

# Μετὰ Τὸ Πάσχα

## After The Passover

### A Concise Study Of Πάσχα (Pascha) In Acts 12:4

by

**James L. Reynolds**

### Foreword

Having been asked to write an appropriate foreword for this study, it was my awesome duty to do so, while at the same time a rare privilege that has been afforded me.

Acknowledging that my duty is not to critique the study, nor to affirm or to refute the clear conclusions that have been laid before us, I now submit to my assignment. I now seek to speak to all in such provocative language as to see the fruit produced when an open and honest examination of the subject and the scriptural exactness of the thesis in question is properly applied.

**Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15).**

Whether or not we apply ourselves to this admonition, yet the admonition remains a clear command of our dear Lord as taught by His Holy Spirit. How is it with each of us? How do we measure up, or fail to measure up to what the Lord has commanded us?

Are we truly provoked to good works and to righteousness? Do our works reflect the teaching of the Scriptures? Do we actually do as the Scriptures teach, and do we actually believe what God has said? Do we go beyond, or outside the teaching of Scriptures? Do we? Do we permit the vain imaginations of our own or of other's hearts to cloud our positions on this or any other issue? Do we?

I pray that I, and that each of you, can honestly proclaim that God has spoken and the issue is forever settled.

Wm. Doyal Thomas  
Hartselle, Alabama

## Preface

**And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people (Acts 12:4 - 1769 KJV).**

Some thirty years ago in a conversation with another Christian brother, the subject somehow came up of the use of the word *Easter* in Acts 12:4. When I made the statement that I felt it was an improper translation, he became quite agitated with me. A few days later, this brother brought me a cassette tape by Peter Ruckman. This dear saint was a member of a very large Baptist Temple church located in Mansfield, Ohio. These Baptist Temple churches were quite abundant in northeast Ohio at that time. These churches were hard-core Arminian and also opposed to the doctrines of the church and its ordinances as Sovereign Grace Baptists hold them. Consequently, I paid little attention to his claim for the propriety of *Easter* in Acts 12:4 or to the disjointed ramblings of Peter Ruckman on the cassette tape. Especially was this novel idea one that held no sway with me, as I had never heard any Sovereign Grace Baptists make such a claim, nor had I ever read of any Sovereign Grace Baptists taking such a position. It was another twenty-seven or so years until I actually read where a Sovereign Grace Baptist made the claim that the use of the word *Easter* in Acts 12:4 in the King James Version of the Bible is a proper and correct translation. To say that I was amazed is somewhat of an understatement. I was totally unaware that any Sovereign Grace Landmark Baptists held to such a position.

For the purpose of clarity we will henceforth refer to these brethren's position as the *Easter is correct position*.

The reason that these folks claim that *Easter* is a proper and correct translation is certainly transparent, and this study is not meant to deal with their position on that subject as a whole.

My purpose for gathering the following reference resources together is twofold. Firstly, it is a review for myself of what I have been taught and what I have believed for thirty plus years. To paraphrase Peter (**II Peter 1:13**), I desired to put myself in remembrance of those things I had been instructed in. Then secondly, I also wanted to make a collation of resources available so that it may be seen by any unbiased reader that the *Easter is correct position* is an untenable one!

I hasten to point out that it is CERTAINLY not my motive to cast any aspersion on the King James Version of the Bible, either the 1611 first edition, the much more commonly used 1769 edition, or any of the iterations between the two that a person may use. In seeking to know more of my Lord and His will for me the King James Bible has been my constant solace for thirty plus years and I am confident that it will continue to be so until I join my Lord, either through the vale or through the air.

However, there are times that one must take a stand for the truth. It is my prayer that this stand on my part is motivated by a love for the Lord and His Word and that it will not be perceived as a contentious sentiment by the reader.

Among those of us who maintain that *Easter* is not a proper and correct translation of **πάσχα - pascha** in **Acts 12:4** there seems to be two divergent schools of belief as to the reason that it is rendered as *Easter* in **Acts 12:4** of the King James Version of the Bible. We desire to briefly delineate the premises of those two positions and also note that they are poles apart.

One group contends that “*the Episcopalian translators of the King James version, the scared Catholics that they were, loved their Easter so much that they just had to put it in the Bible somewhere. So they just mistranslated this word PASCHA in order to do it.*” (What Is Easter? by E. G. Cook).

The other polar extreme to that position asserts that “*It seems probable that this was left inadvertently rather than intentionally, in Acts 12:4. If the translators intended to retain Easter in the Bible for ecclesiastical purposes they would hardly have been satisfied with one instance.*” (The Use of ‘Easter’ in Acts 12:4 by T. H. Brown).

As there are no extant records of the Translators as to their motivation in rendering **πάσχα - pascha** as *Easter* in **Acts 12:4** both of these sentiments are speculative. And quite frankly neither position has any bearing whatsoever on the intent and focus of this study. We are not concerned as to WHY the Translators so rendered **πάσχα - pascha** as *Easter* in **Acts 12:4**. Our sole considerations are meant to be focused as to the accuracy and fidelity of their doing so.

Prior to beginning this rather brief study, it is perhaps needful for me to make two disclaimers.

1.) It is quite possible that there may be typographical errors in this work. For these I take full responsibility and ask the reader to not be unjustly critical of the content because of an error in the form. There may be errors in some of the Greek diacritical marks. In which case, we remind our reader that these were not in the original manuscripts or the subsequent copies for several hundred years, but were later added for the benefit of the readers of the Greek New Testament.

