morning* of the Paschal Sacrifice” (i.e. on 14 Aviv when all the Passover lambs were being readied for sacrifice in the Temple), “but entrance into the *Praetorium* on the morning of the first Passover-day” (i.e. the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) “would have rendered it impossible for them to offer the *Chagigah*, which is also designated by the term *Pesach*”²⁴ (i.e. *Passover*).

Edersheim expertly dismantles the false notion that John 18:28 speaks of defilement for the Passover ceremonial meal, as the word “Passover” applies to any sacrifice during the Feast, especially on the first day of the Feast, when Yeshua was brought before Pilate, as the Fourth Gospel speaks of. If it had been the morning of 14 Aviv, when the Passover lambs were going to be sacrificed in the afternoon in the Temple for the Passover meal in the evening, the Priests and Scribes wouldn’t have been concerned with defilement for the Passover meal because they would have been able to eat the Passover meal in the evening, after having bathed in water at twilight (the end of 14 Aviv) and become ceremonially clean for the Passover on 15 Aviv. Their defilement would have only lasted until dark, that is to say, the end of 14 Aviv. With “Passover” though, also being a term for the Passover festive sacrifice on the morning of 15 Aviv, their morning defilement would have lasted all day long and kept them from offering the festive Passover *Chagigah* sacrifice that morning and of course, they wouldn’t have been able to eat it that day.

Stern agrees with Edersheim and says that the *supper* of John 13:2 was a Passover *Seder*²⁵ (Hebrew for the Passover ceremonial meal on 15 Aviv), and that the “Passover” being spoken of in John 18:28,

“refers to other food eaten during *Pesach*, specifically the *chagigah* (festive sacrifice),

²² Ibid., p. 866, note 7: “The subject has been so fully discussed in Wieseler, Beitr., and in Kirchner, Jüd. Passahfeier, not to speak of many others, that it seems needless to enter further on the question. No competent Jewish archaeologist would care to deny that “*Pesach*” may refer to the “*Chagigah*,” while the motive assigned to the Sanhedrists by St. John implies, that in this instance it must refer to this, and not to the Paschal Lamb.”

²³ Ibid., note 8: “But concession was made to those who had neglected it on the first day to bring it during the festive week, which in the Feast of Tabernacles was extended to the Octave, and in that of Weeks (which lasted only one day) over a whole week (see Chag. 9a; Jer. Chag. 76c). The *Chagigah* could not, but the Paschal Lamb might be offered by a person on behalf of another.”

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 864-866.

²⁵ *Seder* is the Hebrew word for “order” and speaks of the procedure or order for conducting a Passover meal, which involves rituals before and after the meal that speak of Hebrew salvation from Egyptian slavery (Ex. 12:26-27; 13:3-10).

which was consumed with great joy and celebration on the afternoon following the Seder.” The Jewish authorities “gathered outside Pilate’s palace would have been unable to eat had they entered because their defilement would have lasted till sundown. If “the Pesach” meant the Passover lamb” (i.e. the Passover sacrifice on 14 Aviv) “defilement in the morning might not have been a problem, since the Seder meal took place” in the evening.²⁶

The ritual uncleanness or defilement that John 18:28 speaks of for “the Passover” has to do with the special feast sacrifice called the Chagiga, the morning following the Passover meal (cf. Numbers 28:16-19). If it had been the biblical Passover meal (Ex. 12:11f.) that the Jewish group was concerned about, defilement would have easily been dealt with at during the dusk of 14 Aviv after ritually bathing, and the Passover ceremonial meal could have been eaten. Everyone bathed before the Passover meal anyway, as Yeshua mentions concerning the Apostles (Jn. 13:10), and so it wouldn’t have been an issue.

As it was with the *thoughts of the disciples* when Judas left that night, the speaking of *defilement* for the *Passover* points directly to Yeshua having eaten the Passover meal at the biblical time on the night of 15 Aviv.²⁷ After that He was arrested at Gethsemane and tried by the hastily convened Sanhedrin (Council), in the early morning hours and then He was brought to Pilate, all of which was still the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 Aviv, the first annual Sabbath.

John 13:1-2—“Before Passover...and Supper being Ended”

John 13:1: “Now *before* the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

John 13:2: “And *supper being ended*, the Devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him...”

These two verses appear to point to a *supper*, not the Passover meal (a day) *before* the biblical Passover meal of 15 Aviv. As we’ll see, this isn’t the case. Edersheim states that v. 1 forms a “general introduction” to the chapter, and v. 2 begins,

“the account of what happened “*during* supper”—the Supper itself being left undescribed—beginning, by way of explanation of what is to be told about Judas, with this:”

“The Devil having already cast into his heart, that Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, shall betray Him.”

“General as this notice is, it contains much that requires special attention...mark the full description of the name and parentage of the traitor. It reads like the wording of a formal indictment. And although it seems only an introductory explanation, it also points to the contrast with the love of Christ, which persevered to the end (Jn. 13:1)” [“the full extent of His love,” NIV], “even when hell itself opened its mouth to swallow Him up; the contrast also between what Jesus and what Judas were about to do, and between the wild storm of evil that raged in the heart of the traitor, and the calm majesty of love and peace which reigned in that of the Saviour.”²⁸

Now to the poor English translation that fuels the controversy. Even though the respected KJV and NKJV Bibles speak of “supper being *ended*,” the often maligned NIV correctly has “*during* supper.”²⁹ The dif-

²⁶ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp. 206-207.

²⁷ Exodus 12:6-8, 10-12, 21, 23-32, 39, 42.

²⁸ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 818.

ference between “ended” and “during” is only one Greek letter, but it changes the phrase from the supper being “over” to the supper being “in progress.” Distinguished New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce writes,

““Supper was now in progress” (*deipnou ginomenou*) is also a preferable reading to the variant, “Supper having ended” (*deipnou genomenou*)” because John 13:26f., obviously speaks of the Passover ceremonial meal still being in progress.”³⁰

Bruce cites Jesus giving His traitor some bread (matza/unleavened bread; Jn. 13:26), which means the Passover ceremonial meal hadn’t ended. The KJV and NKJV are wrong in writing that the meal was over. British scholar Marcus Dods translates the phrase as, “*supper having arrived*,” because of the foot washing later on. He states:

“Foot washing, customarily done when guests *arrived* for a banquet, would have been “out of place” during or after the meal.”³¹

Dods is referring to Yeshua washing the feet of His disciples, which came at the *beginning of the supper* (the Passover ceremonial meal), starting at vv. 4-5f., which obviously happened after v. 2, which allegedly speaks of the supper having ended (KJV/NKJV). In other words, the Passover ceremonial meal was only just beginning in v. 4, as it speaks of Yeshua rising from the meal, so it cannot have ended in v. 2:

John 13:4-5: (Jesus) “rose *from supper* and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.” (NKJV)

The Passover ceremonial meal is spoken of as a supper, but the actual meal itself is eaten in the middle of the ceremony, the foot washing coming after the initial blessing of Yahveh for freedom from Egyptian slavery. Even the KJV, which at v. 2 has “supper being ended,” at v. 4 states, “He riseth from supper,” which means He rose from the Passover Table during the Passover ceremony. The NKJV says, “he rose from supper.” The correct translation for John 13:2 then, should be, “And supper taking place” or “supper having arrived,” or better yet, the Passover ceremony having begun, not, “And supper being ended.” The literal translation of the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament³² and the Textus Receptus both have, *Kai δείπνου γινομένου* (*Kai dep’nu*), “And supper being” (or arriving).³³ Why the KJV people, as well as the NKJV people, have “supper being ended,” is a mystery.

In John 13:26 Yeshua speaks of giving a *piece of bread* to the traitor:

John 13:26: “Yeshua answered, “It is he to whom I shall give a *pieced of bread*³⁴ when I have dipped it.” And having dipped the *bread*, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.”³⁵

²⁹ The ASV, ESV, NASB, NET, and NRSV also have conceptually, if not specifically, “during supper.”

³⁰ Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, p. 279. Also, the NU text has, “and during supper,” for John 13:2. “Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it.” And having dipped the bread (literally “a morsel”), He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon” (John 13:26 NKJV).

³¹ Dods, *The Gospel of St. John*, p. 815.

³² Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, Translators; J. D. Douglas, Editor, *The New Greek–English Interlinear New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), p. 376. The basis for this interlinear is The United Bible Societies’ Third Corrected Edition of the Greek New Testament. This is the same text as the 26th edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* by Kurt Aland, M. Black, C. Martini, A. Wikgren and Bruce Metzger.

³³ George Ricker Berry, Editor and Translator, *Interlinear Greek–English New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), p. 286.

³⁴ *Matza* is the bread of Passover, unleavened bread. In Hebrew the word for “bread” also encompasses *matza*, as it’s bread too. This is clearly seen in the Passover blessing of God for the Passover *matza*, which is the traditional blessing for bread with yeast in it (bread; *lech’hem* לחם?).

³⁵ When Yeshua said the traitor would be the one He gave the small piece of *matza* to, “a morsel,” He didn’t say it to the whole group, but only to John. If He had said it out loud, all the Apostles would have known who the traitor

Edersheim writes that the *piece of bread*³⁶ (ψωμίον *somi'on*; literally, a *morsel* or *sop*) consisted of some lamb and bitter herbs on a piece of unleavened bread, known in Hebrew as *matza* (cf. Exodus 12:8).³⁷ Whether it was only *matza* dipped in a sauce, or also lamb and bitter herbs on a piece of *matza*, and possibly dipped in what may have been an Israeli sesame seed paste called *hummus*, Yeshua gave it to Judas as the sign to “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” of His betrayer. That disciple would later tell Peter.

The Foot Washing

As theologian Marcus Dods spoke of, the foot washing meant that the Passover ceremonial meal had only just begun when Yeshua got up from the Table and washed the feet of His Apostles, in v. 4f. The foot washing by Yeshua for His Apostles included Judas. Yeshua, the King of Israel and God the Son, washed their feet to reveal His personality of humility, servanthood and love for these men so that they could do the same for others, and so they could realize *who Yeshua was* (John 13:12-17; cf. Luke 9:55).

