

## The Chronology of the Last Supper

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One can construe the chronology of the Johannine passion narrative in such a way as to place the Last Supper on the evening of Nisan 14 and the crucifixion later on the afternoon of Nisan 14. (The day was reckoned from sunset to sunset.) This construal of the data contradicts the synoptic dating of the same events: in the synoptics, Jesus' Last Supper is a Passover meal and he is crucified on the afternoon of Nisan 15, the first day of the Passover festival. The consensus seems to be forming that it is a lost labor of love to attempt to harmonize these accounts.<sup>1</sup> But it would seem, in fact, that the older attempt to harmonize the accounts by the assimilation of the Johannine chronology to the synoptic, which few, it seems, take seriously any longer, has much to commend itself. According to this reading of the data, the Johannine Last Supper is a Passover meal, in spite of the fact that 18:28 and 19:31 can be interpreted in such a way as to suggest that Jesus died before the Passover meal was eaten. It is the aim of this essay to demonstrate anew the probability that, owing to an unfamiliarity with the use of festival terminology in first-century Palestine relating to the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, these two

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verses are misunderstood by modern interpreters as evidence that Jesus' Last Supper was not a Passover meal.

### I. Previous Attempts to Harmonize John and the Synoptics

The work of Annie Jaubert forms somewhat of a watershed in research into the chronology of the Passion week. Jaubert argued that Jesus kept the Essene calendar, and, as a result, celebrated the Passover before the priests and most other Jews.<sup>2</sup> This meant that Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> The following is a partial list of scholars who have concluded that there is no satisfactory way of harmonizing the Johannine chronology with that of the synoptics: G. Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua* (London: SPCK, 1929); S. Zeitlin, "The Last Supper as an Ordinary Meal in the Fourth Gospel," *JQR* 42 (1951/52) 251-60; id., "The Time of the Passover Meal," *ibid.*, 45-50, which is a response to P. J. Heawood, "The Time of the Last Supper," *ibid.*, 37-44; G. Ogg, "The Chronology of the Last Supper," in *Theological Collections VI: Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1965) 75-96; R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; Freiburg: Herder, 1977) 2.323-28; I. H. Marshall, *Lord's Supper and Last Supper* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980) 57-75; R. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (2 vols.; AB 29-29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970) 2.555-58; C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); R. Schnackenburg, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (3 vols.; London: Burn and Oates, 1982) 3.33-47; L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) 774-85; E. Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 2.178.

J. Jeremias was sympathetic to the attempt to harmonize John's account of the Last Supper with that of the synoptics, but in the end was not totally convinced that this was possible (*The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* [3d ed.; London: SCM, 1966] 41-84). There are also those who favor John's chronology, which means, in their view, that the Last Supper was not a Passover meal: cf. V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1966) 664-67; F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972) 191f.; T. Preiss, "Le dernier repas de Jésus fut-il un repas pascal?" *TZ* 4 (1948) 81-101; cf. N. Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951) 650 for a more complete list

<sup>2</sup> Annie Jaubert, *The Date of the Last Supper* (New York: Alba House, 1965).

could have eaten the Passover meal with his disciples and still have been arrested before his opponents had eaten the Passover (cf. John 18:28). Eugen Ruckstuhl continued the line of thought begun by Jaubert: he likewise was convinced that the evidence supported a period of three days for Jesus' arrest, trial, and execution, thereby putting Jesus' Last Supper much earlier in the Passion week.<sup>3</sup> It is, however, very doubtful that Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover according to the Essene calendar.<sup>4</sup>

Since the appearance of Jaubert's work, H. W. Hoehner has argued that the discrepancy between John and the synoptics is a result of different reckonings of the beginning of the day.<sup>5</sup> The Pharisees and the Galileans began the day at sunrise, so on Nisan 14 in the afternoon they slaughtered the Passover lambs and held Passover that night, on Nisan 15. Being a Galilean, Jesus celebrated Passover at this time. The Judeans and the Sadducees used a sunset to sunset reckoning. They also slaughtered the Passover on Nisan 14 but according to their reckoning, which put the slaughtering and the eating a day ahead of the Galilean and Pharisaic practice. By his own admission, Hoehner recognized that his hypothesis lacked hard evidence. In addition, the objection made against Jaubert's theory applies to Hoehner's also, namely, that the Sadducean temple authority would not likely have allowed Passover to be held at two different times.

Prior to Jaubert's work, many attempts were made to harmonize the Johannine Passion chronology with that of the synoptics—some more noteworthy than others—by arguing that the Passover for one reason or another was celebrated on two consecutive days by different groups of celebrants. A two-day Passover would allow the possibility that Jesus and his disciples finished eating the Passover before other Jews had even begun. D. Chwolson argued that in the year of Jesus' death the Passover lambs were slaughtered

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on Nisan 13 and 14, so that the celebrants ate the Passover on the evenings of Nisan 14 or 15.<sup>6</sup> This resulted from the fact that Nisan 15 fell on a Sabbath: two days were needed in order to complete the sacrificing of the lambs so as to avoid doing any of the slaughtering on the Sabbath. This theory fails to recognize that *m Pesah*. deals with the case of Nisan 15 falling on a Sabbath, but nowhere recommends as a course of action the slaughtering of the lambs earlier than Nisan 14. A similar theory was proposed by J. Pickl.<sup>7</sup> In his view, Galileans sacrificed their lambs on Nisan 13 while the Judeans did so on Nisan 14. This practice extended the Passover festival over two days. Again evidence for this view is conspicuously lacking. P. Billerbeck argued that the Passover in the year of Jesus' death was held on two days as a result of a controversy between the Pharisees and the Sadducees over when to offer the omer.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence of this dispute, the Pharisees calculated Nisan 15 to fall on the Friday, whereas the Sadducees dissented, preferring to see it as falling on the Saturday. As a compromise, the Sadducees let the Passover be celebrated on both days. The weakness of Billerbeck's hypothesis is that it is entirely conjectural.

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<sup>3</sup> E. Ruckstuhl, *Die Chronologie des letzten Mahles und des Leidens Jesu* (BibB N.F. 4; Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. Blinzler, "Qumran-Kalendar und Passionschronologie," *ZNW* 49 (1958) 238-51, and Ogg, "The Chronology of the Last Supper."