“*Originally the Bible was written in all capital letters with no punctuation, accent marks, or spaces between the words. ... Capital letters or ‘majuscules’ were used until the later centuries A. D. when cursive script was adopted.*” (Basics of Biblical Greek - Grammar by William D. Mounce - second edition - footnote #3, page 7)

In the few instances that a Hebrew or Chaldee word is used, there may be a slight inaccuracy in that word form due to availability of computer fonts and diacritical marks.

2.) I want to make it clear at the outset that I have no intention of entering into any form of debate with any of these ***Easter is correct position*** brethren on this subject. As far as I am concerned, the truth of the matter is readily apparent to anyone who will objectively examine the evidence herein presented.

## The Form Of The Study

In reading a number of articles by those who hold the *Easter is correct position* it becomes apparent that the defense of their position is primarily based upon the following four postulates. Their expositors may use some or all of these suppositions. I am by no means limiting their apologies to these four premises, as it is certainly probable that they may have other ‘defenses’ than these which they maintain as supporting their position. However, these are the four main ones which I have read and have heard them use repeatedly.

- a.) That the word Passover is not a Biblical word and was invented by William Tyndale.
- b.) That the Passover of the Jews is but the actual supper and not the entire feast period.
- c.) That Herod would have had no concern for the sentiments which the Jews held regarding the sanctity of their Passover.
- d.) That the word *Easter* was used by the Holy Spirit to establish a timeline.

In pursuing this study I will attempt to adhere to the following outline which I believe will adequately address those four presumptions.

**I.) The Etymology Of The Word Πάσχα - Pascha - Passover**

**II.) Greek Lexical Definitions Of Πάσχα - Pascha**

**III.) Comments From Scholars Of Old**

**IV.) All Occurrences Of Πάσχα - Pascha Contained In Tthe Textus Receptus (Current Trinitarian Bible Society Edition)**

**V.) Grammatical Construction Of The Greek Text Where Πάσχα - Pascha Is Used And Comments On The Greek Article**

**VI.) Conclusion**

I have attempted to arrange these reference resources in an orderly and logical fashion. If they seem otherwise, I seek your forbearance and indulgence.

Let us now begin with our first point of consideration.

## **Chapter One**

### **The Etymology Of The Word Πάσχα - Pascha - Passover**

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The URL to this article is: <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/articles/easter.asp>

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#### **The Use of “Easter” in Acts 12:4**

**by T. H. Brown**

**Acts 12.4 “... intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people ...” (Authorised [King James] Version)**

This single occurrence of Easter in the Authorised Version as a translation of the Greek pascha, “passover”, is an interesting reminder of the problems which have confronted translators of the Holy Scriptures for many centuries. When the scholars of Alexandria came to translate the Hebrew into Greek in the third century B.C. they could find in the Greek language no precise equivalent for the Hebrew pesach, and they decided to adopt the Hebrew word in a Greek form. When the Bible was first translated into Latin the same course was followed, and the Greek pascha was adopted without translation. Centuries later, when Wycliffe translated the Bible into English from the Latin version, he could find in the English language no satisfactory equivalent, so he just gave the Latin word an English form -- pask or paske. In the 16th century the Rheims New Testament followed Wycliffe’s example, but slightly changed the English form to pasche. None of these actually translated the word.

#### ***Tyndale’s New Testament and Pentateuch***

When Tyndale applied his talents to the translation of the New Testament from Greek into English, he was not satisfied with the use of a completely foreign word, and decided to take into account the fact that the season of the passover was known generally to English people as ‘Easter’, notwithstanding the lack of any actual connection between the meanings of the two words. The Greek word occurs twenty-nine times in the New Testament, and Tyndale has ester or easter fourteen times, esterlambe eleven times, esterfest once, and paschall lambe three times.

When Tyndale began his translation of the Pentateuch he was again faced with the problem in Exodus 12:11 and twenty-one other places, and no doubt recognising that easter in this context would be an anachronism he coined a new word, passover, and used it consistently in all twenty-two places. It is therefore to Tyndale that our language is indebted for this meaningful and appropriate word. His labours on the Old Testament left

little time for revision of the New Testament, with the result that while passover is found in his 1530 Pentateuch, ester remained in the N.T. of 1534, having been used in his first edition several years before he coined the new word passover.

### ***Martin Luther's German Bible***

Martin Luther encountered the same problems in the translation of the Bible into German, but found no similar solution. In his New Testament we find Ostern, Osterlamm, Osterfest, Fest, and once only das Passa (Heb. 11:28). In Luther's Old Testament Passah is most common, being used for 45 of the 49 occurrences of the Hebrew word, while Passaopffer, Osterfest, Ostern, and Osterlamm are each used once. The Hebrew word is first used in Exodus 12:11 and Luther rendered it Passah with a marginal note referring to the 'Easter Lamb' -- "Was das Osterlamm bedeutet leret genugsam S. Paulus 1 Cor. 5 da er spricht, unser Osterlamm ist Christus der geopfert ist" ("... our Easter Lamb is Christ who is offered").

### ***From Matthew's to the Authorised Version***

Matthew's Bible of 1537 incorporated Tyndale's work on the Pentateuch, using passeover, but there were references to Ester in the chapter summaries in Leviticus 23, Numbers 9 and Deuteronomy 16. The Great Bible of 1539 made good use of Tyndale's passeover in fourteen places, but retained Ester or Easter in the other fifteen New Testament passages. The Geneva Bible of 1560, the Bishops' Bible of 1568, and the Authorised Version of 1611 continued the process of eliminating Easter and replacing it with passover. The fifteen New Testament occurrences of Easter in the Great Bible of 1539 were reduced to only one in the Authorised Version, and it seems probable that this was left inadvertently rather than intentionally, in Acts 12:4. If the translators intended to retain Easter in the Bible for ecclesiastical purposes they would hardly have been satisfied with one instance.