When Yeshua said to Peter that unless He washed Peter’s feet he wouldn’t have any part with Him (v. 8), Yeshua revealed it was also a symbolic picture of being washed, cleansed and transformed by Yeshua’s Blood and the Water of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 7:37-39), to be priests in His Kingdom. Blood and water are the two chief cleansing agents in Mosaic Law (cf. Hebrews 9:19-22), and both are seen in the cleansing of the leper (Lev. 14:1-20), the leper being symbolic of our spiritual condition before the holy God without Messiah’s sacrificial blood atonement. Blood and water literally came out of Yeshua’s pierced side, symbolic of what would cleanse and transform us. Sin, like leprosy in the natural, eats away at a person’s soul while the person is still alive.

In the foot washing Yeshua reveals that there isn’t anything He will not do for us in order that we might be with Him in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 3:12; 21:2; cf. Heb. 12:22). This relieves us of anxiety and stress in having to please Him with “works” for eternal life, or sinning and not being as holy as we think we should be. This peace to our souls was driven home when Yeshua took our just punishment and our guilt upon Himself and was crucified in our place. Our salvation is not “works based,” but by faith and trust in Him for what He has done for us.

Foot washing for guests was only done by slaves and of course, it wouldn’t be done during or after the actual meal, but when the guests arrived or shortly thereafter. Yeshua’s foot washing parallels the Pharisaic Passover ceremony of hand washing, which comes in the beginning of the traditional Jewish *Seder* or Passover ceremony.³⁸ This reveals that Yeshua replaced the washing of the hands with the washing of one’s feet.

From “what the disciples thought” about Judas leaving the Table and *defilement* at the Praetorium, to

tor was.

³⁶ ψωμίον *L&N*, n.p. (*somi'on*) “ψωμίον, ου *n*: a small piece or bit of bread—“a piece of bread, a bit of bread.” ἐγὼ βάψω τὸ ψωμίον καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ “I will dip a piece of bread and give it to him,” John 13:26. In John 13:26, 27, 30 it may be” good for the English phrase to use something like, ““a broken-off piece of bread;” otherwise the inference might be that the ψωμίον was simply a scrap or crumb of bread.”

³⁷ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 824. “This we believe was “the sop,” which Jesus, having dipped it for him in the dish, handed first to Judas, as *occupying the first and chief place at Table*.” This understanding of the “sop” or “morsel” is seen in Jer. Chall. 57b, which was written about the time of Hillel” (who lived a generation before Yeshua).

The NRSV, HCSB and the NIV call it a piece of bread which, of course for the Passover was *matza* or unleavened bread. The Greek word (*somi'on*) for *sop* (*morsel*) is the same for both the Textus Receptus and the NA Text.

³⁸ See [Passover](#). It explains the full ceremony and that the traditional hand washing occurs at the beginning of the Passover Seder (the ceremony surrounding the Passover meal).

John 13:1 being translated as “before the Feast of the Passover,” and also 13:2 speaking of the *supper ending*, the Fourth Gospel has consistently revealed that Yeshua didn’t eat a memorial meal the night before Passover, but ate the Passover with His Apostles at the same biblical time that all Israel was celebrating it.

The well known Christian theologian Gleason Archer speaks about those who hold to a memorial meal or “Passover” a day earlier than the actual Passover meal, and rejects it, saying:

“The various ingenious explanations offered by others, that Christ held His personal Passover a night early, knowing that He would be crucified before the evening of the fourteenth” (or) “that Christ and His movement held to a different calendar, reckoning the fourteenth to be a day earlier than the calendar of the official Jerusalem priesthood; or that He was following a revised calendar observed by the Essenes at Qumran—all these theories are quite improbable and altogether unnecessary.”³⁹

Interchangeable Terms

All three Synoptic Gospels clearly present Yeshua eating the Passover meal at the proper biblical time. In the days of the Apostles the terms Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were used interchangeably. They could even refer to the day before the Passover meal (14 Aviv) when the Passover lamb was sacrificed in the afternoon, as part of the days of the Passover-Feast of Unleavened Bread. Matthew says:

“Now on the *first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread* the disciples came to Yeshua, saying to Him, “Where do You want us to *prepare for You to eat the Passover?*” And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him “The Rabbi says, “My time is at hand. *I will keep the Passover* at your house with My disciples.””” (Matthew 26:17-18)

Obviously, it was the biblical Passover that Yeshua kept, even though v. 17 is the day when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, which was 14 Aviv (not biblically or technically part of the Passover meal or the Feast of Unleavened Bread). The term *Passover*, for both the sacrifice of the lamb on 14 Aviv, and the eating of the Passover ceremonial meal on the night of 15 Aviv, and the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread (15-21 Aviv) had come to be used interchangeably.⁴⁰ Luke 22:1 also uses them that way:

“Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, *which is called the Passover*, was near. Then came the (first) day of *Unleavened Bread*, on which the *Passover lamb* had to be sacrificed.”

Here in Luke the term Passover encompasses the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread and also the sacrifice of the lamb on the day before, on 14 Aviv. Interestingly enough, and something else that tells us that the Lord didn’t die when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple, is that 14 Aviv isn’t even a holy Sabbath day⁴¹ and of course, not the day when the Passover lamb was eaten, nor biblically part of the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Mark has the same thing:

“Now on the *first day of Unleavened Bread*, when they killed the *Passover lamb*, His disciples said to Him, “Where do You want us to go and *prepare that we may eat the Passover?*”” (Mk. 14:12)

³⁹ Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), n.p.

⁴⁰ See Mt. 26:17-20; Mk. 14:12-18; Lk. 22:1, 7-14; Acts 12:3-4; 1st Cor. 5:6-8.

⁴¹ This is an interesting point “in reverse,” that Yeshua wasn’t sacrificed on 14 Aviv because if He had been crucified on the day the lambs were being sacrificed, the day (14 Aviv) would most likely have been an annual Sabbath in commemoration of His death, just as the first day of Unleavened Bread commemorates His crucifixion, being the first annual Sabbath of the biblical year.

Biblically, the first day of Unleavened Bread is not when they sacrifice the Passover lamb, but the day before, on 14 Aviv in the evening. The Synoptics confirm that Yeshua ate the Passover meal at the biblically correct time because the Apostles asked Yeshua where He wanted to keep the Passover, obviously on the day when the lambs were sacrificed in the Temple and the meal eaten in the evening, and *nothing* is mentioned of them eating it a night before. In other words, there is nothing in the Synoptic Gospels to indicate that the time for the disciples in eating the Passover meal was different then when Israel was keeping it.

If Yeshua had died when the lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple, the Apostles couldn't have asked Yeshua what they did—He would have already been crucified in the morning of 14 Aviv. Luke further confirms that Yeshua was still alive when the lambs were going to be sacrificed, saying,

“Then came *the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover (lamb) must be killed*. And He sent Peter and John, saying, “*Go and prepare the Passover (lamb) for us that we may eat*”” the Passover” in the evening. (Luke 22:7)

One of Yeshua's most poignant words is found in Luke where Yeshua speaks of his intense longing to eat the Passover (lamb/meal) with His friends before His death. It was His sacrificial death for them, and us, that reveals His great love and friendship for us:

“When the hour had come He sat down and the 12 Apostles were with Him. Then He said to them, “*With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*”” (Lk. 22:14-15)

The Synoptics are clear, and now the Gospel of John is too—Yeshua ate the Passover Meal on the same night as all Israel ate it. There was no memorial or “new Passover meal” that Yeshua instituted the night before. There is more to persuade us, but was it *matza* that night or regular bread with leaven in it?

John 13:18—Leavened or Unleavened Bread?

“I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, “He who eats *bread* with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.”” (John 13:18)

Some Christians say John 13 could not be a Passover because the Greek word in John 13:18 for “bread” is the standard word for regular or leavened bread, which if it was Passover would have to be the Greek word for unleavened bread they say. They're right that Passover has to have only unleavened bread or *matza* (Ex. 12:8, 15, 18, etc.), but there are two major problems with their reasoning that destroy their position of it being a memorial meal before the actual Passover.

One, the Hebrew Scripture in the Psalms that Yeshua is quoting doesn't use the term for unleavened bread (*matza*), but the standard Hebrew word for bread לֶחֶם (*leh'hem*). Psalm 41:9 states:

“Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my *bread*, Has lifted up *his* heel against me.” (Psalm 41:9 NKJV)

Neither Yeshua, who spoke it in Hebrew, nor John who recorded it in Greek, can be faulted for using the regular Hebrew term for bread לֶחֶם (*leh'hem*) as that is what the Psalm has, and so it can't be used to prove that John 13 wasn't a Passover. Neither Yeshua nor John were required to corrupt the Hebrew Psalm and replace the regular Hebrew word for bread (*leh'hem*) with the Greek word for unleavened bread. Quoting this verse of treachery and betrayal at the Passover was very appropriate at the Passover that night.

The second problem with those who use John 13:8 to teach the “supper” (Jn. 13:2) wasn't a Passover is that the Hebrew term for leavened bread לֶחֶם (*leh'hem*) is also used of unleavened bread (*matza*), both in Hebrew and in Greek. A man wrote me and said that it couldn't be a Passover meal because John used the

Greek word for common or regular leavened bread in 13:18, which is (*artos*). He said,

“If...we go strictly by the Scriptures themselves, it comes down to the Greek words “*artos*, leavened bread” or “*azumon*, unleavened bread” and *all the Gospels refer to the Last Supper bread as artos.*”

As for his use of “Last Supper,” the term is not found anywhere in Scripture. It’s a Catholic invention designed to negate both the Jewishness of Jesus and the fact that His last meal was a “Jewish” Passover. Catholicism is where anti-Semitism was born.⁴²

The man was right though, that the three Synoptic Gospels have Yeshua giving the bread that was to picture His Body, as *artos*, but what he didn’t realize was that both *artos* (bread) in Greek, and especially *leh’hem* (bread) in Hebrew, are regularly used by the Jewish people when also speaking of matza or unleavened bread. For example, in the Jewish prayer of blessing God for the *unleavened bread of Passover*, the traditional blessing for bread is used, which is לֶחֶם (*leh’hem*) “bread.” In other words, when Jews all over the world bless God at Passover for the matza (unleavened bread) they are commanded to eat (cf. Exodus 12:8, 15, 18) they speak of it as לֶחֶם (*leh’hem*) “bread,” not specifically matza, unleavened bread. This is why all the Gospels in Greek have ἄρτος (*artos or artous*), translated as “just” bread.⁴³ Yet when they speak of Yeshua observing the Passover—the Feast of *Unleavened Bread*, where this *bread* is picked up by Yeshua to picture His Body, they call it the Feast of *Unleavened Bread*: ἄζυμων *azumon or azumos*.⁴⁴ *The Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament* states that the Greek word for bread, *artos* is,

“a baked product produced fr. a cereal grain, *bread also loaf of bread*” and “*any kind of food or nourishment, food gener. (since bread is the most important food).*”⁴⁵

In other words, you can say the Greek or Hebrew word for regular or leavened “bread” and have it to also mean matza (unleavened bread) because matza is also bread. It’s just bread without yeast.

