

Is the word "Easter" an error in the King James Bible?

In Acts 12:4 we are told of Peter being taken prisoner by Herod. "Then were the days of unleavened bread. 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."

The Greek word translated as Easter is pascha. Some say the word should only be translated as Passover and not Easter. The KJV is not alone in translating this word as Easter. The Tyndale 1525, Coverdale 1535, Cranmer's bible (The Great Bible) 1540, Matthew's Bible 1549, Bishop's Bible 1568, all preceding the King James Bible, Mace's New Testament 1729, and Martin Luther also translated this word as Easter in 1545, and the German Luther version of 1912 also reads Easter (Ostern). The German word for Passover is a completely different word. The Geneva New Testament was first published in 1557 and read "Easter" in Acts 12:4- "entending after EASTER to bringe him forth unto the people". You can see the 1557 Geneva Bible at this site here:

<http://bible.zoxt.net/hex/hex.htm>

When the Geneva Old Testament was published in 1560, the New Testament was revised and at that time "Easter" was changed to "passover." Likewise the modern KJV 21st Century Version 1994 and the Third Millennium Bible 1998 both read "after Easter" in Acts 12:4.

The Oxford English dictionary tells us that "Easter is one of the great festivals of the Christian church, commemorating the resurrection of Christ, and corresponding to the Jewish Passover, the name of which (Easter) it bears in most of the European languages. Greek -paska; Hebrew - pe'sah; Latin - pascha; French - pagues; Italian - Pasqua; Spanish - pascua."

The Encyclopedia Britannica relates concerning the origin of the word Easter: -"The English word *Easter*, which parallels the German word *Ostern*, is of uncertain origin. One view, expounded by the Venerable Bede in the 8th century, was that it derived from Eostre, or Eostræ, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring and fertility. This view presumes—as does the view associating the origin of Christmas on December 25 with pagan celebrations of the winter equinox—that Christians appropriated pagan names and holidays for their highest festivals.

Given the determination with which Christians combated all forms of paganism, this appears a rather dubious presumption. There is now widespread consensus that the word derives from the Christian designation of Easter week as *in albis*, a Latin phrase that was understood as the plural of *alba* ("dawn") and became *eostarum* in Old High German the precursor of the modern German and English term. The Latin and Greek *pascha* ("Passover") provides the root for *Pâcques*, the French word for Easter. Right here in my personal study I have a copy of Divry's Modern English-Greek and Greek-

English desk dictionary 1974. If you look under the English word Easter on page 99 it has one word only as its translation and meaning - Pascha (paska). Likewise when we look at the Greek part of this book under the word Pascha on page 634 there is once again only one definition of this word given - Easter. This is what the word means in Greek today.

Here is an online Greek translation site that is very easy to use. Just click on the link and go to the site. On the left hand side you can type in the Greek word Pascha, or on the right hand side you can type in the word Easter. See what the Greek word means, and how to say Easter in Greek.

<http://www.kypros.org/cgi-bin/lexicon/>

The Oxford English dictionary also lists many early English literary sources that employed the word Easter to refer to the Resurrection. Among them are the following: 890 A.D. Aelfred Baeda "le dar tide Eastrena ecelice healdan wille"; 1123 A.D. Old English Chronicles, 1200, 1250, 1300; 1389 in English Gild 'be soneday fourthnythe after Easterne"; 1175 A.D. Lamb Homilies 45 "uwile sonnedei is to locan alswa Ester dei"; 1200 Trin. Coll. Homily "Forte pene puresdai biforen Estrene dai"; 1398 A.D. Trevira Barth "Eester daye is tyme of gladnesse"; 1420, 1440, 1480 "wold not graunte unto Estre next comyng"; 1447 Bokenham "On Esterne day next folwyng; 1517 A.D. Torkington - Pilgrimage - "He sawe...Criste rysen upon Estern Day"; 1593 Hooker Eccl. Pol. "keeping the feast of Easter on the same day the Jews kept theirs";

Words can acquire new meanings with changing circumstances and be applied in new ways.

When you turned on your computer, you used your "mouse". Some argue the word pascha does not mean Easter in Greek but any modern Greek dictionary will tell you the way to say Easter is Pascha.

Most of us know how to say Merry Christmas in Spanish. Feliz Navidad. But millions of Spanish speaking people also say Happy Easter with the words Feliz Pascuas, the very same Greek word. This word also means Easter in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Swiss, Norwegian, Russian (Paskha), Romanian and Swedish.

