

How Often Should  
**THE LORD'S**  
**SUPPER**  
Be Taken?

*by* David C. Pack

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits The Restored Church of God from reproducing and distributing literature produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, we are committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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Millions of people regularly take the Lord's Supper! The great counterfeiter—who counterfeits all the Bible's truths—has confused them about *when* and *how often* one should observe this “supper.” What does the Bible teach about this misunderstood subject? What is the truth of this matter?

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Jesus Christ said, “Howbeit *in vain* do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the *tradition of men*...Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep *your own tradition*” (Mark 7:7-9).

That is a strong statement! But it describes the way many professing Christians approach their beliefs. Various traditions now exist regarding *when* and *how often* the Lord's Supper should be observed. Some churches take this “supper” once a month on Wednesday night, while others take it every Sunday. Still others take it twelve times a year on Sunday. Some believe it should be taken at night, while others prefer the morning (Sunday).

But, we need to ask, “What does *God* say?”—not “What do *men* say?” We must set aside all of the traditions of men and examine the Bible!

### **The Original Lord's Supper**

There was a specific *time* that Christ first introduced the symbols of the bread and the wine and *how often* they were to be taken. In doing this, He set an important example: “And when *the hour was come*, He [Christ] sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him...And He took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: *this do in remembrance of Me*. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:14, 19-20).

Jesus referenced a specific “hour was come” to partake of the bread and wine. The example He set involved a definite time, or hour, for this supper. The

phrase, “in remembrance of Me,” connotes, in this case, a MEMORIAL OF HIS DEATH. Also, He commanded the disciples by saying, “*this do.*” Matthew’s account of this same night states that this ordinance was instituted “as they were eating” (26:26). Compare Matthew 26:17 and Luke 22:15. These verses plainly show that *what* they were eating was the *Passover Supper!*

Christ understood that the time for His sacrifice was come and that He was our Passover—who was to be sacrificed for us (I Cor. 5:7). Matthew 26:2 refers to this event as the “*feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.*”

The disciples asked Christ, in Matthew 26:17, “Where will You that we prepare for You to eat *the passover?*” Mark 14:15 shows that it was to be held in a “large upper room furnished and prepared.” The disciples were to get ready for this important event.

It should now be clear that the Lord’s Supper was really the *Passover Supper!* Now read the rest of Matthew 26:26: “Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

To better understand what Christ was introducing, we need to briefly study the Passover of the Old Testament. This will directly *connect* the Old Testament Passover to the New Testament “Lord’s Supper.”

### **The Old Covenant Passover**

Most children learn in Sunday school the story of Israel’s exodus from Egypt. The famous movie *The Ten Commandments* tells the Hollywood version of Pharaoh’s resistance to Moses’ instruction from God and the resultant plagues that God poured out. The twelfth chapter of Exodus explains the key events of this original Passover.

God told the Israelites to take a young lamb, without spot or blemish, to represent a type of Christ—the Lamb of God. This was always to be done on the tenth day of the first month of the Hebrew sacred year. Unlike all humanly-devised calendars that begin the year in mid-winter, the sacred year began *in the spring*, around the equinox, with the new moon.

Four days later, on the 14th day of Abib (the first Hebrew month), the lamb was to be killed. Exodus 12:6 says that it was to be killed “in the evening,” but the original Hebrew means “between the two evenings.” Some Bible margins plainly state this. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* explains that this is the period commonly referred to as *twilight* or *dusk*. This period is described as the time *after* sundown but *before* full darkness has occurred. In other words, it was at the very *beginning* of the 14th that the lamb was killed—and soon thereafter, the blood of the lamb was sprinkled above the doorposts of the Israelites’ houses. At midnight, the death angel struck dead all the firstborn of Egypt. But God had told the Israelites, “when I see the blood, I will *pass over* you”—hence, the well-known term *Passover*.

Israel continued to observe the Passover season for hundreds of years!

From the 15th through the 21st of Abib—a period of seven days—Israel always kept the *Days of Unleavened Bread*. This meant that only unleavened bread could be eaten with meals for this one-week period following the Passover. The first and last of these days, the 15th and the 21st, were to be *annual Sabbaths*. Just as God has a *weekly Sabbath*, kept 52 times a year, He has seven *annual Sabbaths*. These two are kept in the early spring. Another is kept in the late spring, and four are kept in the fall. Leviticus 23 describes these seven Holy Days (annual Sabbaths) or feasts of God. These feasts are sometimes referred to as “high days” by the Jewish people. All of these terms are synonymous. This chapter is often called the “Holy Day chapter.” (To learn more about this topic, read our booklet *God's Holy Days or Pagan Holidays?*)

Deuteronomy 16:6 shows that the lamb was always slain as the sun was going down, yet it was always eaten *during* the 14th day, not afterward (Lev. 23:5-6). God does things exactly on time! The time is once a year, at night, in the beginning of the 14th of Abib—after the sun has set!