All the Jewish Apostles at the Passover Table in the Synoptics would not have flinched an eyelash when Yeshua blessed His Father for the matza, with the traditional blessing that spoke of *leh’hem* (bread). As for John 13, John doesn’t record the blessing; only Yeshua quoting the Psalm, in which it speaks of *leh’hem* (bread). Of course, John would write it in Greek, but the concept remains the same. Jews all over the world bless God for the matza of Passover night with the traditional Hebrew blessing using *leh’hem* (bread). As a matter of fact, there are a total of four times that Jews bless God for the matza of Passover at the Passover meal, and each time they speak of the matza or unleavened bread as *leh’hem* (bread), not matza. Both לֶחֶם (*leh’hem*), as well as the Greek term ἄρτος (*artos*), incorporate *unleavened bread within them*. *Artos* (bread) is used in the other three Gospels when Yeshua spoke of it representing His Body:

Matthew 26:26 has *artos*, for what is obviously unleavened bread at the Passover Meal (Mt. 26:17 establishes that it is the Passover ceremony); as well as,

Mark 14:22 (with Mk. 14:12 establishing that it’s Passover and therefore, unleavened bread that Yeshua is referring to); and also,

⁴² See my Handout, [A Snapshot of Church History and Mosaic Law](#).

⁴³ The Greek word for *leavened* bread, which the Lord speaks of as His Body, is ἄρτος *artos*: Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; John 13:18, although we know it was matza.

⁴⁴ The Greek word for *unleavened* bread, which Matthew, Mark and Luke use for the Feast of Unleavened Bread is ἄζυμων *azumon*: Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:1, 12; Luke 22:1, 7.

In John 13:26 the word that is translated as bread is ψωμίον (*so’me’own or somi’on*) and means “a fragment, bit, morsel, from Joseph Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Accordance Bible Software), paragraph 10,028.

⁴⁵ Walter Bauer, augmented by William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker, *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 136, “ἄρτος.”

Luke 22:19 (with Lk. 22:1, 7 establishing that it's the Passover meal).

We know that Yeshua used the traditional Jewish blessing to God for “bread” לֶחֶם (*leh'hem*), as all Jews do for Passover, thanking His Father for the unleavened bread that night, because Yeshua spoke of not taking “the fruit of the vine” again until He takes it with us in the Kingdom (Mt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25; Lk. 22:18). The phrase, “the fruit of the vine” is the exact English phrase for the traditional Hebrew (Jewish) blessing to God for the wine at the Passover Table, and for daily use (even when it's not Passover). Therefore, it's certain that Yeshua also used the traditional Jewish blessing for the *matza* (unleavened bread) that night, calling the *matza* “bread” or *leh'hem* in the blessing, as Jews still do today. Interestingly enough, Dt. 16:3 refers to *matza* as the “bread of affliction,” the term for regular, leavened bread:

“You shall eat no leavened bread.⁴⁶ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread (*matza*) with it, that is, the bread (*leh'hem*) of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), that you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt *all the days of your life*.” (Deuteronomy 16:3 NKJV)

The Apostle John is certainly not out of line in having Yeshua use the Greek word for regular bread (*artos*) for Psalm 41:9, because the terms for unleavened and leavened bread are interchangeable, and he was being faithful to the Hebrew text. All the Gospels speak of *matza* this way.⁴⁷ The argument that John should have used the Greek term for unleavened bread doesn't prove that John 13 was a memorial meal that night before Passover. John, who wrote the Gospel in Greek, was true to the Psalm in speaking of it in Greek as ἄρτος (*artos*), *bread*, and not *azumon* (*unleavened bread*).

Another point is that John 13:18 doesn't speak of the bread they ate at the Passover meal as *matza* or *azumon* or literally unleavened bread, but as we've seen, if John did speak of *matza* (unleavened bread) he could write of it as ἄρτος (*artos*), *bread*, as the three Synoptics do.⁴⁸ The word *artos* (bread) is written of Yeshua blessing His Father for the *matza* of Passover in the Synoptics. Both the Hebrew and Greek words for “regular bread” (*leh'hem* and *artos*, respectively), also include unleavened bread or *matza*.⁴⁹

John is most likely centering on Judas—Yeshua's betrayer, and not the taking of the Lord's Body and Blood, as the Synoptics do 30-50 years before John wrote his Gospel, because by the time John wrote His Gospel (95 AD), it was “common knowledge” among Christians, from the three Synoptics, that the bread of Yeshua's Body speaks of *matza*. And so John relates how truly loving and humble our Lord was at this Passover, with the washing of the Apostles feet, in knowing that Judas, whose feet He also washed, was about to betray Him. Yeshua gave Judas a last opportunity *not* to betray Him. There was Judas, having eaten with Yeshua for three years, betraying Him that Passover night and Yeshua revealed that to His friends in His quoting of Psalm 41:9. They would come to find out the betrayer's name later that night in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Synoptics present Yeshua at the Passover Table speaking of His betrayer, and John speaks of it in the same chapter that he uses the term “supper” and *artos*. John recorded Yeshua's Passover that night, which was the same night that all the Jewish people were celebrating it, unaware that God's Passover Lamb was about to be sacrificed for them.

⁴⁶ The Hebrew word here is חֶמֶץ (*ha'maytz*) that which is “sour, leavened...of dough...that which is leavened— forbidden at Passover,” from Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, Based on the Lexicon of Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, translator and E. Rodiger, Editor, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon, Abridged* (Accordance Bible Software), paragraph 7,360.

⁴⁷ See p. 12, note 43.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ In speaking of the unleavened bread (*matza*) at the Passover Table the night that Yeshua was betrayed, the Apostle Paul also uses the Greek word *artos* (bread) four times, for the unleavened bread that Yeshua had eaten that Passover night (1st Cor. 11:23, 26, 27, 28). The three Synoptics, plus Paul, speak of Passover's unleavened bread in the traditional Jewish way, as “bread” לֶחֶם (*leh'hem*), not *matza* מַצָּה (unleavened bread) or, from the Greek, as *artos* ἄρτος (bread), not *azumos* ἄζυμος (unleavened bread).

Additional Scriptural Evidence for the Passover Meal

Having established that John 13 is the Passover meal, there are four distinct parallels that further confirm that John 13 is the Passover meal that took place at the biblical time for the Passover, I'm also going to present facts that reveal that Lazarus is not "the Beloved Disciple" nor the author of the Fourth Gospel:

1. Yeshua *speaks* of His betrayer in John 13:10-11, 18-19, 21, 26-27 (cf. v. 2). The Synoptics speak of it being the Passover meal where Yeshua *speaks* of His betrayer.⁵⁰
2. Yeshua *identifies* Judas as His betrayer in John 13:26-27 by giving Judas the sop. The Synoptics speak of it being the Passover meal where Yeshua *identifies* His betrayer as the one who dips his *matza* in the same dish as He does.⁵¹
3. Judas *leaves* the Passover meal to betray Yeshua in John 13:30-31. The Synoptics speak of Judas at the Passover meal and it's obvious that Judas left the Synoptics' Passover before it ended in order for him to lead the Sanhedrin's cohort to arrest Yeshua at Gethsemane.⁵²
4. Peter speaks of *laying down his life* for Yeshua in John 13:36-38, but Yeshua says *that very night* Peter would deny Him. The Synoptics record that this happened at the Passover meal.⁵³

These four specific points from John 13 parallel the Synoptics' Passover and further confirm that John 13 is the Passover ceremonial meal that the Messiah ate with His Apostles on 15 Aviv, not the night before. That Lazarus isn't the "disciple whom Jesus loved" is proven because *only the 12 Apostles were at the Passover ceremonial meal and Lazarus is never called an Apostle, or even named as a disciple.*⁵⁴ There were no women nor other male guests at Yeshua's Passover, which further excludes Lazarus from the Passover meal. Therefore, it's biblically impossible that Lazarus is the one referred to in John 13:23 as "the disciple whom Yeshua loved," as these three Synoptic accounts confirm with their use of "disciple" or "Apostle" for the 12:

Matthew 26:17-18, 20—"Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the *disciples* came to Yeshua, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Rabbi says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with My *disciples*""...When evening had come, *He sat down with the 12.* Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly I say to you, one of you will betray Me.""

Mark 14:17—"In the evening ***He came with the 12.***"

Luke 22:14—"When the hour had come, *He sat down and the 12 Apostles* were with Him."⁵⁵

This also means that Lazarus cannot be the author of the Fourth Gospel because John 21:23-24 directly links the author as being *the disciple whom Yeshua loved, who leaned upon Yeshua's chest at the Passover meal and asked Yeshua who would betray Him* (John 13:23), and Lazarus wasn't at the Passover meal with Yeshua. Also, John 21:2 speaks of *the sons of Zebedee* being two of the seven disciples who were

⁵⁰ Mt. 26:17-21, 23-24; Mk. 14:12, 14-16, 18, 20-21; Lk. 22:13-15, 21-22; cf. Mt. 26:14-16, 25; Mk. 14:43-46; Lk. 22:3-6, 47-48.

⁵¹ Mt. 26:23-26; Mk. 14:20; cf. Mt. 26:2, 14-16, 20-21; Mk. 14:10-11; Lk. 22:3-6, 21-23, 47-48.

⁵² Mt. 26:30, 36, 44-48; Mark 14:32, 42-45; Lk. 22:39-40, 47-48.

⁵³ Mt. 26: 33-35; Mk. 14:29-31; Luke 22:33-34.

⁵⁴ The 12 Apostles are named in Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:14-19; Lk. 6:13-16. John does not name the 12, but he speaks of them; cf. Jn. 6:67, 70-71; 20:24. See also the 11 places where Lazarus is named: John 11:1-2, 5, 11, 14, 43; 12:1-2, 9-10, 17. Lazarus never "followed" Jesus or is written of as a disciple or Apostle of Yeshua.

