

The Quartodecimans and Quasi-Quartodecimans

Few people today are aware that during the first four centuries C.E. support was very strong among the early disciples and assemblies following Yahushua the messiah for the Aristocratic system of keeping Phasekh (System A). It may also come as a surprise to learn that this view was in fact the original practice of all orthodox Christians. Its advocates and supporters were in later centuries referred to as the Quartodecimans (14th keepers). In this present chapter we shall investigate the antiquity of the Quartodeciman practice, demonstrate that they observed the 14th day of the first moon for the Phasekh supper, and present their claim that they observed Phasekh according to both Scriptures and the examples set forth by the messiah and his apostles. As part of this discussion, we will also examine the quasi-Quartodeciman views, especially the early western innovation (System D).

Keepers of the 14th

Beginning in the third century C.E., those who kept the 14th of the first moon as the Phasekh supper and festival were referred to as “Quartodecimans” by members of the Roman Church and others. Unfortunately, since the view of the Quartodecimans was eventually suppressed by the Church of Rome,¹ transmission of their original writings was allowed to fall by the wayside. With only a few exceptions—and there are exceptions—the evidence we have for their practices was recorded by their antagonists.

Nevertheless, knowledge of the Quartodecimans was retained by those Christians of that period who were advocating the western views for Systems D and E.² Sozomenus (mid-fifth century C.E.), for example, writes, “The Quartodecimans are so called because they observe this festival (of Phasekh), like the Jews, on the 14th day of the moon, and hence their name.”³ John of Damascus similarly states, “The Quartodecimans celebrate Phasekh on a fixed day of the year, on that day which coincides with the 14th of the moon, whether it be a Saturday or Sunday.”⁴ Jerome notes that the bishops of Asia,

¹ For the suppression of the Quartodecimans and quasi-Quartodecimans by the Roman Church see FSDY, 2.

² System D differs from System E in that System D calculates the Phasekh of the resurrection on the first day of the week that falls from the beginning of the 14th until the end of the 20th day of the first moon, while System E places the Phasekh of the resurrection on the first day of the week that falls from the beginning of the 15th until the end of the 21st day of the first moon.

³ Sozomenus, 7:18. He adds that the Quartodecimans of this period kept the Phasekh “more according to the manner of the Jews” (Sozomenus, 1:16), implying similarities but not exactness.

⁴ John Dam., 50.

“in accordance with some ancient custom, celebrated the Phasekh with the Jews on the 14th of the moon.”⁵

Yet the Quartodeciman Phasekh of the early Christians was markedly different from the Phasekh of the Pharisees and other Hasidic Jews. They directly opposed the official Jewish practice sponsored by the Pharisees, arguing that the deity (Yahweh) warned believers about these Jews, that they “did always err in their heart as regards the precept of the Torah concerning the Phasekh.”⁶ The Hasidic Jews did observe the 14th of Abib as the Phasekh, but for them this meant only a day of preparation, the removing of leavened bread from their homes, and observing the rituals for sacrificing the Phasekh lamb. They did not attend the supper of the lamb until the night of the 15th, which they generally referred to as the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

The early Christian assemblies, on the other hand, celebrated the 14th of the first moon as the day of the Phasekh supper, as the time of the Eucharist, and as a high Sabbath festival. The Quartodecimans also differed from the Pharisees in that they observed the seven days of unleavened bread like the early Sadducees, from the 14th until the end of the 20th of the first moon (System A), not from the 15th through the 21st (System B). The only similarity with the Pharisees was the fact that the Pharisees included the 14th as part of their overall Phasekh celebration.⁷

At the same time, during the first few centuries C.E., there were still some conservative Sadducees and Samaritans tenaciously holding on to their ancient Aristocratic practice. It is very probable that the Phasekh supper observed by these conservative Jews might well have been used as still another reference point for those charging the Quartodecimans with celebrating their Phasekh supper on the 14th “with the Jews.” In either case, all of the Jews, whether Hasidic or Aristocratic, referred to the 14th as the Phasekh and it was on this day that the Quartodecimans were found observing their sacred day.