Why would this word become Easter for the English speaking people? The word pascha is translated all other times in the KJB as passover, referring to the annual Jewish feast of offering a lamb to God to commemorate their deliverance out of slavery in Egypt.

Yet after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, this word is used only three times, once here in Acts 12:4, once in 1 Corinthians 5:7, where we are told, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Tyndale's Bible actually says, "For Christ our Easter lamb is offered up for us." And once again in Hebrews 11:28 where the King James Bible says regarding Moses: "Through faith he kept the passover" (referring of course to the time of the exodus) and where Tyndale's N.T. says: "Through faith he ordained the Easter lamb."

The only time the word is used in the New Testament referring to a Post-Resurrection time line is in Acts 12:4 where the King James Bible correctly has translated this Greek word as Easter." It makes no sense at all to believe that Tyndale, Martin Luther, Cranmer, Coverdale, Matthews,

the Great Bible, and the Bishop's Bible were referring to a pagan deity of the spring called Eastre or Ishtar when they called Christ the easterlamb.

It is likewise grammatically absurd to think Easter refers to a pagan deity in Acts 12:4 where it says, "intending after Easter to bring him forth unto the people". Try substituting another name there and see how it sounds; like "intending after Buddha to bring him forth", or "intending after Krishna to bring him forth to the people. "

Believers who say that Easter was a pagan holiday use the argument that Passover occurred before the days of unleavened bread, and so the Passover had already taken place. However in Luke 22:1 we see that the entire feast of 7 days was collectively called the Passover. "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover." The term Passover may also refer to the entire week, including the 7 days of unleavened bread after the lamb was slain every year.

This is also confirmed in Ezekiel 45:21 - "In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten."

The KJB is actually the most accurate translation, in that it uses the word "passover" BEFORE the death and resurrection of Christ and then "Easter" the only time the word occurs in the book of Acts AFTER His resurrection.

Some say the word Easter comes from the name of the goddess Ishtar or Eastre. The truth is found in any good dictionary that both Eastre and Easter come from the word East, but they are not related to each other in meaning. The sun rises in the east, to bring the light of a new day, and we are told concerning Christ in Malachi 4:2, "But unto you that fear my name shall the SUN of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."

I also disagree with the idea that it was Herod who wanted to wait till after an alleged celebration of a pagan deity called Ishtar or Astarte. There is no historical evidence that Herod or anyone else in Jerusalem celebrated Ishtar at this time.

Regarding the idea that Herod supposedly wanted to please the Jews by waiting till after the celebration of a pagan deity, brother Herb Evans aptly commented: "**Well, herein lies the fatal flaw ... If Herod was worried about pleasing the Jews in regard to taking Peter, how could Herod please the Jews by either politicking for or worshipping Astarte, Ishtar, Easter, or any other heathen deity? Israel, although apostate, was not idolatrous at this point of her history... Did they not know what happened to those Old Testament Jewish idolaters? That is if we are going to play what Herod knew and when he knew it, we can also play what the Jews knew and when they knew it. "**

I think a more reasonable explanation lies in the fact that at the time of the Passover celebration, there were multitudes of both Jews and Gentile proselytes present in Jerusalem. Herod knew that if he brought forth Peter to be killed before the assembled masses, they would have to make public the accusations laid against him. Peter might well preach a sermon in his defense. Peter

had already preached sermons with the result that 3000 were converted at Pentecost and another 5000 on a later day. If several thousands more believed the preaching of Peter about Christ and the resurrection, he might well have a riot on his hands. Perhaps Herod thought it better to wait till the multitudes had gone home after the Passover week, and then deal with Peter in a quieter fashion.

It is not that Herod himself was celebrating an alleged "Ishtar", or the Jewish Passover or what would come to be called the Christian Easter. Rather, it is the Holy Ghost speaking here in Acts 12:4 and telling us what this Passover celebration would come to signify for the believers in a risen Lord Jesus Christ. Christians today do not celebrate the Passover; we celebrate Easter which commemorates the great and central event of the glorious resurrection of the Lamb of God.