### **Passover Was to be Observed Forever**

There can be no doubt that God ordained the Passover as a permanent ordinance—*forever* (Ex. 12:17, 24)! Just as Romans 2:29 explains a change in circumcision—in the New Testament it was to be of the heart and not the flesh—Christ altered the way Passover was to be kept. Christ is the Lamb of God. He was slain for us, doing away with the need for a *literal* young lamb to any longer be sacrificed. As Christ explained, the bread and wine, symbolizing His broken body and shed blood, was to be an annual “look back” to His death—on our behalf!

Jesus kept the Passover once a year at an *established*—a *set*—time (Luke 2:42), and true Christians follow His example (I Peter 2:21). In fact, Christ Himself was following the example of Exodus 13:10, which explained that the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread were to be kept annually. It says there, “You shall therefore keep this ordinance *in his season from year to year*.” Do you see these two phrases? It does not say “week to week” or “month to month”—or “pick any season you wish.” All humanly-devised traditions of time violate this basic instruction!

For the Israelites to have kept this at any *other* time would have literally jeopardized their firstborn from protection from the death angel. There was no room for miscalculation on their part or they could not have expected to be “passed over”—protected!

### **A Lesson in Deep Humility**

The New Testament Passover, or “Lord's Supper” ceremony, also involved the practice of *footwashing*.

Many today are unwilling to lower themselves to do such a humbling thing as to wash the feet of their brethren. Few want to kneel down to wash one of the most unseemly parts of the body. However, consider the following account in John 13. After the supper (vs. 2), Christ washed the feet of all twelve of His disciples (vs. 4-5). Through His example, Christ gave a very specific instruction—a command—for His disciples to copy (vs. 12-15).

Notice: “So after He had *washed their feet*...He said unto them, Know you what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; *you also ought to wash one another's feet*. For I have given you AN EXAMPLE, that *you should do* as I have done to you.”

Those who will not accept the humbling ordinance of the footwashing as part of the Passover service have neglected to read Matthew 28:19-20. This great command is a statement about *all* of what Christ commanded the apostles: “Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them...*Teaching them* to observe *all things* whatsoever I have *commanded* you.” Christ commanded that the footwashing be included in the Passover service.

### **How Often did the New Testament Church Keep the Passover?**

Is there anywhere in the New Testament where clear instructions are given regarding how often the Passover ordinance should be observed? There is!

I Corinthians 5:7-8 sets the stage for later instructions from the apostle Paul that we will review momentarily. These verses state, “*Christ our passover* is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us *keep the feast*, not with old leaven...but with the *unleavened bread* of sincerity and truth.”

Here, in the *New Testament*, Paul plainly calls Christ the Passover and gives instructions to Christians to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread. In this same epistle, he gives further instructions about the Passover observance.

I Corinthians 11:23-28 is often misunderstood by people to be a license from Paul to observe the Passover *as often as one wishes to do it*. The phrase “as oft as you do it” is said by many to mean that Christians may take the bread and the wine as often as *they choose*! The proper explanation of these verses springs from verse 24. Notice that the Passover is a *memorial*, “a remembrance.” Memorials are observed on an *annual* basis. Verse 26 shows that this memorial refers to “the Lord’s death,” which occurred *on the Passover* (remember, Christ is our Passover [I Cor. 5:7]). In ancient Israel, the Passover was always kept *once a year*. Verse 28 shows that the Passover ceremony is preceded by *careful self-examination*—which could not logically be done every day or every week, even if a person did wish to do it this often.

Verse 29 warns of Christians taking the Passover “unworthily.” And it *can* be taken improperly—or *unworthily*. Self-examination was tied to this warning (vs. 28), just as was the issue of *when* it was taken (vs. 23). Christians must properly discern the symbols that represent Christ’s sacrifice.

It should be clear by now that the New Testament Lord's Supper is a direct continuation of the Old Testament Passover, except that different symbols, commemorating Jesus' death, have replaced the slaying and eating of a young spring lamb. As we have seen, Christ is slain for us in place of a literal lamb. This ordinance should still be observed on the 14th of Abib. NOWHERE DID GOD CHANGE THIS INSTRUCTION! Recall that Christ readied His disciples for the Passover—"when the hour was come." It was taken at the *right time* and on the *right day*. Certainly Christ never substituted this ceremony with the modern popular celebration of Easter. (Read our booklets *The True Origin of Easter* and *Christ's Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* to learn more.)

Coming out of Egypt was a type of coming out of *sin*. The Passover memorialized God's deliverance of Israel from sin. Christ's sacrifice, through the New Testament ordinance of the bread and wine, does exactly the same thing for Christians today. Christ was seized, falsely accused and imprisoned, examined, tortured, beaten and crucified—to pay for and cover our sins—*all in the following daylight portion* of the exact same day of the month Abib! Scholars do not dispute this time sequence. Hence, this all occurred on the 14th of the month of Abib.

