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## **Which Night Was the Old Testament Passover, According to Deut. 16:6?**

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Which night was the first Old Testament Passover? Was it on Nisan 14<sup>th</sup>, the night Jesus took it with His disciples before He died? Or did the Eternal “pass over” and not kill the firstborn of Israel on Nisan 15<sup>th</sup>? Mainstream Judaism says the original Passover was on Nisan 15<sup>th</sup>, but generally the Church of God has taught that it was on Nisan 14<sup>th</sup>. Now, the main text used to argue for a Nisan 15<sup>th</sup> Passover is Deut. 16:6.

S.P.S. So today, I will show why Deut. 16:6 doesn't prove the Old Testament Passover was on Nisan 15<sup>th</sup>.

The COG has had a long-time, simmering controversy over which night the firstborn

were slain during the Exodus. Our parent organization even formally changed its teaching on this subject while I was attending years ago. This is not a dead issue. Some who argue that the original Passover was on Nisan (or Abib) 15<sup>th</sup> say we should take the bread and the wine commemorating Christ's death on the same night the Jews do. Of course, some teach that first Old Testament Passover was on the 15<sup>th</sup>, but still take the "Lord's Supper" on Nisan 14<sup>th</sup>, since that's when Christ took it with His disciples.

Before turning to the problematic text, let's turn first to one that helps to explain it generally. (Let's do it this way because of time constraints).

Ezekiel 45:21

Notice how Ezekiel uses the term "Passover" to include the Days of Unleavened Bread. This general use of the term "Passover" is crucial to understanding

Deut. 16. This text focuses on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which is Nisan 15<sup>th</sup>.

Deut. 16:1-8

Now, does this describe the Passover, Nisan 14<sup>th</sup>? Or does it describe the First day of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15<sup>th</sup>?

Notice some crucial points:

Verse 1+: Did you see the words 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> here? No specific dates are given! It never says anything specific about the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> here! Obviously not decisive then. General principle of Bible study: Base doctrine upon the clear texts, not on the less clear ones.

Verse 2: Here the sacrifice has to be from the “herd” also. The Hebrew word here is “baqar,” which refers to cattle, oxen, cows, but not goats and lambs. But for the original night of the Passover, the children of Israel had to sacrifice goats and sheep, not cows.

Verse 3: Commemorates day left Egypt, Nisan 15<sup>th</sup>, not night that firstborn were slain [Ex. 12:21-24—only turn to if have time]

Verses 5-6: The Passover sacrifice was not done centrally, at the tabernacle or temple, by the priests. But it was decentralized, and domestically each household, or small group of households, took a goat or sheep for itself.

“Going down of the sun”—starts at noon?!? Therefore, is “Passover” in afternoon? Still a bad argument typologically, since Christ died during the day on the 14<sup>th</sup>, not 15<sup>th</sup>. If Christ died on the 14<sup>th</sup>, shouldn’t that be when we commemorate His sacrifice as an annual memorial?

This crudely literal interpretation abuses the Hebrew language. NASB, “in the evening at sunset, at the time that you came out of Egypt.” Let one Hebrew word explain the other. “Twilight” is not one minute after 12

noon! During the Exodus, Israel left Egypt at night, not in the afternoon during daytime.

“Ereb” used in verses 4 and 6, “twilight” (NKJV), “evening” (NASB).

Other Hebrew words here translated “sunset” (NASB), “going down” of sun (NKJV). Gesenius, p. 106, “*to enter* (into a chamber . . .), spoken of the sun, i. q. *to set.*” Obviously not 3 PM in the afternoon!

Verse 8 (cf. verse 4): Why only seven days, not eight in total? This verse counts down from the First Day of Unleavened Bread, not the Passover itself. It’s still permissible to eat leavened products on Nisan 14<sup>th</sup>.

Numbers 28:16-25

This is the text to compare Deut. 16 with primarily. Here we get the specific dates. It describes what sacrifices the priests did during the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. Includes (verse 19) bulls.

General error of theology: Assuming Jewish tradition is any more right than Catholic tradition. Just because they can read Hebrew, doesn't mean the Jews are going to be right when interpreting the Old Testament. Wrong about date of Pentecost, God's being one Person only, and who the Messiah was. Don't have the Holy Spirit any more than the Catholics.

**So In Conclusion,** Deut. 16:6 doesn't prove we in the Church of God should take the Passover symbols on the same night that the Jews take them. Deut. 16:6 is actually about the first Day of Unleavened Bread, as a comparison with other texts shows. So when we get together to take the Passover on Sunday night, March 28, we shouldn't think that we're commemorating Christ's death on the wrong day.

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