Our word EASTER is of Saxon origin and of precisely the same import with its German cognate OSTERN. The German word for Easter (Ostern) is derived from the old Teutonic form of *aufstehen / auferstehung*, that is - RESURRECTION." This is quoted from "Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History," translated in 1850 by C. F. Cruse, Hendrickson Publishers, p 437.

The passover was a type of the true lamb of God who delivers His people out of the bondage of sin. Yet in the Jewish passover, there is no type of the resurrection, only the death of the lamb. The main theme of the preaching in Acts is the glorious resurrection of the lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

The Holy Ghost is speaking here in Acts 12, and He changed the significance of the word pascha to mean Easter. After all, there was no Easter before this great event. Easter is associated with the Jewish passover as a yearly holy day. Does not the same thing occur in Scripture with what was previously called the "passover meal"? The Holy Ghost, speaking through Paul, now refers to the "passover meal" as "The Lord's Supper" in 1 Corinthians 11:20. It is no longer celebrated only once a year but can be celebrated as many times a year as we wish. See 1 Corinthians 11:26. But only once a year do we celebrate the resurrection, and in English and many other languages, this event is called Easter.

Dr. Paul Maier, professor of ancient history at Western Michigan University, observes that "...if all the evidence is weighed carefully and fairly, it is indeed justifiable, according to the canons of historical research, to conclude that the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea, in which Jesus was buried, was actually empty on the morning of THE FIRST EASTER (Caps are mine). And no shred of evidence has yet been discovered in literary sources, epigraphy, or archaeology that would disprove this statement."

Some would argue that the early Christians didn't celebrate Easter at this time, so it can not properly be called by this name but should be passover. The early Christians began very soon to commemorate the yearly event called Easter.

Testimonies about the early Christians celebrating Easter

The history of Christian Easter is told about in the book, A History of The Christian Church. The

first definite record of the celebration of Christian Easter is in connection with the visit of Polycarp (the bishop of Smyrna) to Anicetus (the bishop of Rome) in 154 or 155 in order to come to an agreement about the time of the observance of Easter. (Some say it was earlier, and there is dispute about the exact date of Polycarp's death) Polycarp represented the more ancient custom of observing Easter with a vigil, ending with the Lord's Supper, through the night of the fourteenth of the month Nisan (month of the Jewish calendar), like the Jewish Passover, regardless of what day of the week this day might fall.

Anicetus represented the Roman custom that was also followed by some parts of the East to have the Easter feast always on Sunday. They did not come to an agreement, but continued on each with their own practice. Many articles found on the internet say that Polycarp claimed the apostle John celebrated the yearly event of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. In any event, it seems the early church began very soon to celebrate a special day once of year to commemorate the resurrection of our Lord, and this day became known as Easter, which in the Greek language and many other foreign languages comes directly from this word Paska.

http://av1611.com/kjbp/faq/holland_ac12_4.html

The following is an excerpt from Dr. Thomas Holland's *Crowned With Glory* 2000

Acts 12:4 - "after Easter"

"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."

The Greek word pascha is translated as Passover in the KJV with this one exception where it is translated as Easter. Therefore, some point to this passage as a translation error on the KJV's part. However, earlier English translations such as Tyndale's NT, the Great Bible, and the Bishop's Bible also translated pascha as Easter in this verse, showing that the understanding here dealt with something other than the Jewish Passover. Also, the translation of pascha as Passover in Acts 12:4 was known to the king's translators since this is the reading of the Geneva Bible.

THE USE OF THE WORD PASCHA IN EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITINGS DEALT WITH THE CELEBRATION OF EASTER, AND NOT JUST THE JEWISH PASSOVER. [1] Dr. G. W. H. Lampe has correctly stated that **PASCHA CAME TO MEAN EASTER IN THE EARLY CHURCH.** The ancient Christians did not keep the Jewish Passover. Instead they kept as holy a day to celebrate the resurrection of Christ near the time of both Passover and the pagan festival celebrating the goddess Ostara. Dr. Lampe lists several rules and observances by Christians in celebration of their pascha or Easter. Lampe also points to various Greek words such as paschazo and paschalua that came to mean celebrate Easter and Eastertide. [2] Likewise, Dr. Gerhard Kittel notes that **PASCHA CAME TO BE CALLED EASTER IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE RESURRECTION** within the primitive Church. [3]

It seems that pascha can mean more than the Jewish holy day of Passover. In fact, Greeks today who wish to send the greeting Happy Easter say, kalee pascha. Literally it means good Passover. However it has come to mean good or happy Easter.