⁵⁵ Compare Mt. 26:14, 47; Mk. 14: 10, 20, 23; Lk. 22:47; John 6:71.

“unnamed” by the author of the Fourth Gospel, that went fishing in the Sea of Tiberias, and James and John are Zebedee’s sons.⁵⁶

Lazarus is not “the Beloved Disciple” and therefore, Lazarus did not write the Fourth Gospel. John the Apostle is the disciple that the Fourth Gospel speaks of as *beloved* and John is its author (despite what some think in that there was “another” John who was in Ephesus at the time when the Fourth Gospel was written; about 95 AD). *That* John is called “Elder John,” but this isn’t reason to think that it wasn’t the Apostle John that is being referred to because this title is exactly how the Apostle speaks of himself in 2nd John 1:1 and 3rd John 1:1:

“*The Elder*, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth.” (2nd John 1:1 NKJV)

“*The Elder*, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.” (3rd John 1:1 NKJV)

Add to all this the “Apostolic Tandem” of Peter and John, as well as the “seating” arrangement at the Passover Table, and it only further drives home the point that John was the “disciple that Jesus loved,” as well as revealing the impossibility that Lazarus was not “the Beloved Disciple” or the author of the Fourth Gospel, as some, not wanting to say it’s John’s Gospel, speak of it. A final point: in Acts 1:13, all the Apostles who would have been at John’s Passover meal are named except of course for Judas Iscariot who was dead at this time in Acts One. John is there, but Lazarus is not.

The Apostolic Tandem

Not everyone who followed Yeshua or was healed by Him became His disciple. Disciples generally *followed* Yeshua as He was a traveling rabbi.⁵⁷ In Hebrew the term for disciple is *talmid*, which is a student. Jewish students or disciples would follow their itinerant rabbis or they could be taught by a non-traveling rabbi at his synagogue. In Yeshua’s case His disciples would literally follow Him wherever He went and they would be taught by Him through His example and His words, as we see of the Apostles in the Gospels. Lazarus though, is never mentioned outside his home, except when he’s in the tomb where Yeshua raises him from the dead. In other words, Lazarus, as much as he loved Yeshua and listened to Him teach (e.g. in his home; Lk. 10:38-40; cf. Jn. 11:5) never actually became a disciple and followed Yeshua. The Apostles were also called disciples (Mt. 26:36-37, etc.), but neither term is used of Lazarus.⁵⁸

John is specifically mentioned as one of the three disciples (Apostles) whom Yeshua took with Him on several occasions and seen as Yeshua’s “inner circle,” from the other nine Apostles. When Yeshua wanted prayer, companionship and strength in His greatest hour of need at Gethsemane, He took His inner cir-

⁵⁶ See Mt. 4:21; 10:2; Mk. 1:19; 3:17; 10:35; Lk. 5:10.

⁵⁷ See John 1:35-40 where two of the Baptist’s disciples started *following* Yeshua, and one was most likely John.

⁵⁸ Lazarus is mentioned 11 times in the Gospel of John: John 11:1, 2, 5, 11, 14, 43; 12:1, 2, 9, 10, 17. The name Lazarus is also part of a story Yeshua tells in Luke about a beggar named Lazarus who was full of sores and went to Abraham’s bosom when he died; Luke 16:19-31, but this isn’t the Lazarus of John 11–12. John 11:1 speaks of a “certain man,” and we know it to be Lazarus (11:1), but nowhere does Scripture call Lazarus a disciple. This is a strange way for Lazarus to write of himself, if he indeed was a disciple of Yeshua and/or he wrote the Fourth Gospel. Scripture speaks of Lazarus being sick in his home and yet, if he were a disciple of Yeshua why wasn’t he traveling with Yeshua (who certainly would have healed him)? Scripture (Jn. 11:17) speaks of Yeshua taking four days to reach Lazarus. In Jn. 12:9-11 there are Jews who came to see Yeshua in the home of Lazarus, and they also came to see Lazarus because he had been raised from the dead. There was a plot by the religious leaders to murder Lazarus because many Jews were believing in Yeshua, having heard that He raised Lazarus from the dead. Most likely Lazarus was murdered in 30 AD by them and if so, it would have been difficult for Lazarus to write the Fourth Gospel 65 years later in 95 AD, when theologians believe the Fourth Gospel was written.

cle further on than the other Apostles. Scripture states,

“And He took Peter, James, and *John* with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.” (Mark 14:33 NKJV)

If Lazarus was the Beloved Disciple and so very special to Yeshua, and as one man said, “was closer to the Lord and spiritually more perceptive than even Peter,”⁵⁹ why wasn’t Lazarus included in the three whom Yeshua took with Him that night, if Lazarus had actually been at the Passover and was “the Beloved Disciple”? Of course we know he wasn’t there, but why not? Why didn’t Yeshua invite him, or make him an apostle instead of one of the 12, since he was so “spiritually” perceptive and Yeshua loved him so much more than anyone else, calling him “the Beloved Disciple”? Of course the answer is Lazarus wasn’t the Beloved Disciple—John was.

Peter would become the chief Apostle, James would be martyred, and John would outlive the other Apostles and write a Gospel and his Letters. Also, Lazarus wasn’t one of the three whom Yeshua took with Him up the mountain in His Transfiguration:

“Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, *John*, and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” (Luke 9:28 NKJV)

Again Peter, *John* and James are the three closest disciples to our Lord; Yeshua Himself singling them out to be with Him. When Luke writes of the *two* disciples whom Yeshua sent to prepare the Passover lamb that day for the Passover lamb sacrifice and the Passover meal, it’s Peter and *John*:

Luke 22:7-8—“Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed, and he sent Peter and *John*, saying, “Go and prepare us the Passover (lamb), that we may eat.””

This Tandem of Peter and John is found six times in the Book of Acts.⁶⁰ They were “always together.” Even Paul singles the two of them out, along with a non-Apostle, James, the half-brother of Yeshua, as Pillars of the Mother Church in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9).⁶¹ Where is Lazarus if he was so special?

In the Garden of Gethsemane Yeshua told His Apostles to sit in a certain place and to pray for Him. He then takes three Apostles to another place to pray for Him there (Mt. 26:36f.; Mk. 14:32f.). Those three were Peter, James and *John*. Again, he’s not mentioned as one of the three. Lazarus was not there which also confirms he wasn’t at the Passover meal. If Lazarus had been at the Passover meal he certainly would have gone to the Garden with Yeshua and the other Apostles. Lazarus is not “the Beloved Disciple,” for he was not at the Passover Table that night.

Why isn’t Lazarus written of in Acts or anywhere else in Scripture if he “was closer to the Lord than even Peter,” as some would have us to believe, and so much more spiritually in tune with Jesus? The Apostle John is the Beloved Disciple, who refers to himself as “the other disciple...” whom Jesus loved:

“When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and *the disciple whom He loved* standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!”” (John 19:26)

And,

“Then she (Mary Magdalene) ran and came to Simon Peter, and to *the other disciple whom Jesus loved*, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him!” Peter therefore went out *and the other*

⁵⁹ See the comment by “bob” to Ben Witherington’s article, [Was Lazarus the Beloved Disciple?](#)

⁶⁰ Acts 3:1, 3, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14; cf. Matthew 4:21; 10:2; Mk. 1:19; 3:17; 10:35; Lk 5:10.

⁶¹ The Apostle James, the brother of John, was murdered by Herod in Acts 12:1-2, about 42 AD. The James of Acts and Galatians, etc. (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; James 1:1; Jude 1:1), was the oldest of Yeshua’s half brothers (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3; cf. Mt. 27:56; Mk. 15:40, 47) and the president (prince) of the Council in Acts 15 and 21.

disciple, and they went to the tomb. So they both ran together, and *the other disciple* outran Peter and came to the tomb first.” (John 20:2-4)

This is the Tandem of Peter and John, comprising now of 11 Apostles, after Judas hung himself. They were in the Upper Room, hiding themselves, afraid of being arrested by the Jewish and/or Roman authorities. Where was Lazarus in all this? Scripture is silent.

Peter and John obviously had a special relationship and were recognized as “chief Apostles.” When Samaria came to believe in Yeshua, the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and *John* to extend the hand of fellowship to the estranged half-breed Samaritans, and welcome them into the Kingdom of the Jewish Messiah with the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14f.; cf. Mt. 2:2; 27:11, 37; Mk. 15:2; Jn. 4:22).

The disciple whom Yeshua loved is John. This is also affirmed by one of the 20th century’s greatest Old and New Testament scholars, F. F. Bruce. After speaking of the label, “According to John,” given by someone to the Fourth Gospel so it could be distinguished from the other three Gospels with their labels (According to Matthew, etc.), Bruce states,

“As early as the ascription of this Gospel to “John” can be traced back, it is regularly assumed that the John in question was John, the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve. There is indeed positive evidence for another “disciple of the Lord” called John,⁶² living probably in the Roman province of Asia” (Turkey) “to which John the son of Zebedee, according to tradition, migrated from Palestine in the later part of the first century, but no one in antiquity... ascribed the Fourth Gospel to this other John rather than to the son of Zebedee. This other John is referred to by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (c. AD 130), as “John the elder” (or “presbyter”), “elder” being a designation given especially at that time to Christian leaders of the generation next to the apostles.”⁶³

As I’ve written above, it seems that the designation of the Apostle John as “John the Elder,” is very fitting for the Apostle, John writing it of himself in 2nd John 1:1 and 3rd John 1:1. Be that as it may, Bruce sees “the presence of the Beloved Disciple” at Passover (John 13), when only the Twelve were there, and John being one of the Twelve, as a strong point that it’s John. It’s certainly “not Peter (from whom he is distinguished in John 13:24).”⁶⁴ The author’s “recurring designation as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” implies a deliberate avoidance of his personal name,”⁶⁵ which is very strange if the author was Lazarus, *as there’s no equation between the Beloved Disciple and Lazarus*, meaning the author never even hints that Lazarus was the Beloved Disciple, and strange in that if it was Lazarus, some times he speaks of himself with his name, but many times he doesn’t (if he were the Beloved Disciple).