<sup>5</sup> H. W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) chap. 5.

<sup>6</sup> D. Chwolson, *Das letzte Passamahl Christi und der Tag seines Todes* (Leipzig: H. Haessel, 1908).

<sup>7</sup> J. Pickl *The Messiah* (St. Louis: Herder, 1946) 120-22.

<sup>8</sup> Str-B 2.812-53.

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In each of the positions discussed above, evidence is lacking in a measure sufficient to disqualify each as a viable means of harmonizing the Johannine chronology with that of the synoptics. It remains for us to explore the possibility that the John 18:28 and 19:31 are wrongly taken as evidence that there is a chronological discrepancy between John and the synoptics. It remains, in other words, to consider the possibility that there is no chronological difficulty at all.

## II. Indications That the Last Supper in John is a Passover Meal

It is advisable to note that John shows signs that he is following the synoptic chronology. The meal described by John as Jesus' Last Supper is unusual in many respects, if it is to be understood as an ordinary fellowship meal.<sup>9</sup> The meal was held in Jerusalem, when Jesus' residence for the festival was Bethany (John 12:1). But why would Jesus and his disciples eat this meal in Jerusalem, unless it was required of them, as it was for the Passover meal? In addition, Jesus and his disciples did not return to Bethany that night, but went to the valley of Kidron (John 18:1). This is difficult to account for, unless one assumes that they were forbidden to go to Bethany because it was required that the night be spent within the ritual limits of Jerusalem, a stipulation for Passover night. The

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meal was held at night (John 13:30), which was an unusual time to be eating, unless it was so required.<sup>10</sup> Jesus and his disciples reclined at the table (John 13:23, 25), indicating that the meal was not an ordinary one. Rather, it was a festival meal, and, given the context, it could only have been a Passover meal.

The meal also seems to have been eaten in Levitical purity. Pilgrims to Jerusalem were required to cleanse themselves with the ashes of the red heifer over a period of seven days, the seventh day's cleansing being a full bath (Num 19:19).<sup>11</sup> Jesus' statement that a person who had bathed needed only to wash his feet may suggest that prior to the meal the disciples had ritually bathed (John 13:10). Finally, that the disciples are recorded to have thought that the reason Judas had left was in order to buy provisions for the feast or to give alms to the poor fits the context of a Passover meal (John 13:29). If the meal had been held on the evening of Nisan 14, there would have been no need to buy goods that night during the meal, since there was still the entire next day to do such things. But if the meal was a Passover meal, eaten on the evening of Nisan 15, then the urgency would be understandable, since the next day was a high feast day, the Sabbath of Passover week. (Purchases were lawful during Passover night.)<sup>12</sup> Likewise, it was customary for celebrants to give alms on Passover night.<sup>13</sup> The above data converge towards the conclusion that the Johannine depiction of the Last Supper should not be interpreted as a fellowship meal, but is consistent with its being a festival meal, and in particular a Passover.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. in particular Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 81-84.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 44f.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Victor Epstein, "The Historicity of the Gospel Account of the Cleansing of the Temple," *ZNW* 55 (1964) 47; Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 116.

<sup>12</sup> Heawood, "The Time of the Last Supper," 39f.; Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 53.

<sup>13</sup> Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 54; Str-B 2.842.

<sup>14</sup> The problem still remains, if John intended to relate Jesus' last Passover meal, why did he not say so? The traditional response has been that John wrote in the light of the synoptics, so he considered it unnecessary to mention that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, since the synoptic accounts had already made this clear. This is a possible explanation, but not fully provable. On the other hand, if one claims that John did not mention that

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The fact that the Last Supper in John appears to be a Passover meal should caution against premature conclusions concerning the incompatibility of the Johannine chronology with that of the synoptics.

### III. The Ambiguity of First-Century Festival Terminology

As we said, the two verses that stand as obstacles in the way of assimilating the Johannine chronology to that of the synoptics are John 18:28 and 19:14.<sup>15</sup> John 18:28

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reports that Jesus' accusers did not enter the praetorium, because they did not want to defile themselves, in order that they be able to eat the Passover. If to eat the Passover means to eat the Passover meal held on the evening of Nisan 15, then Jesus' Last Supper could not have been a Passover meal. Similarly, the day of Jesus' death is said in 19:14 to have been the preparation of the Passover. If this temporal designation denotes Nisan 14, again Jesus must have died before the Passover was eaten. For some, these two verses are the nails in the coffin of the hypothesis that the Johannine chronology can be assimilated to that of the synoptics. But an examination of the use of festival terminology relating to the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread in first-century Palestine found in texts temporally close to the Gospel of John is quite revealing. It opens up other possibilities of meaning for these two verses, possibilities not incompatible with Jesus' Last Supper in John's Gospel being a Passover meal.

In the OT, the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread are usually differentiated.<sup>16</sup> The Passover offerings were slaughtered on Nisan 14, and the Passover meal took place on the evening of Nisan 15, whereas the Festival of Unleavened Bread began on Nisan 15, and lasted until Nisan 21. The feasts were distinct, but obviously closely related (Exod 12; Lev 23:5f.; Num 28:16f.). This clarity of distinction, however, did not persist into the postbiblical period.

What does the term Passover and the related term the Festival of Unleavened Bread mean in the NT outside of the Gospel of John? Mark 14:1 reads ἡ δὲ τὸ πάσχα καὶ τὰ ἄζυμα μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας. Here Passover appears to be differentiated from the Festival of Unleavened Bread, if we take τα ἄζυμα to be an abbreviation of ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν ἀζύμων (Nisan 15–21). In this case, the clause would mean that in two days began the period consisting of Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Whether the term *to pascha* would include Nisan 14 or part thereof is uncertain.

The parallel passages in Matthew and Luke, however, differ from Mark's version. If we assume the Two-Source theory, Matthew (26:2) has changed his *Vorlage* to read, οἴδατε ὅτι μετὰ ἡμέρας τὸ πάσχα γίνεται. He omits the reference to the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Matthew could mean by τὸ πάσχα either the entire festival period or the meal eaten on the evening of Nisan 15. It is probable, however, that he means the entire festival period,

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the meal was a Passover because it was not, one is hard pressed to account for the peculiarities of the meal outlined above, which would certainly suggest to the informed reader that the meal was Jesus' last Passover.