The Quartodecimans differed from the Jews of the earlier Aristocratic school in that they believed that, with the death of the messiah, Christians were no longer under the Torah. They also understood the fulfillment of the Phasekh sacrifice in the death of the messiah. For that reason, the Quartodecimans saw no need for the Levitical priesthood and, accordingly, no further need for any of the commanded sacrifices of the Torah.⁸

On the other side of the equation, the Pharisees of this period labeled the early Christians, especially those living in the East, as *minim* (heresy) and “Sadducees.”⁹ This label seems premised upon the fact that the early Christians (Quartodecimans), like the Sadducees, not only rejected the oral laws ascribed to by the Pharisees and rabbis but celebrated the observance of the

⁵ Jerome, *Lives*, 45.

⁶ This Quartodeciman argument is reported by Peter Alex., frag. 5:4.

⁷ Jos., *Antiq.*, 2:15:1.

⁸ That the followers of the messiah were not under the written Torah see Rom., 6:14f; Gal., 3:22–25, 5:18. Further, Jer., 7:21f, notes that when the Israelites left Egypt there were no commanded burnt offerings or sacrifices. Also review our discussion of this issue above in Part I.

⁹ That the Pharisees referred to the early Christian assemblies as Sadducees see LS, pp. 97–99; JE, 10, p. 633; PSSP, p. 226; as *minim* see JQR, 60, p. 198; CTM, pp. 361–397.

seven days of unleavened bread, their Phasekh supper, and Pentecost on the same days as the conservative Sadducees.¹⁰

The Original Christian View

The suppression of the Quartodecimans by the Roman Church has been so complete that few in the modern world are even aware that the Quartodecimans represent the original Phasekh practice of all the early orthodox Christian assemblies: both Jewish Christians as well as those of the nations. This important discovery was first demonstrated years ago by E. Schwarts, and later confirmed by K. Holl and B. Lohse.¹¹ To the voice of these eminent scholars has been added that of the well-respected historian Joachim Jeremias, who concludes, “the passover of the Early Church lived on in that of the Quartodecimarians.”¹² He also notes that “the Quartodecimarian passover celebration represents, as we know today, the direct continuation of the primitive Christian passover.”¹³ Likewise, Alfred Loisy concludes:

At the beginning the festival was held, as was natural enough, on the same day as the Jewish Passover which might fall on any day of the week, and with no difference except that it now commemorated the Christian’s salvation, won for him by the death of Christ, the true pascal lamb, as the fourth Gospel teaches. The so-called quartodeciman usage, maintained by the congregations in Asia at the end of the second century and condemned by Pope Victor, WAS THE PRIMITIVE USAGE OF ALL THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS and is indeed presupposed by the Gospel tradition.¹⁴

Especially noted for advocating this Quartodeciman view are those members from the regions of the famous seven assemblies of Asia listed in the book of Revelation, namely, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.¹⁵ Surrounding communities concurred, including the assemblies of Cilicia, Mesopotamia, and Syria.¹⁶ We must also not forget that in the days of Emperors Nero and Hadrian, the Christian population was far more numerous in Asia Minor and Syria,¹⁷ the heart of Quartodeciman

¹⁰ As with the Sadducees (DBS, 7, pp. 861–864; EEC, p. 119f, 1b, n. a), the Christians always observed the Festival of Pentecost (the 50th day) on the first day of the week, counting the 50 days from the day after the weekly Sabbath falling within the seven days of unleavened bread (e.g., Eusebius, *Pas.*, 4; Athanasius, *Fest. Let.*, 1:10; Apost. Constit., 5:20:2; Theophilus Alex., 20:4 (Jerome, *Epist.*, 96, 20:4); Egeria, 43; ACC, 2, pp. 1157–1161.

¹¹ ZNW, 7, 10f; GAK, 2, p. 214; DPDQ, pp. 74–93.

¹² EWJ, p. 122.

¹³ EWJ, p. 19.

¹⁴ BCR, pp. 226f.

¹⁵ Rev., 1:11. Some of the most famous Quartodecimans, for example, were Polycrates (bishop of Ephesus), Melito (bishop of Sardis), Polycarp (bishop of Smyrna), Apollinarius (bishop of Hierapolis, near Laodicea), and Sagaris of Laodicea.

¹⁶ Athanasius, *Epist. Afros*, 2, and *Epist. Syn.*, 1:5.