Bruce sees that at “the supper table (John 13:24), at the empty tomb (John 20:2-10) and at the lakeside (John 21:7, 20) the Beloved Disciple *is specially associated with Peter*,” which, as we’ve seen with “the Tandem,” is John. Also, in the early days of the church *John appears repeatedly as a companion of Peter* (Acts 3:1–4:23; 8:15-25; cf. also Galatians 2:9, where Peter and John, with James, the Lord’s brother, are associated as “pillars” of the Jerusalem community; the Mother Church).⁶⁶

⁶² F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2001), p. 1. Papias *Exegesis of the Dominical oracles*, quoted by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.4. See F. F. Bruce, *Men and movements in the Primitive Church* (Exeter 1979), pp. 132-136.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3. Also in John 21:7, 20, “and by implication also from Thomas and Nathanael; we should think of him then as one of the sons of Zebedee (whose names are not given) or as one of the two other disciples listed but not named in John 21:2. So far as the sons of Zebedee are concerned, he cannot be identified with James: James was put to death by Herod Agrippa I, according to Acts 12:1f., during his brief reign as king of Judaea (AD 41-44); it was not with regard to James that the rumour spread at a later date “that that disciple was not going to die” (John 21:23).”

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Bruce speaks of the tradition, that John the Apostle wrote the Fourth Gospel. He says that J. A. T. Robinson remarked that it didn't "come out of the blue...about the year AD 100," but rather that there is a "real continuity...in the life of an on-going community, with the earliest days of Christianity."⁶⁷

Bruce also brings out that Irenaeus (130-200), who had lived in Asia before relocating to Lyon, France to be bishop there, knew Polycarp (69-155), who was martyred in Rome for his faith, and also the bishop of Smyrna, who said, "John, the disciple of the Lord, *who leaned back on His breast*, published the Gospel while he was resident at Ephesus in Asia."⁶⁸ Both internal and external evidence speak of John the Apostle being the author of the Fourth Gospel, and the disciple whom Yeshua loved.

The Passover Table

The structure or layout of the ancient Passover Table further reveals evidence that the Beloved Disciple was John. There were no seats at Messiah's Passover Table, just long and large pillows to lay one's body on because the "table" was actually only about a foot off the floor. Lying down upon the pillows and leaning on their left arm, everyone would eat their food with their right hand. Lying down was symbolic of being free. Hebrew slaves in Egypt ate standing up and ready to return to work immediately. There was no rest for them, but God gave them rest and freedom (symbolized in the Sabbath; Dt. 5:12-15) and this pictures the rest and freedom at the Passover Table.

The host at this Passover Table was Yeshua. This is seen by Him seeking the upper room from the man in Jerusalem (Mt. 26:17-19; Mk. 14:12-17; Lk. 22:8-16), and telling Peter and *John* to go and prepare the Passover, which meant going to the Temple with their lamb, sacrificing it, returning to the upper room and roasting the Passover lamb, and also getting the other food and the Table ready. If Yeshua had celebrated the Passover at anyone's home, including that of Lazarus, *Yeshua would not have been the host*. The host provided the lamb, and all Israel celebrated Passover in Jerusalem in the days of Messiah, the place where God chose to establish His name forever, and where the three major Feasts were kept.⁶⁹

The host also chose the person who would be the guest of honor. This man always laid to the left of the host. That night it was not Peter, James or John who would be the guest of honor—it was Judas. To the right of the host was the youngest person (and in our day, a child who asks the Passover questions).⁷⁰ As we'll see it could not have been Lazarus because he was older than many of the Apostles, if not all of them, especially John. The Passover Table reveals that John was the youngest Apostle.

The Passover Table was made in the shape of a large, rectangular, "upside-down U" \cap , and consisted of three long rectangular tables. At the bottom left corner of this \cap lay the youngest, John, on a large pillow. To his left was the host, Yeshua. The upper torsos of everyone were parallel to the Table, but their legs jutted out at a 45° angle, allowing the person on their right, in this case, John in relation to Yeshua, to come closer to the person's upper torso on his left. This is how John could be close to Yeshua's chest when he whispered the question of who would betray Him. (The legs of the Passover participants jutted out so more people could fit around the Passover Table.) The opening in the \cap was for one or two of the Apostles to bring food to the others through it, as it would be difficult to do it with bodies on the inside of the three tables.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 11. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.1.2.

⁶⁹ Ex. 20:24; 23:17; Dt. 12:11, 21; 14:23-24; 16:2, 6, 11.

⁷⁰ The youngest child who is able to read asks the host four questions, which allows the host to speak of God's mighty deliverance from Egyptian slavery. For those questions and how Passover was conducted, see [Passover](#) and [The Passover Ceremony](#).

Yeshua, as the host, determined that Judas would be to His left as the special guest of honor. We know this because Yeshua handed the sop to Judas (with what would have been Yeshua's right hand, crossing over His body to feed Judas; a gesture of honor for the most honored guest (Jn. 13:26-27). Yeshua made His betrayer the guest of honor in one last demonstration of divine love to Judas. It was the host's responsibility to assign the "seating" arrangements around the \cap Table (cf. Lk. 14:7f.), for there was a *hierarchy*. To the left of Judas was the host's "next most honored guest" (in this case, another apostle), and on down the line around the outer perimeter of the Table⁷¹ to the least honored guest at the lower right hand corner of the \cap which we'll see was Peter. Peter was the chief Apostle, and Yeshua was trying to teach him humility (John 13:8-13; cf. Lk. 9:46-48).

It was from that "last" or least honored position at the Table, in the lower right hand corner of the \cap that placed Peter directly across from John, the youngest, who was in the lower left hand corner of the \cap . It was from this position that Peter was able to easily be seen by John when Peter motioned with his hands "to tell" John to ask Yeshua who the betrayer was. John 13:24 states, "Simon Peter therefore motioned to him" (John) "to ask who it was of whom He spoke." John was already laying lovingly upon Yeshua's chest or near it when he asked Yeshua, no doubt in a whisper, who the traitor was (John 13:23-26f.).

If John had asked in a loud voice, all the Apostles, including Judas to Yeshua's left, would have heard the question and known what Yeshua's answer was. Also, the Apostles wouldn't have thought that Judas, upon leaving, might be going to buy some things for the Feast or that he was going to give some alms to the poor if they had heard John's question and Yeshua's reply. They would have known why Judas left.

Even though Scripture speaks of Lazarus being loved by Yeshua (Jn. 11:5, 36), the Passover Table brings out that the Gospel was written by John. In John 13:23 it's the disciple whom Yeshua loved who *asked the question*. John was the youngest and history records that he outlived all the other Apostles, to about 100 AD. If John were 20 years old at this Passover in 30 AD, 70 years later in 100 AD he would have been 90 years old.

On the other hand, Lazarus was most likely at least 50 years old when he died and Yeshua resurrected him (Jn. 11:1f.). He had two younger sisters (Martha and Mary), and there is no father or mother mentioned (i.e. alive), and so 65 years later, in 95 AD (when the Fourth Gospel is said to have been written), Lazarus would have been 115 years old. Of course, Lazarus most likely would not have lived that long, even if they didn't murder him in 30 AD (cf. Jn. 12:10-11). This too proves that Lazarus wasn't the one at Yeshua's bosom during that Passover and that he wasn't the writer of the Fourth Gospel.

Using the phrase, *the disciple whom Yeshua loved* (or variations thereof; Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20), instead of his own name, was John's way of speaking of himself without naming himself. It was not an uncommon form of ancient humility. The way John left his name out of his Gospel was similar to how the other three Gospels were written before him; meaning that none of the Gospel authors tell us their name. It's only the Gospel of John that is questioned, but as we've seen, there is no substance to their concerns. The Beloved Disciple and the one who wrote the Fourth Gospel is the Apostle John, as the next section, "John—The Disciple Whom Yeshua Loved," will further confirm.⁷²

⁷¹ No one laid on the inside of the U. That was left open for food and drink to be brought to the Table without having to step over anyone.

⁷² Church History also confirms (and is actually unanimous) that the Apostle John was the person who laid upon the bosom of Yeshua, which further establishes that John wrote the Gospel attributed to him. In Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History (book 5, chap. 24), Eusebius states that Polycrates (130-196 AD), the Bishop of Ephesus, wrote of the Apostle John, that he "reclined upon the bosom of the Lord." No one in the early church spoke of Lazarus being the Beloved Disciple or the author of the Fourth Gospel.

The [Muratorian Fragment](#) or Canon Muratori (about 170 AD) is the oldest known list of most of the books of the New Testament (Gospels, Acts, Letters and Revelation; only not including Hebrews, James and 1st and 2nd Peter). In relation to John the Apostle being the author of the Fourth Gospel, his Letters and Revelation, it states:

"Of the General epistles, the author accepts the...two epistles "bearing the name of John"...It is clear that the au-

John—The Disciple Whom Yeshua Loved

Ramsey Michaels (1931-2020) is a well known Christian theologian who has written a number of books on Scripture and is best known for his commentary on John's Gospel. The following are excerpts taken from the *New International Biblical Commentary* he wrote for the Gospel of John:

““The Gospel According to John” (or, in some ancient manuscripts simply, “According to John”), was not part of what the author writes, but was prefixed to the text by an early Christian when the four Gospels began to circulate as a collection. This Gospel, like the others, is anonymous, but in modern discussions even those who speak without hesitation of “Matthew,” “Mark,” and “Luke” (regardless of their views on the authorship of those Gospels!) often use for John the noncommittal term, “the fourth Gospel,” suggesting that this Gospel is somehow *more* anonymous than the rest.⁷³ If anything, it is less anonymous, for at least it bears a kind of signature, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (21:20-24; cf. 13:23-25; 19:26-27; 20:2-8; 21:7). Who was this disciple? Who was “John”? How did the two come to be identified with each other, and what are the merits of that identification? These are the questions that must be answered about the Gospel's authorship.”⁷⁴

The Sons of Zebedee

Michaels continues, saying that one of the Sons of Thunder was the Apostle John, and that many times John is mentioned with his brother James, but Lazarus is never mentioned as part of Yeshua's entourage:

“Besides the brothers Peter and Andrew, the first disciples called to accompany Jesus in His ministry were “James, son of Zebedee and his brother John” (Mark 1:19; Matt. 4:21; Luke 5:10). These two are mentioned in the Gospel of John itself only once (Jn. 21:2), not by name, but simply as “the sons of Zebedee.” Almost always in the Gospels the two brothers are seen together as, for example, when they asked about a Samaritan village that would not receive Jesus; “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them? (Luke 9:54) Jesus even gave them a name in common: “Boanerges,” an Aramaic expression meaning “Men of Thunder” or “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). On one occasion they requested of Jesus, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory” (Mark 10:37); in Mt. 20:21 it is their mother who makes the request on their behalf.”⁷⁵

“Sometimes the two of them are present along with Peter, as on the mount of transfigura-

thor (of the Muratorian Fragment) assumed that the author of the Gospel of John was the same as the author of the First Epistle of John, for in the middle of discussing the Gospel of John he says “what marvel then is it that John brings forward these several things so constantly *in his epistles also*, saying in his own person, “What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears, and our hands have handled that have we written” (1 John 1:1) which is a quotation from the First Epistle of John.””