[1] See Dr. Walter Bauer's, A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957) Under the Greek word pascha we find #4. "in later Christian usage **the Easter festival**" (page 639)

[2] G. W. H. Lampe, A Patristic Greek Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 1048-1049.

[3] Gerhard Kittle, Theological Dictionary Of The New Testament, Vol. II. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 901-904. "**In Christian usage Easter is called pascha**" (page 897). "**The oldest accounts of a Christian Paschal feast take us back to the apostolic period.** The N.T. tells us nothing about the details, but the gaps may be filled in from accounts of the Quartodecimans, since their **Easter**, as we now know, was a direct continuation of that of the primitive Church." (page 901). "The paschal feast thus took place in the primitive Church at the same time as the Jewish Passover, that is, on the night of the 15th Nisan...Hence **the original Christian Easter**, as we have come to know and deduce it from the Quartodeciman sources, shared with the Jewish Passover not only the time and details of the rite but also the expectation of the Messiah...The first assured reference to a Sunday **Easter** is in 155 A.D., but it was probably much older than this." (pages 902-903)

<http://answers.org/issues/easter.html>

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Easter is an English corruption from the proto-Germanic root word meaning "to rise." (We see this in the contemporary German cognate "ost-" and the English cognate "east," the direction from which the sun rises in the morning.) It refers not only to Christ rising from the dead, but also to his ascension to heaven and to our future rising with him at his Second Coming for final judgment. IT IS NOT TRUE THAT IT DERIVES FROM THE PAGAN Germanic goddess OESTAR OR from the Babylonian goddess ISHTAR- both fertility symbols signifying the coming of spring images of fertility, new life, and renewal.

The first Easter occurred on the first day of the week after the Passover Sabbath. The first day of the week became the Christian's "sabbath rest" (Heb. 4:1-11), the time of weekly Christian celebration of the resurrection. Annually, the Lord's Day immediately subsequent to the Jewish Passover was a day of special resurrection celebration.

Early Christians consulted local rabbis to determine the date of Passover each year, which would correspond to Holy Week. Passover was determined by the lunar configurations of the latitude in which the Jewish community resided. There was no Jewish authority at Jerusalem to determine a uniform date after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. In communities with no Jewish presence, Christians found it even more difficult to determine the date. Once the churches became unified in the fourth century, the date was more consistent until the West's adoption of the revised Gregorian calendar in the sixteenth century.

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05228a.htm><http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05228a.htm>

We read in Eusebius (Hist. Eccl., V, xxiii): "A question of no small importance arose at that time [i.e. about A.D. 190]. The dioceses of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth

day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should always be observed as the feast of the life-giving pasch [epi tes tou soteriou Pascha heortes], contending that the fast ought to end on that day, whatever day of the week it might happen to be. However it was not the custom of the churches in the rest of the world to end it at this point, as they observed the practice, which from Apostolic tradition has prevailed to the present time, of terminating the fast on no other day than on that of the Resurrection of our Saviour.... These words of the Father of Church History, followed by some extracts which he makes from the controversial letters of the time, tell us almost all that we know concerning the paschal controversy in its first stage. A letter of St. Irenaeus is among the extracts just referred to, and this shows that the diversity of practice regarding Easter had existed at least from the time of 120 A.D.. Further, Irenaeus states that Polycarp, who like the other Asiatics, kept Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon, whatever day of the week that might be, following therein the tradition which he claimed to have derived from St. John the Apostle, came to Rome circa 150 A.D. about this very question."

Easter celebrations

<http://chi.gospelcom.net/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses/glmps100.shtml> The earliest Christians celebrated the resurrection on the fourteenth of Nisan (our March-April), the date of the Jewish Passover. Jewish days were reckoned from evening to evening, so Jesus had celebrated His Last Supper the evening of the Passover and was crucified the day of the Passover. Early Christians celebrating the Passover worshiped Jesus as the Paschal Lamb and Redeemer.

John Owen wrote concerning the celebration of Easter - "There was also a signal vindication of the truth pleaded for, in an instance of fact among the primitive churches. There was an opinion which prevailed very early among them about the necessary observation of Easter, in the room of the Jewish Passover, for the solemn commemoration of the death and resurrection of our Saviour.