Passover is certainly to be preferred to Easter, as there is no evidence that Christians in the time of Herod observed an annual commemoration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, or any commemoration other than on the first day of each week. Herod would not have been concerned with any Christian observances in any case, and his intention was to bring Peter forth after the passover. Tyndale was the first to use Easter in an English translation, and he was also the first to use Passover. His renderings influenced all subsequent English translations, some using one, and some the other, until in course of time Passover prevailed. If Tyndale had lived a little longer it is probable that he would have subjected his New Testament to a further careful revision, consistently rendering the Greek pascha by passover in every passage in which the word occurs.

(This article was originally published in the Quarterly Record no. 470, January to March 1980. Copyright © 1980, 1997 Trinitarian Bible Society)

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In reading a number of articles by those who hold the *Easter is correct position* there were some who alluded to Tyndale's 'coining' the term **passover** (πάσχα - pascha) in a fashion in which it was apparent that they hoped would somehow discredit the use of **passover** as the standard, consistent, and proper translation of πάσχα - pascha.

It is hoped that the above brief account of Tyndale's 'coining' the term **passover** will give the reader a deeper appreciation for his labors in translation and that they will therefore be more appreciative of "**this meaningful and appropriate word**" which he gave us.

We would like to remind those who make much ado about the fact that there was no English word Passover prior to Tyndale 'coining it' that there was a Chaldee word אֲחַדְתָּא and a Hebrew פֶּסַח word which the Holy Spirit used in forty-eight instances in the Old Testament in reference to this sacred ordinance which God instituted in **Exodus 12:11**.

Of those forty-eight instances the Greek word which is used in the Septuagint for that Hebrew word פֶּסַח is *πάσχα* twenty-nine times. In the eighteen times in **II Chronicles** where Passover is found in the English translation the Greek word used in the Septuagint is *φασέχ*.

In the book of **Exodus**, God instituted the Passover. In that portion of the Torah, the Holy Spirit used that word six times. Below are the first two occurrences of the word Passover in the Bible. Note that in this specific English translation the word used is the same English word as is used in the King James Version about seventy-six times. Lest anyone erroneously think that Tyndale had any influence on the use of this word Passover in this particular English translation, it should be noted that these verses are from the Jewish Publication Society's English Version - 1917 edition.

**Exodus 12:11 And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste - it is the LORD'S passover.** (Jewish Publication Society - 1917 Edition)

**Exodus 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them: 'Draw out, and take you lambs according to your families, and kill the passover lamb.** (Jewish Publication Society - 1917 Edition)

Before we leave this topic, there are yet a few more points which we wish to bring to our reader's attention.

There are two definitions which we would like to present of the Hebrew word פֶּסַח - *pehsagh*, which is translated as Passover in the King James Version as well as the Jewish Publication Society Version just previously quoted.

“**Passover** – פֶּסַח - *pehsagh* peh'-sakh; a pretermission, i.e. exemption; used only tech. of the Jewish Passover (the festival or the victim)” (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance - A. H. Strong - thirty-fourth Edition 1976)

“**Passover** - פֶּסַח - *pehsagh* - m. pr. *a sparing, immunity* from penalty and calamity, hence - (1) a sacrifice offered on account of the sparing of the people ...” (Gesenius' Hebrew - Caldee Lexicon To The Old Testament - Baker Book House 1980 Edition)

We trust that the foregoing will have sufficiently equipped our reader to properly evaluate the validity of the presumption that the word Passover is not a Biblical word and that it was invented by William Tyndale.

## Chapter Two

### Greek Lexical Definitions Of Πάσχα - Pascha

The following reference resources are certainly not exhaustive of those available to the reader, but are meant to be a synopsis of the currently available resources. These few references listed are given to illustrate what these various lexicographers believed that **πάσχα - pascha** means.

“**πάσχα - Pascha**, *pas khah*; of Chaldee origin; the Passover: (the meal, the day, the festival or the special sacrifices connected with it)” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance - A. H. Strong - thirty-fourth Edition 1976)

“**πάσχα** - the Passover, 1. a Jewish festival 2. the Paschal lamb 3. the Passover meal” (Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament - F. Wilber Gingrich - 1965 Edition)

“**πάσχα** - 1. the festival of the Passover, a. the paschal supper, b. the paschal lamb” (Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament - G. Abbot Smith - Third Edition 1981)

“**πάσχα** - the passover, the paschal lamb, metaphorically used of Christ, the true paschal lamb, the feast of the passover, the day on which he paschal lamb was slain and eaten, the 14th of Nisan, more generally the whole paschal festival, including the seven days of the unleavened bread” (The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised - Harold K. Moulton Editor - 1978 Edition)

“**πάσχα** - the paschal lamb, applied to Christ, the paschal supper, the paschal feast” (Greek - English New Testament Lexicon - George R. Berry - 1979 Zondervan Edition)

“**πάσχα** - The Greek spelling of the Aramaic word for the Passover, from the Hebrew *pasach*, to pass over, to spare, a feast instituted by God in commemoration of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, anticipatory of the expiatory sacrifice of Christ. The word signifies (1) the passover feast, ... (a) the Paschal supper, ... (b) the Paschal lamb, ... (c) Christ Himself, ...” (An Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words - W. E. Vine - Seventeenth Impression 1966 / Volume III Page 166)

“**πάσχα** - Passover, Passover Meal, Passover lamb” (Complete Vocabulary Guide To The Greek New Testament - Warren C. Trenchard - Zondervan Edition 1998)