“Another indication that the author identified the Gospel writer John with two epistles bearing John's name is that when he specifically addresses the epistles of John, he writes, “the Epistle of Jude indeed, and the two belonging to the above mentioned John.” In other words he thinks that these letters were written by the John whom he has already discussed, namely John the gospel writer. He gives no indication that he considers the John of the Apocalypse (i.e. Revelation) to be a different John from the author of the Gospel of John.”

⁷³ J. Ramsey Michaels, *New International Biblical Commentary: John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002), p. 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

tion (Mk. 9:2; Mt. 17:1; Lk. 9:28) or in Gethsemane (Mk. 14:33; Mt. 26:37) or at the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk. 5:37; Lk. 8:51); sometimes both sets of brothers—Peter and Andrew, James and John—are on the scene (Mk. 1:29; 13:2), just as they were when Jesus called them from their fishing nets. Only once in the entire synoptic tradition does John speak or act alone: “Master,” he reported to Jesus, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him because he is not one of us” (Lk. 9:49; cf. Mk. 9:38). “Do not stop him,” was Jesus’ reply, “for whoever is not against you is for you” (Lk. 9:50; cf. Mk. 9:39-40).⁷⁶

Michaels brings out many facts of Scripture relating to the sons of Zebedee to support his position that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was the Apostle John; one of the two Sons of Thunder. Also, that the Three Synoptics speak of John as one of the two disciples to follow Jesus, whereas in John only Andrew is actually named. This means that the Fourth Gospel’s unnamed disciple was John. There’s more.

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loved

Michaels then addresses how John came to be seen as both the disciple whom Yeshua loved and the author of the Fourth Gospel. He asks and answers:

“How did half of the “brother combination” of James and John come to be identified with the so-called *disciple whom Jesus loved*, and so with the *authorship* of one of the four Gospels? The logic is simple and appealing. The “disciple whom Jesus loved” must have been one of the Twelve Jesus had chosen (Jn. 6:70-71) to help Him and carry on His work, for he was present at the last” Passover “(13:23-25). He was in fact “reclining next to” Jesus (13:23) and “leaned back against” him (21:20). Because in the synoptic Gospels Peter, James, and John (and sometimes Andrew) constitute a kind of “inner circle” who were closest to Jesus at crucial moments in His ministry, it is likely that the Beloved Disciple is one of these. He is obviously not Peter, for he is distinguished from or contrasted with Peter on four of the five occasions that he appears in the Gospel:”

1. At the Passover, “Peter asked him to find out who the predicted betrayer was (Jn. 13:23-25).”
2. On the day of the Resurrection, “he and Peter heard the news of the empty tomb and he outran Peter to the tomb, and finally “saw and believed” (20:2-8).”
3. “On Lake Tiberias, when a stranger appeared to the disciples as they were fishing, he said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” (Jn. 21:7).”
4. “When Jesus predicted Peter’s death, Peter turned and looked at this disciple and asked what his fate would be. Jesus replied that it was none of Peter’s concern. A concluding note explicitly identifies the Beloved Disciple as the Gospel’s author (Jn. 21:20-24).”⁷⁷

“the only incident that does not involve Peter is at the crucifixion (after Peter and the others had fled), when Jesus commits His mother into this disciple’s care (Jn. 19:26-27). There are two other occasions where the designation, “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” does not occur, but where this disciple’s presence is sometimes assumed: John 1:35-41 (where an unnamed disciple is present with Peter’s brother Andrew) and John 18:15-16 (where an anonymous disciple brings Peter into the High Priest’s courtyard). These incidents should probably be left out of consideration, but even when they are, the evidence indicates if not a rivalry at least a kind of assertiveness on the Beloved Disciple’s behalf

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

in this Gospel, almost always with Peter on the scene.”⁷⁸

“Could the Beloved Disciple be Andrew, Peter’s brother? This possibility seems to be excluded by the fact that Andrew is mentioned by name in John 1:40, 44; 6:8; 12:22. Why would someone be named freely in certain contexts, but on others designated anonymously as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”? The same objection applies to most of the Twelve:”

1. Philip (Jn. 1:43-46; 6:5-7; 12:21-22; 14:8-10).
2. Thomas (Jn. 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-28; 21:2), and,
3. Judah (Jn. 14:22), as well as,
4. Nathaniel, who was probably also numbered among the Twelve (Jn. 1:45-49; 21:2).

“It applies as well to Lazarus, whom Jesus is said to have “loved” (Jn. 11:5) and about whom (because of his” marvelously being brought back to life, “the rumor may well have spread that he would never die; Jn. 21:23). Why would Lazarus be *named* in chapters 11–12 only to become anonymous in chapters 13–21?”⁷⁹

“This leaves the sons of Zebedee, who are not named in the Gospel, yet who were undoubtedly present at the” Passover “and on one other occasion in which the Beloved Disciple played a part (Jn. 21:2; cf. v. 7). The synoptic account of their bold request to sit immediately on Jesus’ right and left “in your glory” (Mk. 10:37 and parallels) may indicate that those were already their customary places when Jesus and his disciple ate together ...in any event, the Beloved Disciple’s seat at the last” Passover “was immediately at Jesus’ side.”

“If the identification is narrowed down to James and John, the sons of Zebedee, James can be eliminated because of his early martyrdom. His death at the hands of Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12:2” (circa 42 AD), “leaves him scant time in which to have written a Gospel, much less for a rumor to have gotten started that he would not die before Christ’s Second Coming (John 21:23)! A process of elimination thus leads to Zebedee’s other son, the Apostle John. This helps explain why the identification of the Beloved Disciple with John, the son of Zebedee, *is found almost universally in early christian tradition*. A few very late testimonies that speak of John as having been martyred appear to be attempts to create for one of Jesus’ prophecies a more literal fulfillment than he intended. His warning in Mark 10:39, that the two brothers would “drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with” referred in James’ case to actual martyrdom, but in John’s case many have pointed simply to his exile on the island of Patmos in his later years for “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus;” Rev. 1:9).”⁸⁰

Another point that is often overlooked is when Yeshua is on the Cross and He tells His disciple whom He loves that Mary is “his mother;” and tells Mary to “behold your son.”⁸¹ Yeshua would hardly say, “Woman! Behold your son!” concerning Lazarus, who was probably 10-20 years older than Mary!

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 4. See also p. 17, note 1...According to Origen, Commentary on Matthew 16:6. See p. 25, note 94, which states that John died in his sleep at Ephesus.

⁸¹ John 19:26 NKJV: “When Jesus therefore saw His mother, *and the disciple whom He loved* standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!””

THE APOSTLE JOHN AND CHURCH HISTORY

J. Ramsey Michaels lists more facts from Scripture and ancient Church History to prove that “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was the Apostle John, and that John wrote the Fourth Gospel:

“Because John’s name has been so closely linked to the fourth Gospel, it’s helpful to examine the memory he left in the ancient church and the traditions identifying him as the Gospel’s author. After Jesus’ resurrection, John is seen with Peter in Jerusalem at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (Acts 3:1-11) and before the ruling Council or Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-23). Later he and Peter are sent by the Jerusalem church to Samaria to confer the Holy Spirit on those who had believed there and deal with Simon Magnus (Acts 8:14-25). John’s association with Peter in the Book of Acts recalls the Beloved Disciple’s association with Peter in John’s Gospel, as if the one were simply a continuation of the other,”⁸² which they were.

Interestingly enough, the Gospel of John and the Book of Acts were written by two different men: John and Luke, and yet,

“They are still together in Paul’s letter to the Galatians, where it is agreed that Peter, John and James (not John’s brother, but James, the half-brother of Jesus), would continue their mission to the Jews while Paul and Barnabas worked among the Gentiles (Gal. 2:9).”⁸³

“The author of the Book of Revelation,” circa 95 AD “(probably written after Peter’s death” (circa 65 AD) “identifies himself as “John” (Rev. 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8), and the fact that he needs no further introduction suggests that he may be this same John, son of Zebedee and the Apostle of Jesus, now a well-known prophet to Christians in Ephesus and other church centers in Asia Minor” (Turkey). “Tradition, at any rate, bears out this identification by linking the Apostle closely to the church at Ephesus”⁸⁴ and the Gospel by his name.

Papais

Michaels writes of Papias knowing Aristion, a man who personally had known Presbyter or Elder John (the Apostle), and of others who had known John:

“Papias (60-130 AD) Bishop of Hierapolis in Asia, wrote that “if ever anyone came who had followed the presbyters” (i.e. the Apostles), “I inquired into the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or Peter or Philip or Thomas or James or *John* or Matthew, or any other of the Lord’s disciples had said, and what Aristion and *the presbyter John*, the Lord’s disciples, were saying” (meaning that John was still alive). “For I did not suppose that information from books would help me so much as the word of living and surviving voices.”⁸⁵ *Eusebius claimed* that Papias referred here to *two individuals named John*: the first numbered among the “disciples of the Lord,” and the second a later “presbyter.”⁸⁶ *But the quotation does not bear out Eusebius’ claim*; each time John is mentioned it is as “presbyter” and “disciple of the Lord” (it appears in fact that Papias uses the word “pres-

⁸² Michaels, John, p. 4.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 5.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Also p. 17, note 5: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.4; LCL 1.293.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Also p. 17, note 6: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39.5-7; LCL 1.293.

byter” to mean “apostle,” and at one point Eusebius follows this practice as well).⁸⁷ Papias seems to be referring to John in two ways: first, along with the other Apostles, as a guardian of the tradition in the past and second, *as a contemporary figure*, the only survivor of the original Apostles or “presbyters” (cf. the two letters, Second and Third John, sent from “The Elder” or “presbyter;” 2nd John 1:1; 3rd John 1:1).⁸⁸

Polycarp

Polycarp (69-156 AD) was Bishop of Smyrna in Asia Minor about the same time as Papias in Hierapolis, which cities are about 100 miles from each other in western Turkey. Polycarp “is mentioned by Irenaeus as having known John. In a letter to Florinus, *On the Sole Sovereignty of God*, Irenaeus wrote:”

“For I saw you” (i.e. Florinus) “when I was still a boy, in lower Asia with Polycarp...I remember the things of that time better than the things which have happened recently, for the experiences of youth, growing with the soul, are united with it, so that I could tell the very place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught...the addresses which he made to the people, *and how he spoke of his association with John* and the others *who had seen the Lord*, and how he remembered their words, and what the things were concerning the Lord, which he had heard from them, both concerning His miracles and concerning His teaching.”⁸⁹

Theologian Marcus Dods writes that Polycarp didn’t refer his hearers to the Gospel of John,

“*because having himself been a pupil of John*, he preferred to relate what he had heard from” John. “Irenaeus recognized that Polycarp’s oral tradition was in harmony with the Gospel. Besides, John lived to the times of Trajan, whose reign began in 98 AD, while Polycarp was born not later than 70 AD, and was put to death in 156, *so that the first 30 years of his life coincided with the last*” (28) “*years of John’s*, and the last 30 years” of Polycarp’s life, “with the youth of Irenaeus. This being so,” is it “likely that after such intimacy with Polycarp as Irenaeus claims, he should not know whether John had written a Gospel or not?”⁹⁰

According to Polycarp the Apostle John wrote the Fourth Gospel. Polycarp spoke of John’s words “coincidentally” coinciding with words from John’s Gospel.