Remember, Christians copy the example of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 2:21)—and Christ set the example of keeping the Passover. Christians are commanded to keep it *forever*—as were the Israelites when God first instituted it. To observe it daily, weekly or monthly is to trivialize this deeply important and solemn annual occasion. The Passover was always intended to be a yearly memorial. Christ, as our Passover, was crucified at the time of the Passover—which is observed once a year. Men are never permitted to arbitrarily place Christ back on the cross, even symbolically, as often as they choose! This does not "glorify Christ"—it disobeys Him and dishonors His sacrifice. (Notice Hebrews 6:6.) (To learn more about Christ, read our book *The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity*.)

### **The Book of Acts Sets the New Testament Pattern**

The book of Acts demonstrates which days the early Church observed. Notice Acts 20:6: "And we sailed away from Philippi after the *days of unleavened bread*." This was nearly thirty years after the death of Christ—and Luke is referencing the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Also, Acts 12:3 states, "Then were the *days of unleavened bread*." Some focus on verse 4, where a reference is found to *Easter*. The Bible does mention the word Easter here—*or does it?* This text bears careful examination. In verse 1, Herod had begun to persecute the Church. This ended with the brutal death by sword of the apostle James, which so pleased the Jews that Peter was also imprisoned. The plan was to later deliver him to the Jews also. The stage is now set to *properly* read verse 4. "And when he [Herod] had apprehended him [Peter], he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quarternions of soldiers

to keep him; intending after *Easter* to bring him forth to the people." Is this reference *New Testament proof* for the observance of Easter?

Emphatically, NO!

Although the New Testament is recorded in the Greek language, the word translated *Easter* is derived from the *Hebrew* word *pecach* (or *pesach*)! This word has only one possible meaning. It *always* means PASSOVER and can *never* mean EASTER! The Greek does not contain an equivalent word for Passover, so the equivalent word *pascha* was the only available word to reference the correct meaning—PASSOVER! As a side note, while researching my genealogy, I was surprised to learn that our family name is derived from this very word *pascha*—Passover.

Numerous other translations correctly render this verse using the word *Passover* instead of *Easter*. Consequently, the New Testament, when correctly translated, does not mention the celebration of Easter anywhere! *The True Origin of Easter* explains that this practice (Easter celebration) was directly *condemned* in the Old Testament.

### Misreading the Term "Break Bread"

Now return to Acts 20. This is a remarkable account. Paul was visiting the Troas congregation immediately after the Days of Unleavened Bread. He spent an entire Sabbath preaching to the brethren and continued well into Saturday night—or the first day of the week. Leviticus 23:32 shows that God counts days from sundown to sundown, or "even[ing] unto even[ing]." The first day of the week started at sundown on Saturday evening. Some claim that Acts 20:7 refers to keeping the Lord's Supper on Sunday morning because the term "break bread" was used. This is not true. Paul's long preaching had left people hungry. It was midnight. They wanted to eat. This is why verse 11 says those present "had broken bread *and eaten*." This was an ordinary meal, not the observing of the Lord's Supper. Other passages prove this.

Acts 2:46 speaks of the disciples who, "continuing *daily...breaking bread* from house to house, did *eat their meat* with gladness." The account shows that the brethren were doing this daily. Obviously, human beings *do* eat daily.

Further, Acts 27:34-35 explains, "Wherefore...take some meat...he took bread...and when he had broken it, he began to eat." Finally, even Christ said, in Matthew 26:29, that He would not take the "Lord's Supper" until after He had returned to earth in His kingdom. However, Luke 24:30, *at a later time*, shows Him to have sat "at meat," or eating a meal, with the disciples. He broke bread and blessed it on that occasion. There are cultures today, particularly some Europeans, who still use the term "break bread" to mean the actual breaking of a certain type of bread as they eat a meal. This should now be clear.

### A Time Set Apart

Herbert W. Armstrong concluded his booklet *How Often Should We Partake of the Lord's Supper?* with this statement:

“Let us return to the faith once delivered. Let us humbly and obediently observe this solemn, sacred ordinance as we are commanded, and at the time set apart in the Bible, after sundown on the 14th of Abib, or Nisan, sacred Hebrew calendar.

“The first day of the new year begins near the spring equinox when the new moon usually is first visible to the naked eye at Jerusalem (not the United States). The Jewish calendar as used by Jews today is correct. But it must be remembered that ‘in the 14th day of the first month at even is the passover, and in the 15th day of the same month is the *feast*.’ The Jewish people no longer observe the Passover on the 14th. They observe the FEAST—one night *after* the Passover, on the eve of 15th Abib. The ‘Lord’s supper’ or New Testament Passover should be observed after sunset on the evening *before* the Jewish people of today celebrate their feast.”

## **The following literature expands on topics discussed in this booklet:**

- The True Jesus Christ – Unknown to Christianity
- God's Holy Days or Pagan Holidays?
- The True Origin of Easter
- Christ's Resurrection Was Not on Sunday

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