“**πάσχα** - Passover” (A Reader’s Greek - English Lexicon Of The New Testament - Sakae Kubo - Andrews University Edition 1975)

“**πάσχα** - The Greek spelling of the Aramaic **ܢܗܪܕܐ**, the Passover, i.e. a sparing, immunity, from Hebrew to pass over, to spare, Hence, English, Paschal lamb ...” (A Critical Lexicon and Concordance To The English And Greek New Testament - E. W. Bullinger - Kregel Reprint 1908 Edition)

“**Πάσχα, τὸ** - indeclinable, *the Passover, paschal lamb: also the time or feast of the Passover* (Hebrew word.)” (Liddell & Scott Greek - English Lexicon Abridged - Twenty-Fifth Edition - Follet Publishing Company - 1927)

“**πάσχα** - Chaldee ajsp, Hebrew jsp, to pass over, to pass over by sparing; the Septuagint also constantly use the Chald. form **πάσχα** except in 2 Chron [and Jer. xxxviii. (xxxix) 8] ..., prop. a passing over; (1) the paschal sacrifice ... (2) the paschal lamb, ... (3) the paschal supper, ... (4) the paschal festival, the feast of Passover” (Thayer’s Greek - English Lexicon Of The New Testament - Joseph H. Thayer - Baker Book House Edition 1977)

As I complete this brief study on April 1, 2009 there is a television commercial being aired which is sponsored by the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. The commercial is a plea for donations to purchase Passover Boxes for holocaust survivors.

*“Thousands of elderly Jews in the former Soviet Union (FSU) who survived the horrors of Nazism and Communism now live their final years in dire poverty and hunger. Prevented from practicing their faith and observing their holidays during decades of oppression, today many will be unable to celebrate the upcoming **holiday of Passover** (bold jlr) with the traditional Jewish Seder meal - because they simply cannot afford it.”* (<http://www.ifcj.tv>)

On the commercial displayed across the bottom of the screen in large letters is the notation: **Passover: April 9 - April 16**. Who would be so insolent as to infer that these Jews do not know what constitutes and what is considered to be the Passover by Jews?

Having demonstrated that a number of these lexicographers clearly stated that a definition of **πάσχα** will also denote “**the whole paschal festival**”, we are confident that an unbiased reader will see that the presumption that the Passover of the Jews is but the actual supper, and not the entire feast period, is not one anchored in and buttressed by the generally available Greek lexicons or the obvious meaning applied by the Jews of this age.

## Chapter Three

### Comments From Scholars Of Old

It is doubtful and highly unlikely that any reader would agree with everything the following commentators have written on every subject. And it is certainly not unfathomable that a reader may not agree with some or all of the commentators on any subject. Yet a reader's approbation of the scholarship and verity of these men is not our goal. The objective in presenting what these men had to say on this subject is not to persuade those who hold the *Easter is correct* position to change their posture. I entertain no such expectations! The design in presenting what these men have written is to clearly demonstrate that such a position of *Easter* correctness in **Acts 12:4** is not a historical position to be found in the generally available writings of old.

John Gill:

**“intending after Easter, or the passover,”** (Gill's Commentary - John Gill - Baker Bookhouse Edition 1980 / Page 890)

B. H. Carroll:

“The word ‘Easter’ occurs in the American Version of 12:4: ‘Intending to bring him forth to the people after Easter.’ The Revised Version says, ‘Intending after the Passover to bring him forth.’ So the common version says that Herod after Easter intended to bring him forth. Pious Episcopalians and Romans use this verse of the American Version to confirm their custom of celebrating Easter, but the Greek plainly shows that ‘Passover’ is precisely the word.” (An Interpretation of the English Bible - B. H. Carroll - The Acts / Page 167)

B. H. Carroll:

“The wholly unscriptural ‘forty days of Lent’ preceding the equally unscriptural Easter observed by Romanists and Episcopalians. The word ‘Easter’ in the common version of Acts 12:4 is simply the Jewish Passover and is so rendered in our best English versions.” (An Interpretation of the English Bible - B. H. Carroll - The Four Gospels / Page 250)

Adam Clarke:

**“Intending after Easter to bring him forth - μετὰ τὸ πάσχα,** After the passover. Perhaps there never was a more unhappy, not to say absurd, translation than that in our text. But, before I come to explain the word, it is necessary to observe that our term called Easter is not exactly the same with the Jewish passover. This festival is always held on the fourteenth day of the first vernal full moon; but the Easter of the Christians, never till the next Sabbath after said full moon; and, to avoid all conformity with the Jews in this matter, if the fourteenth day of the first vernal full moon happen on a Sabbath, then the festival of Easter is deferred till the Sabbath following. The first vernal moon is that whose fourteenth day is either on the day of the vernal equinox, or the next fourteenth day after it. The vernal equinox, according to a decree of the council of Nice, is fixed to the 21st day of March; and therefore the first vernal moon is that whose

fourteenth day falls upon the 21st of March, or the first fourteenth day after. Hence it appears that the next Sabbath after the fourteenth day of the vernal moon, which is called the Paschal term, is always Easter day. And, therefore, the earliest Paschal term being the 21st of March, the 22d of March is the earliest Easter possible; and the 18th of April being the latest Paschal term, the seventh day after, that is the 25th of April, is the latest Easter possible.