¹⁷ EPC, pp. 63, 87, 103; CRG, p. 108. One is mindful of the statement of the newly installed Roman governor named Pliny to Emperor Trajan in 112 C.E. with reference to the country of

country, than other parts of the Roman empire. The 14th was even observed in the Christian assemblies as far away as the British Isles, where it continued under the System D (early western) form until the end of the seventh century C.E.¹⁸

Likewise, the Quartodeciman practice originally prospered in Rome, Egypt, Ethiopia, as well as other western countries, until the early part of the second century C.E.¹⁹ Due to an accumulation of Roman and Jewish persecution against the Christians, their own anti-Jewish sentiments, and a strong desire by some of the assemblies to separate themselves from the stigma of being classified as a Jewish sect, the Christians at Rome and Alexandria, as well as a few other western cities, began to turn to a modified Quartodeciman interpretation for the observance of Phasekh, System D.²⁰

Next, we must divide the Quartodecimans into two general camps: the original and the quasi (those sects which developed in later years who gave variant traditions to the Quartodeciman practice). Cyril Richardson calls the original Quartodecimans the “conservatives” among the early assemblies.²¹ F. E. Brightman refers to them as the “original Quartodecimans” and to those of later practices as “quasi-Quartodecimans.”²² Among the later quasi-Quartodecimans we must include the Montanists²³ and the Sabbatians,²⁴ who are one branch of the Novatians,²⁵ and are also called Proto-Paschitae.²⁶

One difference between the two camps of Quartodecimans was the fact that the original Quartodecimans did not fast on the 14th at Phasekh,²⁷ while some of the quasi-Quartodecimans “fast and celebrate the vigil and the festival

Bithynia, Asia Minor. Bithynia was one of the several countries of Asia Minor, listed along with Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and Asia proper, as having Christian assemblies to whom the apostle Keph wrote (1 Pet., 1:1). Pliny the Younger notes of the Christians in his region that, “It is not only the towns but villages and rural districts also which are infected through contact with this wretched cult” (Pliny Young., *Epist.*, 10:96). Tertullian reports that Pliny was “disturbed by their very number” (*Apol.*, 2:6). Eusebius similarly writes that Pliny was “disurbed by the great number of martyrs” (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 3:33:1; also see Eusebius, *Arm.*, Oly. 221). Paul Allard interprets these and the other words from Pliny’s letter to mean that Pliny had arrived in a Christian state (HDP, p. 154).

¹⁸ Bede, *Hist.*, 2:2, 4, 3:3f, 3:17, 35, 7:21.

¹⁹ Evidence of the Quartodeciman practices in Rome, Egypt, and Ethiopia comes from copies of the Quartodeciman text entitled *Epistula Apostolorum* discovered in those regions: a Latin text in a Vienna palimpsest, a Coptic version found in Cairo, and an Ethiopic translation (see SACE). Also see our discussion of how and when the western Christian Phasekh (Systems D and E) originated below in Chap. XX–XXI and in FSDY, 2.

²⁰ For the development of System D and its cognate form System E see below Chap. XX–XXI.

²¹ JTS, (NS) 24, pp. 81, 83, 84.

²² JTS, 25, pp. 262f.

²³ Sozomenus, 7:18. Montanism was an early form of Pentecostalism which came into existence during the mid-second century C.E. (NCE, 9, pp. 1078f). Sozomenus (7:18) notes that the Montanist counted the festivals according to the cycles of the sun and not the moon. The first day of the year was always the first day after the vernal equinox, which according to Roman reckoning was the ninth day before the calends of April (i.e., March 24). They kept Phasekh on the 14th day of that cycle (April 6), “when it falls on the day of the resurrection; otherwise they celebrate it on the following Sovereign’s day; for it is written according to their assertion that the festival may be held on any day between the 14th and 21st (days).” Also see the comments in BCal, pp. 162f.

²⁴ Sozomenus, 7:18; Socrates Schol., 5:21.

²⁵ Socrates Schol., 4:28.

²⁶ ACC, 2, pp. 1150f; EEC, p. 163.

simultaneously” on the 14th.²⁸ Other quasi-Quartodecimans only kept the Phasekh on a fixed day of the year, March 25, which according to the Acts of Pilate was the date of the messiah’s death, and consequently, by this interpretation, the day of the solar year on which the 14th of the moon happened to fall in the year of his death.²⁹ Because many of the quasi-Quartodeciman views only provide later traditions and interpretations built up during the Christian period, they offer little to our research. Therefore, we shall concentrate mainly on the original assemblies and the common themes and premises that held these Quartodeciman views together.