<sup>15</sup> It has been argued often that John 13:1 and 19:36 are also indications that Jesus was crucified before the beginning of Passover. Neither of the arguments based on these passages is very convincing, as has been recognized by most scholars.

<sup>16</sup> In Ezekiel 45:21 ΠΟΠΠ is used to denote the seven-day festival formerly called the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

since otherwise he would be changing the sense of his Marcan source. Luke's Gospel (22:1), different from both Mark and Matthew, has ἡγγιζεν δὲ ἑορτὰ τῶν ἀζύμων ἢ λεγομένη πάσχα. Luke clearly identifies the Festival of Unleavened Bread with the Passover. The two are indistinct. We might also point out that a similar phrase is used in Luke 2:41. It is said there that every year Jesus'

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parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of Passover (τῇ ἑορτῇ τοῦ πάσχα). It is unlikely that they went simply for Nisan 14/15; rather, Luke means the entire festival period.<sup>17</sup>

We find a similar ambiguity in the terminology used in Mark 14:12 and its parallels in Matthew and Luke. Mark 14:12 reads, καὶ τῇ πρώτῃ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν ἀζύμων, ὅτε τὸ πάσχα ἔθουον. If the first day referred to in this phrase is the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, then Mark is saying that the first day of the festival was Nisan 14, since the Passover lambs were sacrificed on the afternoon of Nisan 14. In this case, according to the use of festival terminology in the OT, Mark has made an error.<sup>18</sup> But in the first century would it have been wrong to call the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread the day on which the Passover offerings were sacrificed? It may be that Mark 14:12 simply reflects an imprecision in first-century festival terminology. Other sources testify to the possibility of calling Nisan 14 the first day of the festival.<sup>19</sup> It is also possible that Mark's τα ἀζυρᾶ is an abbreviation of the phrase αἱ ἡμέραι τῶν ἀζύμων (cf. Acts 12:3; 20:6), which presents no historical problem, for, since unleavened bread was not to be eaten after a certain hour on Nisan 14, it rightly became one of the days on which Jews were obliged to eat only unleavened bread.

Matthew (26:17) abbreviates Mark's version to τῇ δὲ πρώτῃ τῶν ἀζύμων. The meaning of the Matthean phrase, as with the Marcan, is either the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread or the first day of the days of unleavened bread. Luke's version in 22:7 reads, ἦλθεν δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα ἀζύμων, [ἐν] ἣ ἔδει θύεσθαι τὸ πάσχα. Luke seems to prefer to call Nisan 14, the day on which the Passover victims were slaughtered, the day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. In other words, according to Luke's terminology, the entire eight-day period of Nisan 14–21 constitutes the Festival of Unleavened Bread. In 22:1, we should recall, Luke calls the Festival of Unleavened Bread the Passover.

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The terminological imprecision of both Marcan phrases and their parallels in Matthew and Luke is evident. In particular, a clear distinction between Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread is not maintained. Also Nisan 14 is referred to as the first day of Unleavened Bread/days of unleavened bread (Mark; Matt) and simply as the day of the

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<sup>17</sup> The term πάσχα in the synoptics can also mean the Passover offering or the Passover meal. Mark 14:12 = Matt 26:17 = Luke 22:8; Mark 14:14 = Luke 22:11; and Luke 22:15 use the phrase φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα. In Mark 14:12 = Matt 26:19 = Luke 22:13 we find ἐτοιμάζειν τὸ πάσχα. Finally, in Matt 26:18, Jesus tells his disciples to say to a certain man in Jerusalem: πρὸς σ ποιῶ το πάσχα μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν μου.

<sup>18</sup> Dalman (*Jesus-Jeshua*, 105) held that the calling of Nisan 14 the first day of Unleavened Bread was the result of Gentile ignorance of the Jewish festival calendar. Ludger Schenke drew the conclusion that this error was one of the tell-tale signs that the redactor of Mark was responsible for the Passion chronology; the redactor thereby proved that he could not be trusted with Jewish chronology (*Studien zur Passionsgeschichte des Markus* [Würzburg: Echter, 1971] 152-60).

<sup>19</sup> There is limited evidence in rabbinic sources that Nisan 14 was considered the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (cf. Str-B 2.813-15; Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 17 n. 4). Josephus (*J.W.* 5.3.1 §98) also refers to the day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread as beginning on the fourteenth of the month: καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀζύμων ἐνστάσης ἡμέρας τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτῃ Ξανικοῦ μηνός.

Festival of Unleavened Bread (Luke). In Acts 12:3 and 20:6 the festival period is referred to as the days of Unleavened Bread, which likely includes Nisan 14.

The imprecision of terminology relating to Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread is equally as evident in sources outside of the NT and roughly contemporary with it. Josephus consistently blurred the distinction between the two. In one place he referred to the whole, eight-day festival period—from Nisan 14 to Nisan 21—as the Festival of Unleavened Bread (ἑορτὴν ... τῶν ἄζύμων, *Ant.* 2.15.1. §317). Jeremias held that what Josephus meant by the eight-day festival was the period of Nisan 15–22, the twenty-second being included in deference to the diasporan practice.<sup>20</sup> This is unlikely, however, since Josephus was not a diasporan Jew, and would have been more inclined to give the Palestinian practice. Rather he, in accordance with his usual practice, is compressing the two festivals into one, including both feasts under the same name. In addition, if Josephus did make a point of deferring to the diasporan practice, one would expect consistency, which we do not find, for in another place he described the feast as lasting seven days (*Ant.* 3.10.5. §249). The hypothesis that he was inconsistent in his use of terminology, as his contemporaries were, makes better sense of the data.

Further evidence for Josephus' inclusion of Nisan 14 as part of the Festival of Unleavened Bread can be found in *The Jewish War*. In *J.W.* 5.3.1 §98, he calls Nisan 14 the day of unleavened bread, suggesting that the day of preparation had been assimilated to the subsequent seven-day festival (cf. Luke 22:7). Similarly, in *J.W.* 2.12.1 §224; 2.12.7 §244; 2.14.3 §280, he refers to the festival period as the Festival of Unleavened Bread. It is likely that he meant by this the entire feast period of Nisan 14–21, rather than the period of Nisan 15–21.