The term Easter, inserted here by our translators, they borrowed from the ancient Anglo-Saxon service-books, or from the version of the Gospels, which always translates the **τὸ πάσχα** of the Greek by this term; e.g. Mat 26:2 : Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover. *Wite ye that aefter twam dagum beoth Eastro.* Mat 16:19: And they made ready the passover. *And hig gegearwodon hym Easter thenunga* (i.e. the paschal supper.) Prefixed to Mat 28:1, are these words: *This part to be read on Easter even.* And, before Mat 28:8, these words: Mar 14:12 : *And the first day of unleavened bread when they killed the passover. And tham forman daegeazimorum, tha hi Eastron offrodon.* Other examples occur in this version. Wiclif used the word *paske*, i.e. passover; but Tindal, Coverdale, Becke, and Cardmarden, following the old Saxon mode of translation, insert Easter: the Geneva Bible very properly renders it passover. The Saxon Earten, Eartno, Eartna, and Earton are different modes of spelling the name of the goddess Easter, whose festival was celebrated by our pagan forefathers on the month of April; hence that month, in the Saxon calendar, is called Easter month. Every view we can take on this subject shows the gross impropriety of retaining a name every way exceptionable, and palpably absurd.” (Online Bible Edition)

Albert Barnes:

“***Intending after Easter.*** There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this. The original is simply after the Passover **μετὰ τὸ πάσχα**. The word ‘Easter’ now denotes the festival observed by many Christian churches in honor of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that, nor is there the slightest evidence that any such festival was observed at the time when this book was written. The translation is not only unhappy, as it does not convey at all the meaning of the original, but because it may contribute to foster an opinion that such a festival was observed in the time of the apostles. The word ‘Easter’ is of Saxon origin, and is supposed to be derived from ‘Eostre,’ the goddess of Love, or the Venus of the North, in honor of whom a festival was celebrated by our pagan ancestors in the month of April (Webster). Since this festival coincided with the Passover of the Jews, and with the feast observed by Christians in honor of the resurrection of Christ, the name came to be used to denote the latter. In the old Anglo-Saxon service-books the term ‘Easter’ is used frequently to translate the word ‘Passover.’ In the translation by Wycliffe, the word ‘paske,’ that is, ‘Passover,’ is used. But Tyndale and Coverdale used the word ‘Easter,’ and hence, it has very improperly crept into our King James Version.” (Online Bible Edition)

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown:

“**intending after Easter** - rather, after the Passover; i.e., that is, after the whole festival was over. (The word in our authorized version is an ecclesiastical term of later date, and ought not to have been employed here).” (Commentary On The Whole Bible - Jamieson, Fausset & Brown - Zondervan Edition Volume II / Page 188)

E. G. Cook:

“Yes, I am aware that you can find the word ‘Easter’ in your Bible. But the word ‘Easter’ in Acts 12:4 comes from the Greek word PASCHA which means Passover. But the Episcopalian translators of the King James version, the scared Catholics that they were, loved their Easter so much that they just had to put it in the Bible somewhere. So they just mistranslated this word PASCHA in order to do it.” (What Is Easter? by E. G. Cook)

Matthew Henry:

“... **after Easter, μετὰ τὸ πάσχα** - *after the passover*, certainly so it ought to be read, for it is the same word that is always so rendered; and to insinuate the introducing of a gospel-feast, instead of the passover, when we have nothing in the New Testament of such a thing, is to mingle Judaism with our Christianity. Herod would not condemn him till the passover was over, some think, for fear lest he should have such an interest among the people that they should demand the release of him, according to the custom of the feast: or, after the hurry of the feast was over, and the town was empty, he would entertain them with Peter’s public trial and execution. Thus was the plot laid, and both Herod and the people long to have the feast over, that they may gratify themselves with this barbarous entertainment.” (Online Bible Edition)

Cyrus I. Scofield:

“**the passover** “

Kenneth S. Wuest:

“Now it was the days of bread baked without yeast. And having apprehended him, he put him in prison, having delivered him into the custody of sixteen solders who were to guard him constantly, purposing as the result of mature consideration after the passover to set him before the people for the purpose of being tried in their courts.” (The New Testament: An Expanded Translation - Kenneth S. Wuest - Eerdmans Publishing Company - 2004 Edition / Page 302.)

Family New Testament Notes:

“Four quaternions; four companies of four soldiers each; making, in all, sixteen. One company guarded him three hours, and was then relieved by another. **Easter**; the passover. Easter is supposed to have been originally the name of a heathen feast, which occurred in the month of April. It was afterwards applied to the Jewish feast of the passover, which occurred about the same time. Tyndale in his translation of the Bible into English in 1526, used this word instead of passover, and our English translators in 1611 retained it in their version. But there was no Christian feast called Easter in the days of Peter. And the word Pascha which is here translated Easter, means passover, and should

have been so translated. **Bring him forth**; for trial and condemnation.” (Online Bible Edition)

Marvin R. Vincent:

“**The passover** - The whole seven days of the feast.” (Vincent’s Word Studies Of The New Testament - Marvin R. Vincent - Hendrickson Edition - Volume I / Page 508)

V. C. Mayes:

“Easter is not a Christian name or origin, but is pagan. It means ‘Isthar’ one of the titles of a Babylonian queen of heaven, and was worshipped by the children of Israel which was an abomination in the sight of God.

