

Skeptics and critics of the Bible often claim that the gospel of John contradicts the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, in reporting Jesus died before, rather than after, the Passover. Did Jesus die before, or after, Passover?



Alleged contradiction:

Can the Bible be trusted?

Was Jesus crucified on the daytime before the Passover meal or the daytime after?

(a) After ([Mark 14:12-17](#))

(b) Before. Before the feast of the Passover ([John 13:1](#)) Judas went out at night ([John 13:30](#)). The other disciples thought he was going out to buy supplies to prepare for the Passover meal ([John 13:29](#)). When Jesus was arrested, the Jews did not enter Pilate's judgment hall because they wanted to stay clean to eat the Passover ([John 18:28](#)). When the judgment was pronounced against Jesus, it was about the sixth hour on the day of Preparation for the Passover ([John 19:14](#))

This alleged contradiction correctly states the fact that the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke report that Jesus ate the Passover the night before he died, but incorrectly assert the gospel of John has Jesus dying before the Passover. The problem with this allegation is that it

ignores several significant facts in John's gospel and the Mosaic Law. The question is, did Jesus die before, or after, Passover?

John 13:1 reports that, **"Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come . . . "** (NAB). Jesus was aware that this would be his last day alive prior to his death.

John 13:4 reports that Jesus **"rose from supper . . . "** (NAB). Jesus got up from the passover meal to wash his disciples' feet. This event occurred either during, or just after, the passover supper, according to John's account, when we review it in light of the other three gospels. This took place that year on what we today call Thursday night. Passover had started that night at sundown, and would last until sundown the next day, Friday.

"Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival" (John 13:29 NIV). Which festival was this? It was not the Passover meal, which had just concluded. The Mosaic Law required a week long festival, beginning the day after the Passover, which on that year, began on Saturday.

"The fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight, is the Passover of Yahweh; and the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of Unleavened Bread for Yahweh. For seven days you will unleavened bread. On the first day you will hold a special assembly; you will do no heavy work. For seven days you will offer food burnt for Yahweh. On the seventh day there will be a sacred assembly; you will do no heavy work" (Leviticus 23:5-8 LSB). The fourteenth day of the first month was the Passover, and the 15th began the "Festival of Unleavened Bread" (Leviticus 23:6 NIV). The 15th day of the first month was always treated like a Sabbath, in which no work was to be done, no matter which day of the week it fell on. It was this Festival of Unleavened Bread, which was soon to begin, that the disciples thought Jesus was telling Judas to buy supplies for, and not the Passover.

"Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus to the palace of the Roman governor. By now

it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat Passover” (John 18:28 NIV). On the surface, this verse appears to indicate the Passover had not yet occurred, since it was in the wee hours before dawn. Since Matthew, Mark and Luke reported the Passover had been observed earlier that night, here is where critics say the gospels contradict. Is there an explanation?

“Pilate . . . brought Jesus out, and he sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover” (John 19:13,14 NASB). The term “Passover” was also commonly used by Jews at that time to refer to both the Passover meal on the 14th, and the weeklong Festival of Unleavened Bread, from the 15th through the 22nd. *“A voluntary peace offering was made on Passover and another, a compulsory one, on the next day, Nisan 15, the first day of the Festival of Unfermented Cakes. It was this second offering that the Jews were afraid they might not be able to eat if they contracted defilement in the judgment hall of Pilate”—The Temple, by Alfred Edersheim, 1874, pp. 186, 187.*

“Now since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down.” (John 19:31 NAB) By saying “the Sabbath of that week was a solemn one”, it means the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which always a Sabbath. But that particular year it fell on the weekly Saturday Sabbath. So, the “preparation day”, spoken of here, is the preparation for the week long Festival of Unleavened Bread, and not the Passover.

Therefore, Jesus ate the Passover meal on the 14th day of the first month, Thursday night that year, but before he died on Friday afternoon, which was still the 14th day of the first month, since Jewish days ran from sundown to sundown. This occurred prior to the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which began the next day, the 15th day of the first month.

The scriptural facts are that Jesus did die before, not after, Passover.