Elsewhere Josephus uses the terms the Festival of Unleavened Bread and Passover as synonyms or refers to the festival period as the Passover (*Ant.* 14.2.1 §21; 17.9.3 §213; 18.2.2 §29; 18.4.3 §90; 20.5.3 §106; *J.W.* 2.1.3 §10). When he is commenting on the biblical text, however, he maintains the distinction between Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, as in *Ant.* 3.10.5 §§248–51. In that same passage, he calls Nisan 16 the second day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

It is clear that for Josephus the terms used to designate the two festival periods had become imprecise to the point of being interchangeable. That Josephus could refer to this eight-day period in one place as the Festival of Unleavened Bread and in other places

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use Passover as a synonym for the Festival of Unleavened Bread or simply refer to the entire period as the Passover confirms what we have seen from our examination of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts. It seems that, in common use, a distinction was no longer made between Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread and that Nisan 14 had become assimilated to the festival period.

We find a different set of terms relating to the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread in place in the Mishna and Tosepta. פסח in the Mishna and Tosepta can mean the Passover offering.<sup>21</sup> It can also mean the entire festival period. In many passages it is impossible to know whether Nisan 14 is included as one of the days of Passover, but in other passages it is

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<sup>20</sup> Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 17 n. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Outside the tractate *m. Pesah*, פסח means the Passover offering in *m. Sabb.* 23:1; *m. 'Arak.* 2:3 par *t. 'Arak.*; *m. Ker.* 3:8. Within the tractate *m. Pesah* the references to פסח as the Passover offering sacrificed on Nisan 14 are too numerous to list.

clear that Passover only begins on the fifteenth.<sup>22</sup> Nisan 14 in the Mishna and Tosepta is referred to as "the eve of Passover" (ערב פסח).<sup>23</sup> Correspondingly, the "first holy day of Passover" (יום טוב הראשון של פסח) is Nisan 15 (cf. *m. Ta'an.* 1:2; *m. Hag.* 1:3), and the second day of Passover is Nisan 16, the day on which the omer is offered (cf. *m. Menah.* 10:1, 3). The period of time during which the meal itself was eaten on the evening of Nisan 15, however, what the OT usually calls the Passover, seems to be called in the Mishna one of the "nights of Passover" (לילי פסחים).<sup>24</sup> There are also passages referring to the Passover as a period of time that can only denote the evening on which the Passover meal was eaten. When *m. Pesah.* 2:6, for example, refers to the eating of bitter herbs on Passover, since bitter herbs were not required eating at any time but on the evening of Nisan 15, Passover in this context must mean that period of time.<sup>25</sup>

In *m. Pesah.* 9:5 we find פסח used to denote the festival offerings sacrificed by the Passover pilgrims on any day of the festival. In this mishna, it is asked what the difference is between the Passover (i.e., Passover offering) in Egypt (פסח מצרים) and the Passover of subsequent generations (פסח דורות). The Passover in Egypt had to be acquired on the tenth of the month and its blood was required to be sprinkled on the lintels and the door

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posts. In addition, it had to be eaten in haste during one night (בלילה אחת). In contrast, it was customary to eat the Passover of subsequent generations during the entire seven-day festival period. There is no doubt that this mishna allows for the eating of the פסח over the seven-day period. In other words, the term פסח in *m. Pesah.* 9:4 means not only the Passover offering/meal slaughtered and eaten on Nisan 14/15 but any of the fellowship offerings eaten during the entire feast.<sup>26</sup> One must conclude that this was one of the semantic possibilities of the term פסח at the time of the composition of the Mishna and before.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Outside the tractate *m. Pesah*, פסח means the festival period in *m. Seb.* 2:1; *m. Ma'as.* . 5:6; *m. Hal.* 1:1, 8; *m. Sabb.* 23:1; *m. Seqal.* 3:1, par *t. Seqal.* 2:1; *t. Beša* 2:15; *m. Roš. Haš.* 1:2, 3 par *t. Roš. Haš.* 1:12, 13; *m. Ta'an.* 1:2; *m. Meg.* 3:5 par *t. Meg.* 3:5; *m. Hag.* 1:3 par *t. Hag* 1:4; *m. Ned.* 7:8, 9; 8:2, cf. *t. Ned.* 4:7; *m. B. Qam.* 9:2 par *t. B. Qam.* 10:3; *m. B. Meš.* 8:6, cf. *t. B. Meš.* 8:27; *m. Mak.* 3:2; *m. 'Ed.* 2:10; 7:6; *m. Menah.* 10:23; *m. Bek.* 9:5; *m. 'Arak.* 2:3; *m. Tem.* 3:1; 7:5; *m. Ker.* 1:1; 3:8; *m. Mid.* 3:4. Within the tractate *Pesahim*, פסח means the festival period in a few instances, such as *m. Pesah* 2:35, 7; 3:1; cf. *t. Pesah* 2:1, 3-10, 15.

<sup>23</sup> Outside of the tractate *m. Pesah*, cf. *m. Ma'as.* *S.* 5:6; *m. Sabb.* 23:1; *m. 'Ed.* 5:2; *m. Menah.* 10:1, 3, par *t. Menah.* 10:23. Within the tractate *m. Pesah*, cf. 4:1, 5, 6; 5:1; 8:8; 10:1; cf. *t. Pesah.* 3:18; 10:1.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *m. Beš* 2:7; *m. Pesah.* 4:4; *m. 'Ed.* 3:11.

<sup>25</sup> We should note that within the intertestamental period references in the extant literature to the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread are absent, with the exception of the *Jubilees*. There Passover means the meal held on the evening of Nisan 15.

<sup>26</sup> Often one finds the term חגיגה used in *m. Pesah.* and other tractates to mean the festival offering (cf. *m. Pesah.* 6:3, 4; 10:9; *m. Meg.* 1:3; *m. Ha.* 1:2, 8). But the festival offerings are also known simply as the sacrifices (הזבחים), distinguishing them from the Passover offerings (cf. *m. Pesah.* 10:6, 9). In *m. Ha.* the festival offerings are referred to by their biblical names: peace-offerings (שלמים) and free-will offerings (נדבה) (cf. *m. Hag.* 1:4, 5). Given the semantic fluidity of the terminology used to denote the festival offering, it should not be surprising if פסח in some contexts could also denote the festival offerings.