The decree for the observance of Easter and lent was given in AD 519. The word ‘Easter’ was also given to an ancient Sun Goddess which heathens worshipped. The word Easter is found in our King James Bible one time, in Acts 12:4, which in the original inspired Word of God was Passover and means such. The word Easter was put in Acts 12:4 by the translators and is not from the inspired writings of the New Testament. Remember it should read ‘Passover’, also remember ‘Easter’ is of Babylonian and pagan origin, and God forbid that any Christian should adopt any of Babylonian or pagan Rome’s festivals.” (The Naked Truth - V. C. Mayes - 1979 Edition / Page 10)

The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary:

“Herod is known to have followed a policy of catering to Jewish desires, and the popular response at his execution of James led him to seize **Peter** also. The **days of unleavened bread**, the seven days following the Passover, were holy days, when the execution would not be fitting. Properly speaking, the **Passover** (AV *Easter* is incorrect) introduced the days of unleavened bread, but Luke uses the two terms interchangeably (**Luke 22:1**).” (The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary - 1971 Edition / Page 425)

Easton’s Bible Dictionary:

“**Easter** - Originally a Saxon Word (EOSTRE), denoting a goddess of the Saxons in honour of whom sacrifices were offered about the time of the Passover. Hence the name came to be given to the festival of the resurrection of Christ which occurred at the time of the Passover. In the early English versions this word was frequently used as the translation of the Greek *pascha* (the Passover). When the Authorized Version (1611) was formed, the word ‘passover’ was used in all passages in which this word *pascha* occurred, except in Act 12:4. In the Revised Version the proper word, ‘passover,’ is always used. “

American Tract Society Dictionary of the Bible:

“Easter is improperly put for PASSOVER in Acts 12:4, for Herod and the Jews did not celebrate the resurrection of Christ.” (Dictionary of The Holy Bible - American Tract Society - 1914 Edition / Page 142)

Davis Dictionary of the Bible:

“**Easter**- In the AV it occurs once, viz., in Acts xii. 4, but is a mistranslation. The original is *pascha*, the ordinary Greek word for passover. The RV properly employs the word passover.” (Davis Dictionary of the Bible - 1973 Revised Edition / Page 193)

Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary:

“**Easter** - (Greek **πάσχα** - **pascha**, **passover**), rendered *Easter* in Acts 12:4 KJV, but correctly translated *Passover* in ASV.” (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary - twenty-first Printing 1978 / Page 230)

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia:

“**EASTER**, ester (**πάσχα** - **pascha**, from Aramaic **בִּשְׁחָא** *pasha*, and Hebrew **פֶּסַח** *pesah*, the Passover festival): The English word comes from the Anglo-Saxon *Eastre* or *Estera*, a Teutonic goddess to whom sacrifice was offered in April, so the name was transferred to the paschal feast. The word does not properly occur in Scripture, although the AV has it in **Acts 12:4** where it stands for Passover, as is rightly rendered in RV. There is no trace of Easter celebration in NT, though some would see an imitation in 1 Corinthians 5:7. The Jewish Christians in the early church continued to celebrate the Passover, regarding Christ as the paschal lamb ...” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia - James Orr General Editor - 1915 Edition / Volume II Page 889)

In reading a number of articles by those who hold the *Easter is correct position* there were some who made the defensive statement for their position, “Herod would have had no concern for the Jewish festival of Passover.” However, that is not a statement which an elementary examination of the beliefs held by the older scholars of repute would validate. Consider the following and how they comment on the meaning and proper translation of **πάσχα** - **pascha** as well as their comments on Herod’s concern with the displeasure of the Jewish leaders.

Matthew Poole:

“**After Easter**; that day in which the paschal lamb was ate, on which the Jews would put none to death, that they might not eclipse the joy of that day.’ (Online Bible Edition)

Simon J. Kistemaker:

“Having seized Peter, Herod put him in prison. He handed him over to four squads of four soldiers each to guard him. He intended to bring him before the people after the Passover.

Herod judged it expedient to delay Peter’s execution. Therefore, he put Peter in prison, which served as a place of detention. In the Roman empire, imprisonment itself was not considered punishment. Prisoners were kept in custody to await their trial, which could result in release, flogging, exile or death. Peter’s trial would come when the Passover feast had ended. Moreover, the execution of James had whetted the Jew’s desire for Peter’s trial and execution.’ (New Testament Commentary - Volume V: Acts - Simon J. Kistemaker - Baker Book House 1990 Edition / Pages 433 - 434)

Lucius R. Page:

“**Easter** - Rather, the Passover. The original *pascha* (πάσχα) is the same which is used in Matt. xxvi. 2, and in very many other places, where it is rendered **Passover**. In this case only is the word **Easter** used; and here it conveys an entirely wrong idea. The festival observed in many churches, in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord, and called Easter, was not instituted until long after the Acts of the Apostles had been written. The passage, as translated, might lead some to suppose that Herod had regard to a festival of which he never heard, and which, indeed, did not then exist, instead of that great feast of the Jews which, for some cause, he was accustomed to observe with scrupulous exactness. The term **Easter** is said to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon, in which language it was the name of a goddess, supposed to be the same as the Venus of the Romans. When the Anglo-Saxons were converted to Christianity and renounced idolatry, they gave the name of Easter to the Christian festival which corresponded so nearly, in point of time, with that to which they had long been accustomed. Bede, usually styled the ‘venerable Bede,’ one of the earliest ecclesiastical historians, whose history was published AD 731, says:

‘Eostremonath, which is now called the Paschal month, had its name from a goddess called Eostre, and to whom at that time they used to celebrate festivals.’ - Richardson.