Theophilus of Antioch

Patriarch *Theophilus of Antioch* (169-182), also spoke of John as the author of the Fourth Gospel:

“Early church tradition also links John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, with the writing of a Gospel, *sometimes with direct citation of the Gospel of John...Theophilus of Antioch*, late second century, wrote: “and hence the holy writings teach us, and all the spirit-bearing (inspired) men, *one of who, John, says, “In the beginning was the Word*, and the Word was with God,” and he continued with a brief exposition of John 1:1-3.”⁹¹

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 5-6, and also p. 17, note 7: 3.39.7.

⁸⁸ In English the Greek word πρεσβύτερος *presbyteros* means presbyter or elder.

⁸⁹ Michaels, *John*, p. 6. Page 17, note 8: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 5.20.4 translated by D. J. Theron, *Evidence of Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1958), p. 27.

⁹⁰ Marcus Dods, D.D., Author; W. Robertson Nicoll, Editor, M.A., LL.D., *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, Volume One: *St. John* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), p. 660.

Polycrates

Polycrates (130-196 AD) “Bishop of Ephesus, wrote to the Bishop of Rome,”⁹² Victor (circa 190 AD), about keeping Passover on 14 Aviv, as all the churches of Asia (Turkey) did (along with those of the East; e.g. Syria and Israel), and not keeping Easter on “Easter Sunday.” Pope Victor threatened all the churches of Asia with excommunication if they continued to keep Passover, but they didn’t listen to him because they knew Passover came straight from Yeshua *through John*. Victor excommunicated them anyway.⁹³ In the letter that Polycrates wrote to Victor, before the excommunication, *he speaks of John the Apostle*, saying, “and there is also John, *who leaned on the Lord’s breast*.”⁹⁴ There is no mention of Lazarus.

Irenaeus

Michaels says that Irenaeus (130-203 AD) Bishop of Lyon, France,

“near the end of the second century, wrote of “*those who were conversant in Asia with John, the disciple of the Lord* (affirming) that John conveyed to them the information (i.e. about Jesus’ age and length of His ministry. And he remained among them up to the time of Trajan.”⁹⁵ And that “the church in Ephesus...*having John remaining among them permanently until the time of Trajan...is a true witness of the tradition of the Apostles*.”⁹⁶

⁹¹ Michaels, *John*, p. 6, and also page 17, note 9: Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 2.22; ANF1.414.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹³ Samuele Bacchiocchi, [From Sabbath to Sunday](#) (Rome, Italy: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), p. 128, and also note 549.

⁹⁴ Michaels, *John*, p. 5. See [Polycrates](#), *Church History*, Book V, chapter 24: Polycrates wrote, “We observe the exact day” (i.e. Passover), “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. And Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr, and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from Eumeneia, who fell asleep in Smyrna...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*” (Jewish) “*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*” (of Victor). “For those greater than I have said, “We ought to obey God rather than man”” (Acts 4:17-21). “I could mention the bishops who were present, whom I summoned at your request, whose names, should I write them, would constitute a great multitude. And they, beholding my littleness, gave their consent to the letter, knowing that I did not bear my gray hairs in vain, *but had always governed my life by the Lord Jesus*.” This reveals that most Christians continued to observe Passover, as Yeshua and all His Apostles did, 160 years after the Resurrection, which means that Passover, not Easter, was the normal way for Christians to walk out their faith in Jesus. It also means that Mosaic Law was being kept by them, as they not only kept Passover, which isn’t found in the Ten Commandments, but also the 7th day Sabbath, etc. See Samuele Bacchiocchi, [From Sabbath to Sunday](#), p. 120ff.

Also, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002), pp. 216-217. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, Chapter 24, for Polycrates’ letter to Victor, and New Advent, [Church History V](#), chapter 24.

⁹⁵ Michaels, *John*, p. 5, also page 17, note 2: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2:25.5; ANF 1.392. Trajan or Marcus Ulpius Traianus was Roman Emperor from 98 to 117 AD.

Irenaeus,

“after recounting the traditions associated with the other Gospels, concluded that “Afterwards, *John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast*, did himself *publish a Gospel* during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.”⁹⁷ Later he adds that John wrote his Gospel to refute certain Gnostic heretics who argued that God the Creator and God the Father of Jesus were two different gods, and he quotes extensively from the prologue” (of John’s Gospel) “to prove his point.”⁹⁸

Marcion of Sinope, Turkey (85-160 AD) is best remembered as the chief heretic of the teaching that there were two different Gods of the Bible; the ogre and “lesser” God of the Old Testament, and the heavenly, compassionate “greater” God the Father of Jesus Christ. Even though Marcion lived after John, his teaching or heretical ideas didn’t originate with him, but began before him. It’s called Marcionism, for he became its primary expositor, and his thinking remains in the Church today as many Christians believe the very same thing about “the Old Testament God.” Of course, Marcion didn’t believe in Mosaic Law as God’s Christian’s lifestyle. John comes against this “Ogre Heresy” by never saying that the Father of Jesus is a different God than “the Lord” of the Old Testament, implying they are the same God. There isn’t a single Scripture to support this demonic dichotomy, and just a cursory reading of John reveals Yeshua, as well as others like John the Baptist, quoting this “Old Testament God” many times.⁹⁹

“Even earlier (about 130-140 AD) a certain Ptolemy, himself one of these Gnostics, attributes to “John, the disciple of the Lord” the words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,”¹⁰⁰ and elsewhere attributes to “the Apostle” the words that shortly follow, “everything was made through Him and apart from Him nothing was made.”¹⁰¹

“Such statements show how, in the second century, both orthodoxy and heresy (as they later came to be called) *appealed to the Gospel of John and regarded John the Apostle as its author*. The testimony to his authorship is early and unanimous... The late second century anti-Marcionite prologues (i.e. Gospel headings presumably written to refute the heretic Marcion) have John actually dictating the Gospel to Papias, identified as his disciple. The Muratorian Canon, from about the same period, states that all the disciples fasted together for three days, after which “it was revealed to Andrew... that with all of them reviewing, John should describe all things”¹⁰² (i.e. to write the Gospel).

Michaels sums up these ancient Christian witnesses to John being “the Beloved Disciple” and also the one who wrote the Fourth Gospel, stating the,

“Gospel is anonymous by the author’s choice and design... Second, no other name but that of John, the son of Zebedee, appears in the tradition” (of the Church); “the only ex-

⁹⁶ Ibid., also page 17, note 3:3.3.4; ANF 1.416.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 6 and p. 17, note 10: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.1.1; ANF 1.414.

⁹⁸ Ibid., note 11: 3.11.1; ANF 1.426.

⁹⁹ For example, John 1:23; 2:16-17, where Yeshua aligns His Father with the God of the Old Testament by the quote from Psalm 69:9; also Jn. 7:18-24; 8:42-47, 54-58; 10:31-39; 11:21-22; 12:12-15, 37-41; 13:18; 14:1; 19:23-24; etc., and Jesus is the long awaited Old Testament Messiah (Jn. 4:25; cf. Ps. 2:2, 6-7; 110:1, 4; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 11:1-2, etc.), which means the Old Testament God sent the Messiah.

¹⁰⁰ Michaels, *John*, pp. 6-7, also p. 17, note 12: Ptolemy, *Exegesis of John*, in Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.85; ANF 1.328.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 7, and also page 17, note 13: Ptolemy, *Letter to Flora*, in Epiphanius, *Panarion* 3.33; translated by R.M. Grant, *Gnosticism* (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 184.

¹⁰² Ibid., and also p. 17, note 14: Theron, *Evidences of Tradition*, pp. 107-109.

PLICIT indication of the involvement of others besides John in the writing of the Gospel is the anonymous “we” in 21:24 who “know that his testimony is true.” A group of Christians somewhere is vouching for the validity of the Beloved Disciple’s written testimony. The traditions connecting John with Ephesus could suggest that “we” refers to the Elders of the Ephesian church (and perhaps also that “I” in the following verse is a scribe among them who was responsible for preparing the finished Gospel for publication)...yet the statement in 21:24 that the Beloved Disciple not only “testifies to these things, “but also, “wrote them down,” sets strict limits to the participation of anyone else in the writing of the Gospel. The most plausible theory is that the author put together the Gospel...but as narrator, left himself out of the story. His associates in Ephesus...testified...to his personal involvement...and consequently to the reliability of his Gospel”¹⁰³ and its author.

CONCLUSION

Alfred Edersheim reveals that John 13 is the Passover ceremonial meal with two distinct points: the Apostles could only have thought that Judas was going to buy something for the feast or that he was going to give alms to the poor, both of which would have been silly if the meal had been the evening before the biblical Passover because all that could have been done the next day.