<sup>27</sup> This phenomenon has its antecedents in the OT. In 2 Chr 35:7, Josiah provides his people with thirty thousand sheep and goats, as well as three thousand head of cattle (בקר). The implication is that the cattle were also considered to be Passover offerings. The meaning of the term פסח in this context, therefore, could include the festival offerings, since it was not permissible to sacrifice cattle for the Passover offering slaughtered on Nisan 14. Cattle were permissible, however, for festival offerings (cf. *m. Tem.* 3:1).

In the tannaitic midrashim also, פסח can mean not only the Passover offering but the festival offering as well. In Deut 16:2, the Passover is to be sacrificed to the Lord in the place where it shall please him to make his name dwell. This sacrifice can be from the flock (תאצ) or the herd (בקר). The flock denotes either sheep or goats, both of which are permissible for the Passover sacrifice on Nisan 14. The herd denotes cattle, which are not permissible as the Passover offering on Nisan 14. The meaning of פסח in Deut 16:2, therefore, is ambiguous.

The rabbinic exegetes resolved the ambiguity by interpreting פסח in Deut 16:2 as denoting both the Passover offering and the festival offering (*Sipre* Deut 16:2 §129). The obligation of the Passover pilgrim was to sacrifice both the Passover offering from the flock and a festival offering from the herd during the festival period. Similarly, later in *Sipre* Deut 16:4 (§131), we find that the Deuteronomic stipulation that the meat of the Passover offering must not be left until morning is understood to mean the morning of the third day. How is this possible? The meat of the sacrifice offered on the first day of the feast can be, according to the context of Deut 16, nothing but the meat of the פסח. Now, if read in the light of Exod 12:10, פסח must be interpreted as the Passover offering sacrificed at sunset on Nisan 14 and consumed before daybreak on Nisan 15. But this is not how the term is interpreted in *Sipre* Deut. Again פסח is understood as including the festival offering, so that the morning referred to is the morning of the third day after the

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slaughter of the victim, in accordance with the stipulations set out in Lev 7:16 pertaining to the free-will offerings (cf. *Sipre* Lev 7:16). *Mek.* 12:5 (*Pisha* 4:10–56) also reflects the confusion that Deut 16:2 created for the rabbis in their attempts to establish the procedure for the Passover of subsequent generations. The problem, as we said, was that Deut 16:2 could be interpreted as allowing the offering sacrificed on Nisan 14 to be taken from the herd as well as from the flock. This interpretation, however, is rejected by all authorities cited. R. Akiba, for example, justified his conclusion by the application of the hermeneutical principle that when two passages seem to contradict each other, they are to stand as they are, until a third passage can be brought to bear on the point in question. In this case, Deut 16:2 seemed to allow the sacrifice of cattle for Passover, whereas Exod 12:5 stipulated that the offering be from the flock. The third and mediating verse was Exod 12:21, where Moses explicitly said that the Israelites were only to take a lamb for the Passover offering. Accordingly, the Passover offering taken from the herd must be the festival offering, not the Passover offering slaughtered on Nisan 14.<sup>28</sup> We might add that in *t. Pesah.* 5:2, 3 the same ruling is made with respect to the proper animals for the Passover and festival offerings as we find in *Sipre* Deut and the *Mekilta*, but without reference to its probable midrashic origin in Deut 16:2 (cf. *m. Pesah.* 6:4).<sup>29</sup>

Now the question that arises is whether the rabbinic effort at harmonizing Scripture by their decision to interpret פסח in some contexts as denoting the festival offerings actually reflects common usage. Or is this phenomenon simply the result of the demands for halakic consistency? No doubt the rabbis found the difficulty created by Deut 16:2 to be intolerable: the Torah had to be self-consistent. But given that פסח is used in *m. Pesah.* 9:4 to mean festival offering where there is no midrashic interest in consistency present suggests that this

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<sup>28</sup> Billerbeck also quoted other instances of the use of Passover to mean the festival offerings in post-tannaitic sources (*Str-B* 2. 838).

<sup>29</sup> Zeitlin was wrong, therefore, when he said that the festival offering (חגיגה) was never called the Passover (cf. "Last Supper," 256).

meaning was one of the semantic possibilities of the term in common usage. In fact, the solution to the midrashic problem caused by Deut 16:2 could have been suggested to rabbis by the actual use of פסח to mean festival offering. The two festivals—Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread—had been terminologically compressed into one by the first century, so that Passover had come to denote the entire festival period. As a corollary to this phenomenon, the sacrifices offered during the festival—the פסח and חלל—became known in common speech simply as the Passover offerings.

We have established that at some point in the history of the Jewish festivals of the post-biblical period the terminology relating to Passover and the subsequent Festival of

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Unleavened Bread changed. The OT usually differentiates the Passover from the Festival of Unleavened Bread. In the NT and Josephus' writings, we find that there has been a shift in terminology, resulting in an imprecision in meaning in the use of the terms Passover and Festival of Unleavened Bread. They tend to be used interchangeably. Furthermore, Nisan 14 in some contexts is included as part of the Festival of Unleavened Bread or the days of Unleavened Bread. In the Mishna and Tosepta, the term Festival of Unleavened Bread has been eliminated altogether. Passover refers to the entire festival period as well as to the offering sacrificed on Nisan 14. In addition, we saw that in *m. Pesah.* 9:5 פסח was used to mean the festival offerings of the seven-day feast: the פסח was said to be eaten for seven days. In the tannaitic midrashim we also saw that the Passover is said to denote in some contexts the festival offering.

## IV. The Two Problem Passages in the Gospel of John

### 1. John 18:28

We now turn to the first of the "problem passages" in the Gospel of John. In John 18:28, we read of Jesus' accusers: καὶ αὐτοὶ οὐκ εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον, ἵνα μὴ μιανθῶσιν ἀλλὰ φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα. The *crux interpretationis* is the clause ἵνα μὴ μιανθῶσιν ἀλλὰ φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα. Two questions need to be answered. First, why would Jesus' accusers be prevented from eating the Passover if they entered the praetorium? Second, what does "to eat the Passover" mean?