Another quasi-Quartodeciman outgrowth of the original Quartodeciman view was System D (the early western variation). Like the Quartodecimans, those following System D counted the seven days of unleavened bread from the 14th until the end of the 20th. Yet they differed from the other Quartodecimans in that they observed the Phasekh supper and Eucharist only on the first day of the week—the day of the week on which the messiah was resurrected—when that day fell during those seven days of unleavened bread. If the first day of the week happened to fall on the 14th then they would observe the 14th as the Phasekh.³⁰ This system was continued in some parts of the British Isles until the end of the seventh century C.E.³¹ A variation of this view was used by the Audians during the time of the Roman emperor Constantine.³²

Phasekh Supper on the 14th

The Quartodeciman assemblies followed the Aristocratic understanding of בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים (*byn ha-arabim*; within the periods of twilight) and kept the 14th of the first moon both as the time of the Phasekh supper and as a high Sabbath. To begin with, it was widely believed among the early assemblies (a belief that continued for a considerable period of time among those of the eastern assemblies) that, at the Exodus from Egypt, the Phasekh sacrifice occurred after sunset, followed that same night by the Phasekh supper, and that both events occurred on the 14th day of the first moon (sunset-to-sunset reckoning). The Christian writer Ephraem the Syrian (mid-fourth century C.E.), to demonstrate, reports that the book of Exodus includes the story about “the lamb” of Phasekh, noting that:

. . . on the 14th day (of the moon) they slaughtered
AND ate it.³³

In another place he states:

And on the 10th of this moon, (each) man will procure a lamb for his household, and will keep it until the 14th; then he will slaughter it at sunset, and

²⁷ JTS, 25, pp. 260f.

²⁸ John Dam., 50.

²⁹ Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 50:1:5–8, 50:15; JTS, 25, p. 262f.

³⁰ E.g., Anatolius, 10–12; Bede, *Hist.*, 2:2, 4, 3:3.

³¹ See below Chap. XIX, pp. 307ff.

³² ACC, 2, p. 1150; EEC, pp. 169f.

³³ Ephraem, *Exod.*, proem., 14, “*et de agno, die decima quarta immolando et edendo.*”

sprinkle some of its blood on the door-posts and the lintels of the house where they will eat it.³⁴

In turn, the Quartodecimans and others, including the advocates of System E,³⁵ all believed that the messiah both ate his last Phasekh supper and died on the 14th of Abib. Defining this issue, Ephraem continues:

And on the 14th (day), when (the lamb) was slaughtered, its type (the messiah) was killed on a (torture-)stake.³⁶

Aphraates similarly writes:

Our saviour ate the Phasekh with his disciples in the sacred night of the 14th . . . And he was taken in the night of the 14th, and his trial lasted until the sixth hour, and at the time of the sixth hour they sentenced him and lifted him up on the (torture-)stake.³⁷

Scholars have noticed this important difference between the Quartodeciman view and the Hasidic practice of the Pharisees. Raniero Cantalamessa, for example, contrasts this eastern Quartodeciman premise as expressed by Aphraates with that of the Jews (Pharisees), writing:

The Jewish Passover was eaten in the night after the fourteenth of Nisan, but Aphraates puts Jesus' Passover meal in the night leading to the fourteenth, which his tradition held as the day of Jesus's death.³⁸

Following this logic, the Quartodecimans and those agreeing with them claimed that the 14th was the correct day in the Torah for keeping the Phasekh supper as well as the Phasekh sacrifice. The African Christian writer Pseudo-Cyprian (c.243 C.E.), for example, attempts to correct Hippolytus—an advocate of System E who believed that the Pharisees were correct in keeping the Phasekh on the 15th—with quotations from Scriptures. He writes that Yahweh commanded the whole assembly of Israel through Moses “to wear certain clothes when they ATE THE PHASEKH ON THE 14TH.”³⁹ The quasi-Quartodeciman, Columbanus of Luxovium, similarly argues that “the 14th day of the moon” was chosen by Yahweh as the night for the first Phasekh supper and the beginning of the Exodus.⁴⁰

³⁴ Ephraem, *Exod.*, 12:1.

³⁵ For examples of those following System E who believed that the messiah kept the Phasekh on the 14th, as against the Pharisees who kept it on the 15th, see Peter Alex., frag. 5:1–7; Clement, *Pas.*, frag. 28; Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 2:23:3, 4:10:1, cf., EEC, p. 145, 28, n. b; Eusebius, *Pas.*, 8–10; Eutychius, 2. Those of System E depart from the other systems in that they believe that the messiah's Phasekh supper was not the legal Phasekh of the written Torah but an innovation.