Clarke after his manner, says, ‘Perhaps there never was a more unhappy, not to say absurd translation, than in our text. Every view we can take of this subject shows the gross impropriety of retaining a name every way exceptionable, and palpably absurd.’” (A Commentary of the New Testament by Lucius R. Page - Volume III Acts Of The Apostles -1848 Edition / Page 173)

A. T. Robertson:

“**After the passover** (μετὰ τὸ πάσχα - meta to pascha). The passover feast of eight days. “The stricter Jews regarded it as a profanation to put a person to death during a religious festival” (Hackett). So Agrippa is more scrupulous than the Sanhedrin was about Jesus.’ (A. T. Robertson - Word Pictures In The New Testament / Volume III Page 165)

The Expositors Greek Testament:

“**μετὰ τὸ πάσχα**, ‘after the passover’ R. V., I.e. after the whole festival was over: Herod did not wish, or affected not to wish, to profane the feast:” (The Expositors Greek Testament - Edited by W. Robertson Nicoll - 1980 Edition - / Volume II Page 273)

C. H. Lenski:

“It was Herod’s intention ‘to bring Peter up to the people’ the day after the Passover proper. That means that he was to be led up out of his dungeon cell to be present, and from there to be led away to execution where all who cared to could witness the act which demonstrated the king’s wonderful zeal for the integrity of the Jewish faith.

‘After the Passover’ means after the Passover meal on the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan, namely on the fifteenth. The plan was to duplicate the execution of Jesus who also died on the fifteenth of Nisan. Herod intended to impress the thousands of people who

attended the festival from far and near. In Matthew 26:5, the Sanhedrin planned to wait until the festival week was past because it feared the people, the pilgrim hosts attending the festival who were captivated by Jesus. Their plan was frustrated when God allowed Jesus to fall into their hands on the night between the fourteenth and fifteenth. The Jewish rule was: *Non judicant die festo*. It was broken in the case of Jesus; it was again to be broken in the case of Peter.

‘After the Passover’ is generally taken to mean ‘after the entire Passover week,’ which identifies ‘days of unleavened bread’ and ‘Passover.’ Πάσχα has this wider meaning, but it also has the narrower which refers to the ceremonial meal when the Passover lamb was eaten on the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan. Here the narrower meaning is in place because of the context and because ‘days of unleavened bread’ precedes. ‘After the Passover’ specifies on which particular day during the days of unleavened bread the execution was to take place.” (The Interpretation Of The Acts Of The Apostles - R. C. H. Lenski - Augsburg Publishing House Edition - 1961 / Page 470)

We are fully persuaded that the above references from writers of yesteryear will not only have fully demonstrated that the *Easter is correct position* was unknown to them, but, also that the presumption, “Herod would have had no concern for the sentiments which the Jews held regarding the sanctity of their Passover” has no historical basis in the writings of a significant number of well-known sources.

## Chapter Four

### All Occurrences Of Πάσχα - Pascha Contained In The Textus Receptus (Current TBS Edition).

For clarity's sake, the **article**, when in both the Greek text and the King James Version, will be **red**; and the **particularized noun**, when in both the Greek text and the King James Version, will be **blue**.

(**Matthew 26:2**) Ye know that after two days is *the feast of* **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα), and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

(**Matthew 26:17**) Now the first *day* of the *feast of* unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα)?

(**Matthew 26:18**) And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα) at thy house with my disciples.

(**Matthew 26:19**) And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα).

(**Mark 14:1**) After two days was *the feast of* **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα), and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put *him* to death.

(**Mark 14:12**) And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα), his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα)?

(**Mark 14:14**) And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα) with my disciples?

(**Mark 14:16**) And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα).

(**Luke 2:41**) Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of **the passover** (τοῦ πάσχα).

(**Luke 22:1**) Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the **Passover** (πάσχα). (There is no article in the Greek text.)

(**Luke 22:7**) Then came the day of unleavened bread, when **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα) must be killed.

(**Luke 22:8**) And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα), that we may eat.

(**Luke 22:11**) And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα) with my disciples?

(**Luke 22:13**) And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα).

(**Luke 22:15**) And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat **this passover** (τὸ πάσχα) with you before I suffer: (The article is here translated as the pronoun **this**.)

(**John 2:13**) And the Jews' **passover** (τὸ πάσχα) was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, (The article is not translated here.)

(**John 2:23**) Now when he was in Jerusalem at **the passover** (τῷ πάσχα), in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

(**John 6:4**) And **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα), a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

(**John 11:55**) And the Jews' **passover** (τὸ πάσχα) was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before **the passover** (τοῦ πάσχα), to purify themselves. (The first article is not translated here.)

(**John 12:1**) Then Jesus six days before **the passover** (τοῦ πάσχα) came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

(**John 13:1**) Now before the feast of **the passover** (τοῦ πάσχα), when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

(**John 18:28**) Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat **the passover** (τὸ πάσχα).

(**John 18:39**) But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at **the passover** (τῷ πάσχα): will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?

(**John 19:14**) And it was the preparation of **the passover** (τοῦ πάσχα), and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

(**Acts 12:4**) And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter (**τὸ πάσχα**) to bring him forth to the people.

(**1 Corinthians 5:7**) Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ **our passover** (**τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν**) is sacrificed for us: (The article not translated here, and I have never seen it translated in any English version.)

(**Hebrews 11:28**) Through faith he kept the **the passover** (**τὸ πάσχα**), and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Grammatical Construction Of The Greek Text Where Πάσχα Is Used And Comments On The Greek Article**

For the sake of brevity, we will not belabor this point; but cite six Greek grammarians, three of which are yet extant. But as the New Testament Greek grammar has not changed, it would be of small import whether these men lived a thousand years ago or not!

“As in English the article is translated ‘the’. The general rule is to translate according to the presence or absence of the article. If an article is present, translate it. If there is no article, do not use ‘the’.” (The Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar - Dr. William D. Mounce - Second Edition / Page 38.)