There seems to be only one possibility concerning why entering the praetorium would cause ritual defilement and, as a result, prevent Jesus' accusers from eating the Passover. The dwellings of Gentiles were considered ritually defiling, because it was assumed that a Jew contracted corpse uncleanness by entering therein, owing to the belief that Gentiles buried their miscarried children within their houses.<sup>30</sup> This type of ritual defilement would prevent a Jew from taking part in the sacrificing of the Passover lamb or the festival offering.<sup>31</sup> The Mishna stipulates that one affected by any ritual uncleanness, including, of course, corpse uncleanness, cannot participate in either the Passover meal (cf. *m. Pesah.* 7:7) or meals composed of festival offerings (cf. *m. Pesah.* 6:3).<sup>32</sup> (Cf.

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<sup>30</sup> *m. Ohol.* 8:7; *t. Ohol.* 8:11.

<sup>31</sup> The OT forbids one affected by corpse uncleanness from eating either the Passover (Num 9:6ff.) or the festival offering (Lev 9:20f.).

<sup>32</sup> There were some cases where those who became disqualified from eating the Passover were exempt from offering the second Passover, while nonetheless being unable to participate in the feast (*m. Pesah.* 8:2, 6; *t. Pesah.* 7:5f.). The general principle seems to be that if one has had the blood tossed on one's behalf and then

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parallel material in *t. Pesah*. 6:5; 8:1, 2.)<sup>33</sup>

We turn now to the second question, namely, what does "to eat the Passover" mean? The phrase "to eat the Passover" in the synoptics without a doubt means to eat the Passover lamb or meal.<sup>34</sup> But does "to eat the Passover" mean the same thing in John's Gospel? The phrase only appears this once in John, and every other use of the term to

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*pasc* denotes the festival period, similar to its use as a temporal designation in the Mishna and Tosepta.

Obviously, if the phrase *φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα* in John 18:28 means what the synoptics mean by it—the eating of the meal on the evening of Nisan 15—then Jesus' arrest, according to the Gospel of John, took place on the evening of Nisan 14 and his execution took place between the evenings, i.e., in the afternoon of Nisan 14. But given that the Johannine Last Supper appears to be a Passover meal and that the meaning of the term *πάσχα/ΠΟΞ* does not

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subsequently became disqualified from eating, one was exempt from offering the second Passover. On the other hand, according to the Mishna and Tosepta, the Passover offering could be eaten in a state of uncleanness under certain conditions. If the entire congregation or even the majority thereof became unclean, or if the Passover offering was made unclean by reason of the uncleanness of an officiating priest, then the group could eat the Passover in a state of uncleanness. *Sipre* Deut 16:5 (§132) and *t. Pesah*. 6:2 quote R. Eliezer ben Matithiah as ruling that the majority has to be more than a majority of one. With respect to the uncleanness contracted by members of the congregation, a condition for the possibility of eating in a state of uncleanness seems to have been that the Passover be slaughtered before the act of becoming unclean occurred (*m. Pesah*. 7:6; *t. Pesah*. 6:2). Also, if unknowingly the Passover was offered in uncleanness and subsequently this fact came to light, the meal could be eaten in uncleanness (*m. Pesah*. 7:4, *t. Pesah*. 6:1). Neither of these provisions would apply, however, in the case of Jesus' accusers in John 18:28, if we assume that the Passover referred to was the Passover of Nisan 14/15. Jesus' accusers would have become unclean prior to the slaughter of the lambs and would have known that they were unclean.

<sup>33</sup> Barrett (*John*, 532) and Robinson ("The Date and Significance of the Last Supper," 130) wrongly interpreted *m. Pesah*. 8:8 as saying that one defiled by corpse uncleanness could be purified without waiting the usual seven days and thereby be able to eat the Passover meal. The passage in question, unparalleled in the Tosepta, states that the mourner (*עֲרֵיב*), the one who learns of the death of a relative, or the one who has the bones of his parents gathered can eat the Passover after he has bathed in the evening. This mishna, however, contrary to the interpretation of Barrett and Robinson, does not concern the one who has contracted corpse uncleanness.

In each case the person is required to be in mourning and, therefore, not able to participate in any feast (Deut 26:14). The mourner is the one who is involved in the preparations for burial, but has not been made ritually unclean through contact with the dead. The one who hears of the death of a kinsman is not involved in the burial preparations, owing to the distance between him and the dead, yet is still in mourning. In both of these cases, the person is in the state of mourning until the burial, which usually took place the same day as the death. (After burial one became a *לֵבֵי*.) In the case of the one who has the bones of his parents gathered, but does not come into contact with them himself, he is required to perform a second mourning on that day. In all three cases, the mourning is to come to an end at the close of the day, and the question that the Mishna addresses is whether people in these three classes can participate in the Passover meal, even though they were in mourning during the previous day. It is important to stress that none had contacted corpse uncleanness. If they had become thus ritually defiled, they would have had to wait the prescribed seven days. According to the Mishna, therefore, people who fall in one of these three categories need only bathe in the evening to be able to participate in the Passover meal. The mourner cannot, however, eat the other sacrificial offerings, whereas people in the other two classes can.

<sup>34</sup> See above, n. 17.

necessarily mean the lamb/meal eaten on the evening of Nisan 15 in sources roughly contemporary with John's Gospel, this conclusion by no means follows.

The phrase φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα in John 18:28 may mean to eat the festival offering required to be sacrificed by the Passover pilgrims on Nisan 15, the first day of the feast (cf. *m. Hag.* 1:3).<sup>35</sup> When Jesus' accusers expressed hesitation about entering the praetorium for fear of not being able to eat the Passover, they could have been referring to this offering.<sup>36</sup> We have already seen that there is precedent in the sources for referring to all the offerings sacrificed during the entire feast as Passover offerings.<sup>37</sup> If this is the meaning of John 18:28, then Jesus was taken to the praetorium on the evening of Nisan 15, after the Passover meal was completed but before the sacrificing of the festival offerings later in that day.

## 2. John 19:14

The second verse in John's Gospel that stands as an obstacle to the easy assimilation of John's Passion chronology to that of the synoptics is John 19:14. When

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Pilate brought Jesus out and presented him before the mob, which then shouted for his execution, it was said to have been παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα, ὥρα ἧ ὡς ἕκτη. Should the term παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα be understood as a translation of the Hebrew פסח ערב, which we saw in the Mishna means Nisan 14?<sup>38</sup> Or could the term mean something other than Nisan 14? The most appropriate way of proceeding with this investigation is to begin with John's own use of par askeuē and then proceed to other sources.