Also, the concern of the priests and scribes of the Sanhedrin, about being defiled and not able to eat the Passover if they came into Pilate’s abode, doesn’t speak of the Passover meal on the night of 15 Aviv, but in the morning of 15 Aviv, after the Passover had been eaten the night before. Being defiled meant the priests couldn’t eat of the Passover Chagiga, the festive Passover sacrifice that was sacrificed on the morning of 15 Aviv and was eaten that day. If they were defiled by going into Pilate’s abode on 14 Aviv, when the lambs were sacrificed at the Temple, they could still eat of the Passover meal by bathing at dusk. The ritual defilement would end at dark and they could eat the Passover meal in the evening.

John 13 is most certainly a Passover meal on the biblical date for Passover. Some Christians though, not wanting to believe what the other three Gospels clearly say about Yeshua celebrating the Passover at the correct biblical time, refuse to acknowledge the Synoptics and center in on what they think the Gospel of John presents. They say that Yeshua kept either a memorial meal, or “His own Passover” a night earlier. Aside from the fact that even Yeshua wouldn’t alter Mosaic Law’s date for “another” or earlier Passover. It’s evident that they don’t understand what John is writing. They believe they found a Gospel that dispels the teaching that it was a Passover that Yeshua kept. This is foolish, ignorant and anti-Semitic.

Being that it was the Passover meal also categorically excludes Lazarus from being the Beloved Disciple and/or the one who wrote the Fourth Gospel because Scripture speaks of only the 12 Apostles being at the Passover.¹⁰⁴ Lazarus is never seen in any Gospel account with the names of the 12 and he’s never even called a disciple, let alone an apostle. Therefore it’s not possible that Lazarus is “the Beloved Disciple” or that he wrote the Fourth Gospel because the “one who leaned on the chest of Yeshua” at the Passover wrote it.

John 13:1 usually reads, *before* the Feast of the Passover, and forms a general introduction to the chapter, as v. 2f., reveals, and so some think it’s a night before the biblical Passover, but the translation in the KJV and NKJV isn’t accurate. Verse 1 says nothing about the *supper* taking place the night before the biblical Passover, and *nowhere* in the New Testament does anyone say that Yeshua had a memorial meal or “His own Passover” in the evening of 14 Aviv (so He could die as the Passover Lamb when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple on 14 Aviv). Something like that would have to be mentioned

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

¹⁰⁴ John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20.

so that all Christians could follow Jesus in this memorial meal or “new Passover” date. This means that Yeshua didn’t die when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple, but kept the Passover with His Apostles at the biblical time in the evening of 15 Aviv; the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an annual Sabbath, which is when the Passover meal is eaten. *At His sacrifice* on 15 Aviv we were set free from Satan’s Kingdom, not when the Passover lambs were sacrificed on 14 Aviv.

John 13:2 doesn’t speak of the meal *being over*, but actually that the time for the Passover meal had arrived and had just begun. We see that especially with John writing of the foot washing (v. 4), which is done before the Passover meal.

The “problem” that the Greek word for the *bread* of John 13:26-27, 30 not specifically being matza or unleavened bread, and so the refrain that “it cannot be a Passover,” is easily solved when it’s realized that both in Hebrew and in Greek the generic term for leavened bread also applies to matza. The traditional Hebrew blessing for the matza at Passover confirms this, using the regular term for leavened bread in blessing God for the matza of Passover.

That Yeshua didn’t eat a memorial meal or keep the His own Passover the night before the biblical date, is also evident from the distinct and specific parallels that John 13 displays with the Synoptic Gospels. It all points to John 13 being the Passover meal because:

1. Yeshua *speaks* of His betrayer at the Passover and,
2. Yeshua *identifies* the traitor to John by giving Judas the sop at the Passover and,
3. Judas *leaves* the Passover meal to betray the Lord at the Passover and,
4. Peter *speaks* of laying down his life for Yeshua, but Yeshua tells him, during the Passover meal, that he would deny Him *that very night*.

These additional four points reveal that John 13 is the Passover meal that was kept by the Lord on the correct biblical date of 15 Aviv.

Then there is the Tandem of Peter and John. This points to John being the “other disciple,” when Peter is spoken of being with another disciple. Also, the dating of the Fourth Gospel excludes Lazarus from being its author on the grounds that he would be over 110 years old, and most likely dead, by 95 AD when the Fourth Gospel was written, if he hadn’t been murdered by the Pharisees in 30 AD for having been resurrected from the dead by Yeshua.

Furthermore, the layout at the Passover Table reveals that John was *the Beloved Disciple* who laid upon Yeshua’s chest and asked Him who His betrayer was, because he was the youngest Apostle and subsequently, that it was John who wrote the Gospel that bears His name because *the disciple whom Yeshua loved* is the author of the Fourth Gospel (John 13:23; 21:20-24; cf. 21:7). Lazarus, even if he were at the Passover with Yeshua, would not have occupied the place to Yeshua’s right because Lazarus wouldn’t have been the youngest person at the Passover, as he seems to not have had any living parents at that time, which made him the head of his home, with his sisters, Martha and Mary, living with him. Lazarus was not a young man at the time of that Passover. He was most likely 50-60 years old.

Ancient Church History also confirms, through a number of Gentile Christian saints, that John was not only “the Beloved Disciple,” but that he was also the author of the Fourth Gospel. From,

1. Papias (60-130 AD) who inquired from those who heard the Apostle John speak as a presbyter or elder (Apostle), which John uses for himself in 2nd and 3rd John,
2. to Polycarp (69-156 AD) who knew John and spoke of the Gospel as John’s,
3. to Theophilus, Patriarch of Antioch (169-182) who said that John wrote the Gospel, saying that John was the one who gave a personal message on John 1:1-3,
4. to Polycrates (130-196 AD) who said that John *leaned on the chest of Yeshua* at the Passover (John 13:23, 25) and that he, Polycrates, had learned to keep the Passover from Christians who had fol-

lowed John (like his seven relatives who were bishops before him) and finally,

5. to Irenaeus (130-203 AD) who also spoke of John *leaning on the chest of Yeshua* at the Passover of John 13.

These godly Christian men confirm that the Gospel of John was written by the Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, and that John is the one that Scripture speaks of, *who leaned on Yeshua's chest*, not Lazarus. This also means that John was the one whom Peter asked the Lord about concerning when or how John was going to die (John 21:20f.). Now we can understand why the scholar Gleason Archer wrote that the various theories that try and debunk John 13 as a Passover, and on the right biblical night, “are quite improbable.”¹⁰⁵

Turning to Yeshua's sacrificial death on 15 Aviv, as wonderful of a theological gem it would have been for Yeshua to die on 14 Aviv when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple, it's not scriptural. Even though Yeshua is the (Passover) Lamb of God,¹⁰⁶ and so it's not unreasonable to think that he would have died on 14 Aviv, especially with John 13 seeming to make a way for it, God had a stronger theological reason for His Son's death on 15 Aviv. God made this day the first annual Sabbath; not 14 Aviv when the Passover lambs were slain, for His reason.

It was on 15 Aviv, not 14 Aviv, when the lambs were sacrificed, that the First Passover was eaten in Egypt.

1. 15 Aviv is the day, or rather the night, when the Passover lamb was eaten in Egypt and,
2. 15 Aviv, at midnight, is when Egypt's *firstborn* sons were slain by God (Ex. 12:17, 41-42, 51; Num. 33:3).
3. 15 Aviv is the day when Israel was *set free from slavery* to Pharaoh in the early morning hours.
4. 15 Aviv is also the night when “the Second Passover” (as I call it) was eaten in Jerusalem with Yeshua, *God's FirstBorn Son* and,
5. 15 Aviv is the day Yeshua was crucified and *died in our place*, in the middle of the day, when darkness came upon the land, which mimicked when Egypt's firstborn sons were slain at midnight and,
6. 15 Aviv is the day when the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16), Jew and Gentile who love Yeshua, were set free from slavery to sin, sickness, death and Satan because of the sacrifice of God's Passover Lamb.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, n.p.

¹⁰⁶ John 1:29, 36; 1st Peter 1:19; Rev. 5:6, 8, 12-13; 7:9-10, 14, 17, etc.

¹⁰⁷ John 19:14 seems to place the crucifixion at the time when the lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple: “Now it was the day of preparation (*paraskeue*) for the Passover (*tou pascha*); it was about the sixth hour” (NASB). The NIV translates it as, “It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour.”

Gleason Archer (*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, n.p.), states that, “the word *paraskeue* had already by the first century AD become a technical term for “Friday,” since every Friday was the day of preparation for Saturday, that is, the Sabbath. In modern Greek the word for “Friday” is *paraskeue*...the Greek term *tou pascha* (lit., “of the Passover”) is taken to be equivalent to the Passover Week” referring to the seven day Passover—Feast of Unleavened Bread. “It was unnecessary to insert a specific term for “week”...for it to be understood as such. Therefore, that which might be translated literally as, “the preparation of the Passover,” must in this context be rendered, “Friday of Passover Week.””

This means that John is actually saying it was Thursday night that Yeshua was dead, having eaten the Passover meal the evening before, for Thursday night begins “the day of preparation,” and so it was Wednesday night that the Passover was eaten that year, and on Thursday morning Yeshua was crucified, and there was darkness over the land from noon to 3:00 PM (Mt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 23:44). A few hours later, the 9th hour or 3:00 PM (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:33-34; Lk. 23:44), Yeshua was taken down from the tree (1st Peter 2:24) on Thursday afternoon. Preparation Day for the Sabbath would begin at darkness, Thursday night.

John 19:31 states: “Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross

15 Aviv is the night when the Passover lamb is eaten, and not the day before when it's slain on 14 Aviv, and 15 Aviv is the day when God the Son was sacrificed for Israel. This is why God chose 15 Aviv to be the first annual Sabbath for the Passover meal and why it coincides with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Yeshua's sacrifice, as the Lamb of God, sets us free from the Kingdom of Darkness. This is the greatest event in the History of the Universe, eclipsing Creation itself.¹⁰⁸

on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." Preparation Day begins on Thursday evening, but the bodies were crucified on the first day of Unleavened Bread, an annual Sabbath or the high Sabbath of John, on Thursday, and so it seems that the 7th day Sabbath was deemed greater than the annual, high Sabbath, for they were crucified on the high Sabbath, but taken down on the same day so that they wouldn't still be on the crosses for the weekly Sabbath.

John 19:42 has: "So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby." Again, it's Thursday evening, which begins Preparation Day.

¹⁰⁸ This article was last revised on Friday, June 7, 2024.