“The article is associated with gesture and aids in pointing out like an index finger. It is a pointer. ... Whenever the Greek article occurs, the object is certainly definite. ... The article is never meaningless in Greek, though it often fails to correspond with the English idiom ...” (A Grammar of the Greek New Testament In Light Of Historical Research - A. T. Robertson - Third Edition 1934 / Page 756).

“A significant part of speech is the Greek definite article. In many instances, a proper translation will hinge upon the simple observation of the usage of the article or the lack of it. ... The Greek article is never used arbitrarily, although at times it is difficult to express its significance in English. ... The Greek article generally serves in one of two functions, either syntactical (*e.g.*, to indicate case relations) or semantic (*e.g.*, to particularize some noun).” (In The Beginning New Testament Greek Grammar - Dr. William D. Ramey - Chapter 6 / Page 25.)

“... the presence or absence of the Greek article should always be carefully indicated in the English translation.” (New Testament Greek For Beginners - J. Gresham Machen - Macmillan Company, 1923 / Page 35)

“The function of the article is to point out an object or draw attention to it. Its use with a word makes the word stand out distinctly.” (A Manual Grammar Of The Greek New Testament - Dana & Mantey - The Macmillan Company, 1923 / Page 137)

In reference to papyri 66 (P66) Bruce M. Metzger comments on the importance of the Greek article.

“In vii. 52 the presence of the definite article in a difficult passage now supports what scholars had long thought was the required sense, namely ‘Search [the Scriptures] and you will see that *the* prophet does not rise from Galilee.” (The Text of the New Testament - Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration - Bruce M. Metzger - Third Edition / Page 40)

Again, the issue here is not whether we agree with Dr. Metzger's positions on textual criticism or not. We are not discussing textual criticism. The point is that he clearly attests to what the other quoted sources have said. If present in the Greek text, the article should be translated in the English!

"The definite article in Greek is the Greek index-finger pointing out individual identity. ... The presence and the absence of the article must be carefully noted by the Greek student. ... *The presence of the article identifies. The absence of the article qualifies.* That is, when the article is used, the emphasis is upon particular identity, individuality, even uniqueness in some contexts, and upon contrast." (The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament - Kenneth S. Wuest - Moody Bible Institute 1982 Edition / Page 15)

"*One simply cannot afford to neglect the Greek article if one wants to do an accurate exegesis in the New Testament.*" (The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament - Kenneth S. Wuest - Moody Bible Institute 1982 Edition / Page 20)

So, our reader may ask, "What is the purpose of the forgoing information relative to the Greek article which was just quoted from those noted Greek grammarians?"

The following is the last portion from **Acts 12:4** as found in the edition of the Textus Receptus currently published by the Trinitarian Bible Society. It is claimed by the TBS that this is the text upon which the 1611 King James Version is based.

**"H KAINH ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ THE NEW TESTAMENT - THE GREEK TEXT UNDERLYING THE ENGLISH AUTHORISED VERSION OF 1611"**

(The Trinitarian Bible Society New Testament Greek Text front piece)

The English translation will be placed underneath to illustrate this final point.

βουλόμενος ..... μετὰ ... τὸ ... πάσχα ..... ἀναγαγεῖω ..... αὐτὸν ... τῷ ..... λαῷ

**Intending ..... after ... the ...passover .... to bring forth ... him to .. the ..... people**

It should be patently obvious that the Greek article τὸ is not translated in **Acts 12:4** of the King James Version of the Bible, after the same manner that they did in other instances.

Ask yourselves, "Do we say, 'After the Easter'?" In sixty-one years, I do not recall ever having heard someone say, "I went to church on the Easter." Can our reader say that they have ever heard anyone use the expression *the Easter*?

That the article is in the Greek text in **Acts 12:4** is incontrovertible. That it is to be translated if in the Greek text has been shown to be the standard and proper grammatical procedure. This standard practice was followed by the Translators of the King James Version twenty-four of the twenty-eight times the article was found in conjunction with **πάσχα - pascha** in the Greek text. The article was translated as the pronoun **this** one time in **Luke 22:15**. As noted relative to the article in **I Corinthians 5:7** I have never seen it translated in any English version.

## Conclusion

There is but one cause why anyone holds the *Easter is correct position*. That reason is not founded on a proper translation of *πάσχα* - **pascha** as delineated in a host of Greek Lexicons. Nor is that reason based upon a historical position supported by the recorded words of many well-respected Biblical commentators of years gone by. And lastly and certainly most importantly, it is obviously not based upon the generally accepted proper grammatical translation of ALL of the Greek text in **Acts 12:4**.

The Passover, as has been noted by a number of previously quoted sources, was “**anticipatory of the expiatory sacrifice of Christ**”. How can His precious blood-bought people justify such a perversion of the word that denotes His vicarious atonement and in anyway attempt to associate it with a celebration whose origin is of “**that wicked one**”?

As I stated at the outset of this study, it is not my objective to cast any aspersion on the King James Version of the Bible nor to be contentious.

Nor do I ever want to be justly chargeable for the sin of “**handling the Word of God deceitfully**”. May we all seek to avoid such an ignominious accusation.

In closing this study we wish to address the fourth and final postulate of our brethren who tenaciously hold to the *Easter is correct position*. Their premise is that the word *Easter* was used by the Holy Spirit to establish a timeline. While I strongly disagree with the sentiment that the Holy Spirit used the word *Easter* to establish a timeline in **Acts 12:4** I wholeheartedly agree that the Spirit of God did establish a timeline in **Acts 12:4**. And that timeline is clearly and plainly shown in a proper translation of all the Greek text.

**μετὰ τὸ πάσχα - after the passover**

**(1 John 5:21) Little children, keep yourselves from idols.**