In John παρασκευὴ occurs, apart from 19:14, in 19:31, 42. In both instances it means the day before the Sabbath, i.e., Friday. In John 19:31, because it was παρασκευὴ and the next day was a high Sabbath (a Sabbath during a festival period) the Jews could not leave Jesus' body on the cross. Similarly, in 19:42, since it was the παρασκευὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων, Jesus' body was buried in a nearby tomb. Clearly both uses of παρασκευὴ mean the day before the Sabbath.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Zeitlin claimed that the Jews could have eaten festival offerings, in particular the festival offerings sacrificed on Nisan 15 (*m. Hag.* 1:3), even if they had contracted uncleanness ("Last Supper," 256). What they could not do was participate in the sacrifice of the animal at the temple, because they could not enter the temple in a state of uncleanness. As Zeitlin wrote, "Moreover, a Jew could join friends in offering the chagiga by sharing the costs of the animal. Entrance into the Hall of Judgment would not prevent a Jew from eating the chagiga with his family." Zeitlin, however, is wrong in this. Lev 7:19-21 states explicitly that one cannot eat the thanksgiving offerings and the free-will offerings (i.e., the festival offerings) in a state of ceremonial impurity (cf. Str-B 2.839).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. C. C. Torrey, "The Date of the Crucifixion according to the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 50 (1931) 227-441; id., "In the Fourth Gospel the Last Supper Was the Passover Meal," *JQR* 42 (1951-52) 237-50; cf. also T. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* (3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909) 3.296-98.

<sup>37</sup> It has also been argued that φαγωσιν το πασχα could be a synonym for "to celebrate the festival." Support for this view is found in the fact that one finds a similar phrase in 2 Chr 30:22. In this passage it is said that the people ate the feast for seven days (וַיֵּאָכְלוּ אֶת-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ שִׁבְעַת הַיָּמִים). If one assumes that Passover is a general term for the entire festival period, the clause φαγωσιν το πασχα in John 18:28 could be seen as the functional equivalent of the clause in 2 Chronicles. Both, in other words, are idiomatic for to celebrate the festival.

<sup>38</sup> Billerbeck argued that the phrase must mean פסח ערב: So hat ein Jude unter פסח ערב nie etwas anders als den 14. Nisan verstanden (Str-B 2.834-37). Zeitlin made the same point in his articles.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium* 2.325.

In the synoptics the term also means Friday, the day before the Sabbath. Mark 15:42 is a case in point: in the sentence δαὶ ἤδη ὀψίας ηγενομένης, ἐπεὶ ἦν παρασκευή, ὃ ἐστὶν προσάββατον, παρασκευή is a synonym for the day before the Sabbath. Luke 23:54, similarly, says that the day of Jesus' death was on the day of preparation and that a Sabbath followed (καὶ ἡμέρα ἦν παρασκευῆς, καὶ σάββατον ἐπέφωσκεν). Clearly the day of preparation is the Friday, the day before the Sabbath.

Matthew 27:62, however, poses a difficulty with respect to the interpretation of the phrase μετὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν found therein. In this verse it is said that τῇ δ' ἐπαύριον, ἥτις ἐστὶν μετὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν, συνήχθησαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι πρὸς Πιλάτον. The difficulty is the awkwardness of describing the day on which the event occurred as the day "after the day of preparation." Why would not Matthew simply give the name of the day itself, the Sabbath, rather than rely on this circumlocution? Torrey argues that it was a mistranslation of the Aramaic by the Greek translators.<sup>40</sup> Whatever the explanation of this awkward phrase, it cannot be used to prove that παρασκευὴ does not mean Friday. If one interprets παρασκευὴ in Matthew as the eve of Passover, so that the phrase means the day after the day of preparation for Passover, i.e., Nisan 15, one could make the same objection that this is an unnecessary circumlocution, since one could designate that day as the first day of Passover or of the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

Greek sources outside of the NT also give evidence that the day before the Sabbath was referred to as παρασκευή. Josephus wrote ἐν σάββατον ἢ τῇ πρὸ αὐτῆς

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παρασκευῆ ἀπὸ ὥρας ἐνάτης (*Ant.* 116.6.1 §163). There is no doubt that παρασκευὴ means here the day before the Sabbath. It is true that Josephus also used the phrase πρὸ τοῦ σαββάτου to designate the day before the Sabbath (*Ant.* 3.10.7 §255), but he did not use it exclusively. Mark shows a similar tendency to use the terms παρασκευὴ and προσάββατον as synonyms, as we saw. The *Didache* (8:1) is explicit in naming Friday as παρασκευὴ, one of the days of the week upon which Christians were not to fast. Likewise, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (7:1) uses παρασκευὴ to denote Friday, the day before the Sabbath.

We conclude that the Greek term παρασκευὴ in John as well as other sources means the day before the Sabbath. Torrey argued that this linguistic use was the result the influence of the Aramaic term אַרְבַּע־עָרָב on the Greek language as used by Aramaic-speaking Jews and later by Aramaic-speaking Christians.<sup>41</sup> This explanation no doubt is correct, but all that needs to be established is that the term can mean Friday. In fact, we should note that in the other places of its occurrence in John's Gospel, apart from the verse under investigation, the term does mean Friday.

Returning now to the question of whether παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα should be interpreted as the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew פֶּסַח אַרְבַּע־עָרָב, it seems that it should not. Context should determine meaning. In the case of John 19:14, the immediate context of the phrase is the Gospel of John, and in the fourth Gospel παρασκευὴ means the day before the Sabbath. Ought not the exegete also to interpret παρασκευὴ in the phrase παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα as the day before the Sabbath of Passover, i.e., the Friday of Passover week? After all, to pas in John's Gospel, as in other sources, means the entire festival period, not the meal

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<sup>40</sup> Torrey, "In the Fourth Gospel," 240-42.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 239-40; *id.*, "The Date of the Crucifixion," 232-37.

eaten on the evening of Nisan 15.<sup>42</sup> Now it is true that it does not necessarily follow that the meaning of a linguistic unit is to be carried over into a larger linguistic unit of which it forms a part. It is not certain that παρασκευή must mean Friday in its occurrence in the phrase παρασκευή τοῦ πάσχα. But, in the absence of definitive proof, one is justified in regarding as unfounded the semantic equation of παρασκευή τοῦ πάσχα and the Hebrew phrase פסח ערב.<sup>43</sup> That with this interpretation the chronology of John's Gospel is brought into agreement with that of the synoptics is further evidence that this understanding of *par askeuh tou pasca* is correct.