And it was taken for granted by most of them, that the observance hereof was countenanced, if not rendered necessary to them, by the example of the apostles; for they generally believed that by them it was observed, and that it was their duty to accomodate themselves to their practices... By the later second century, it was accepted that the celebration of Easter was a practice of the disciples and an undisputed tradition that Easter was to be observed by virtue of Apostolical tradition was generally granted by all."

Christians had obviously been celebrating Easter before 150 A.D. or so, since Christian leaders met to discuss its proper date and not the fact of its observance. God is now calling the passover Easter because of its new signifiacne. He calleth those things which be not, as though they were. Has He not done this before in His word? Genesis 14:14 tells us that Abraham pursued those who had taken Lot captive unto Dan. There was not even a tribe of Israel called Dan let alone a

city named after them at this time. But God knew there would be.

In Genesis 21:14, 21, God calls the name of a place Beersheba before it is so named. In Isaiah 44:28 and 45:1, God speaks of Cyrus, my shepherd, his anointed "whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him", as though he already existed, yet Cyrus would not be born till many years later.

Again in Romans 4:17, "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." At the time Abraham had only one son, Ishmael. He was hardly a father of many nations, yet God says he had already made him a father of many nations.

There are two other examples in the scriptures of a religious holiday being established by God's people to commemorate a great deliverance or event. In Esther 9:26-27 we see the feast of Purim established. "Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year."

The other one is found in John 10:22 where we read, "And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter." This feast of the dedication was instituted in 164 BC when after Antiochus Epiphanes defiled the temple and Judas Maccabeus rededicated it. This holiday is now called Hanukkah.

Words can adapt to new meanings and events can obtain new significance. What was once called by one name can now be called by another. Much has changed since the victory over death and the putting away of sin; the types have been fulfilled and their significance brought to light in the face of Jesus Christ.

I am well aware of how this original Christian celebration of Easter has been corrupted over the years with the bunnies, candies, and eggs. But these corruptions came about much later in the history of the church.

What things of Christ and of God have not been corrupted to some degree by the world and even by the church itself? Nevertheless, there remains the central kernel of divine truth in I Cor. 15:20, that "Christ is risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept". The word Easter in Acts 12:4 is not an error, but rather a fuller revelation of the significance of the passover lamb, His sacrifice for our sins, and His resurrection from the dead.

Will Kinney

Notes from the internet.

At one of the Facebook clubs called "KJV ONLY" EXPOSING THE WHOLE VIEW OF THE ISSUE, a Bible critic named DeeJay writes:

“So you're saying that Luke had Easter in mind even though the celebration wouldn't happen until hundreds off years after?”

To whom I answered: “No, GOD had Easter in mind because that is what the yearly celebration of the Resurrection would be called and history has shown this to be true. What? God doesn't know what is going to happen in the future?”

Deejay then came back with: “Then why did God not use a different word other than the one that is used every other time as passover? seems like that might be just a bit confusing. ”

To whom I responded again: “That's actually a very good question, Deejay. I believe God used the same Greek word for both the pre-resurrection Passover and to show the fulfillment of the type in the Resurrection, He chose to use the same word so we can see the direct relationship that exists between the type and the fulfillment of the type. The ONLY time the King James Bible translates this word as Easter is the only time the word is used in the New Testament when it refers to a post-Resurrection event. The KJB got it right because God gave us this remarkable Book. There is no denying that the word paska MEANS both Passover AND Easter in many of the world's languages today.

Just another "coincidence" found in the King James Bible, huh?

Will Kinney

Brother Nick Sayers has written a very well documented article about the relationship between Passover and Easter, and shows how the King James Bible is the more accurate reading by rendering this word as Easter in Acts 12:4. <http://www.easterau.com/>

For another article by Scott Jones which shows that Easter is the correct translation here, go to http://www.lambliion.net/Articles/ScottJones/easter_or_passove.htm

Just recently (March 2010) another KJB believer sent to our Which Version club this article posted at King James Version dealing with Easter. It also has a lot o good historic information on the origin of the word Easter and how it is the yearly celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can see it here: <http://sites.google.com/site/kjvtoday/home/translation-issues/easter-or-passover-in-acts-124>

And now we have a brand new full length (55 minutes) video explaining in detail the origin of the word Easter and how it was consistently used to refer to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can see it here: <http://www.bible.net.au/flowplayer/example/index.html>

Will Kinney

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