One might argue that too much "explanation" is required in order to harmonize the Johannine Passion chronology with that of the synoptics. In other words, the evidence converges towards the conclusion that John and the synoptics are irreconcilable. Any attempt to bring the two in line with each other appears to be apologetically motivated.

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Nevertheless, it seems that John's Gospel is a victim of circumstance. We saw that there was evidence that the Last Supper in John's Gospel was not an ordinary meal, but was consistent with its being a Passover meal. And really there are only two verses that give reason to place Jesus' death on Nisan 14: John 18:28; 19:14. But these two verses, as we saw, are explainable in terms of the synoptic chronology, when one takes into consideration the fact that the festival terminology relating to Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread was very fluid at the time of the writing of John's Gospel, contrary to the expectations of modern exegetes. The expectancy of a precise festival terminology becomes an obstacle in the understanding of the intended meaning of the texts. We conclude that the hypothesis that the Johannine chronology can be assimilated to that of the synoptics is certainly respectable and ought not to be dismissed out of hand, as is the tendency today. The probability is that this is the best explanation of the data.

#### *Appendix: Josephus' Use of Paschal Terminology*

Zeitlin, in his rebuttal of Heawood's arguments (see above, n. 1), made the claim that only after the destruction of the temple did the term (feast of) Passover as a designation for the entire eight-day period come into existence. He further claimed that Josephus reflected this development in his writings. In the earlier work, *The Jewish War*, Josephus, according to Zeitlin, did not confuse the term Passover with that of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Zeitlin wrote, "In the *Jewish War* Josephus mentions the Festival of Unleavened Bread but specifies the Passover only in connection with the slaughtering of the Paschal lamb." For the earlier chapters of *Jewish Antiquities* Zeitlin made the same claim. Only in the later chapters of the *Jewish Antiquities* (chaps. 17–19) did Josephus begin to call the Festival of Unleavened Bread the Passover. In these passages, according to Zeitlin, he used the Greek equivalents of the term "the festival which is called the Passover," in order to introduce his readers to the new terminology. From these data Zeitlin concluded, "Any serious student of Josephus can see that by this he wanted to convey something new which was not known to his readers at large." Josephus' readers would not have known that the new term for the festival period, formerly called the Festival of Unleavened Bread, was now the Passover.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1. πάσχα in John 18:28 means, as we argued above, the festival offering.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Marshall, *Lord's Supper*, 70.

Zeitlin's ulterior aim was to prove that, since the Gospels related events that took place before the period of the terminological shift, the terms used must reflect the old usage. In particular, when the term Passover appears in John's Gospel, it must denote the Passover meal of Nisan 14/15. Now it is difficult to prove a hypothesis such as this one. But, in addition, Zeitlin does not realize that his argument is irrelevant to the matter of the interrelation of the Passion chronologies of John and the synoptics. There is no reason why the Gospels should not reflect the new terminology, assuming that Zeitlin's historical reconstruction is correct. In fact, one would expect the Gospel writers to use the revised terminology. Most scholars date John around AD 90, the same period in which Josephus wrote his *Jewish Antiquities*. Thus, the use of the term Passover in John ought to reflect the usage current at the time. Passover, in other words, ought to denote the entire eight-day period.

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But we have been assuming that Zeitlin's point that there was a terminological shift and that this is evidenced in Josephus' writings has been proven. This, however, is highly questionable. Zeitlin claimed that Josephus used the older terminology in his earlier writings. Supposedly, only in the later portions of the *Jewish Antiquities* did he begin to make use of the newly emerging terminology, and clearly showed that the terminology was new by using the phrase "the festival which is called Passover" to qualify the old term. Zeitlin's claim is simply false. In his earlier work, *The Jewish War* (2.1.3 §10), Josephus wrote, καὶ δὴ τῆς τῶν ἄζύμων ἐνστάσης ἑορτῆς, ἢ πάσχα παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις καλεῖται. Clearly, we have an early example of Josephus' calling the Festival of Unleavened Bread the Passover. Luke 22:1 uses similar terminology, as we have seen: ἤγγιζεν δὲ ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν ἄζύμων ἢ λεγομένη πάσχα. Both Josephus' and Luke's use of the phrase "called/named Passover" is explainable on the hypothesis that the two terms had come to denote the same thing and that they felt obliged to include both for the sake of completeness when writing about the festival period. Strangely enough, Zeitlin cited this passage in his footnotes, but did not notice that it undermined his own position.

In addition, we find in the later works of Josephus only one of four passages in which he took pains to use the phrase "the festival which is called Passover," as if he was explaining to those not yet familiar with the change in terminology what the Jews now called this festival period (*Ant.* 18.2.2 §32). In *Ant.* 17.9.3 §213; 18.4.3 §90; 20.5.3 §106, Josephus simply referred to the festival period as the Passover. He, in other words, did not write as someone mediating a shift in terminology to his readers. This would be unexpected, if Zeitlin's theory were correct. We conclude that Josephus demonstrates neither rhyme nor reason in his use of terminology relating to the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, except that, as mentioned previously, when he was commenting on OT texts, he distinguished between Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

Zeitlin's point has not been established. As both the NT and Josephus show, the terminology had become blurred by the first century. In particular, Passover could denote, in different contexts, the Passover sacrifice or meal, the period of Nisan 14/15, the festival offering, the period of Nisan 15–21, or even the period of Nisan 14–21. Whether Jesus and his disciples used this "new" terminology, as Zeitlin claims they did not, is irrelevant, since we are dealing with the Gospels and what their authors intended.

Barry D. Smith, "The Chronology of the Last Supper," *Westminster Theological Journal* 53:1 (1991): 29-45.

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