³⁶ Ephraem, *Exod.*, 12:3.

³⁷ Aphraates, *Dem.*, 12:6.

³⁸ EEC, p. 183, 87, n. b.

³⁹ Ps.-Cyprian, 2. The mention of clothes by Ps.-Cyprian is a reference to Exod., 12:11, “And you shall eat it (the Phasekh) this way; (with) your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.”

⁴⁰ Gregory, *Epist.*, 127.

Pseudo-Cyprian then argues that the events which occurred and special rules which were required in Egypt during the night of the Phasekh—from the sacrifice of the lamb, the conditions by which the children of Israel should eat the lamb and other foods, the protection of the houses by means of the lamb's blood, followed by the arrival of the angel of death, and the burning of the remains of the lamb at dawn—were prophetic signatures for the day of the messiah's capture and murder. Not only was the lamb sacrificed but, by punishing the Egyptians, Yahweh had indicated “the villainy” of those in Egypt (a type of Jerusalem)⁴¹ up until that evening. This villainy, Pseudo-Cyprian argues, was symbolic of the acts of those Jews who “came out with swords and clubs” against the messiah “on the first day of unleavened bread *ad vesperam* (at twilight),”⁴² i.e., the events which took place during the night that the messiah ate his Phasekh supper and then was seized by the servants of the chief priests on the Mount of Olives.⁴³ In another place this writer adds that the messiah “ate the Phasekh . . . and suffered the next day” (i.e., in the daylight portion of the 14th).⁴⁴ With this construct in mind, Pseudo-Cyprian in effect charges the Pharisaic method, followed by the advocates of System E, with error because they continued to keep the Phasekh supper on the 15th day. He concludes:

And then we shall find that the Phasekh should not be observed by the Jews themselves before or after the 14th of the moon.⁴⁵

Anatolius of Alexandria (c.270 C.E.) writes of the Quartodecimans:

But nothing was difficult to them with whom it was lawful to celebrate the Phasekh on any day when the 14th of the moon happened after the equinox.

⁴¹ Cf. Rev., 11:8.

⁴² Ps.-Cyprian, 2. Those who were coming against the messiah with swords and clubs captured him after his “Last Supper” Phasekh (Matt., 26:46–57; Mark, 14:43–50; Luke, 22:47–54), which meal took place “on the first day of unleavened bread, when they kill the Phasekh (lamb)” (Mark, 14:12; Luke, 22:7; Matt., 26:17) and at night (Mark, 14:27–30; 1 Cor., 11:17–28, esp. v. 23; cf., John, 18:3). It was after this meal that Judas went out to lead the Jewish leaders to Yahushua. Therefore, since the reference of Ps.-Cyprian is to the time when the enemies of the messiah “came out” against Yahushua and not just to the events that occurred after they actually captured him, it is clear that Ps.-Cyprian uses the Latin term *ad vesperam* to include the late evening before midnight, about which time the messiah was captured.

⁴³ 1 Cor., 11:23–27; cf., Matt., 26:21–75; Mark, 14:18–72; Luke, 21:14–62; John, 18:1–27.

⁴⁴ Ps.-Cyprian, 9. In an effort to uphold a Friday crucifixion against the fact that the messiah spent three days and nights in death (Matt., 12:40; cf., Jon., 1:7), Aphraates and some others held to the unique definition that the three hours of darkness that preceded Yahushua's death (from the sixth until the ninth hour of the 14th day; Matt., 27:45f; Mark, 15:33f; Luke, 23:44–46) and the three hours of daylight remaining in that day (the 9th until the 12th hour of the 14th of Abib) represent the 15th day and the first day of Yahushua's death (e.g., Aphraates, *Dem.*, 12:6–8, 12f). Therefore, the death of the messiah is counted as part of the next day, though in reality it was the afternoon of the 14th (EEC, p. 186, n. i). This arrangement explains Ephraem's statements that Yahushua ate the Phasekh on the 14th but was slain on the 15th (Ephraem, *Hymns*, 3:1). This system of counting must not be confused with the Roman and Alexandrian method (midnight-to-midnight reckoning) which counts the night of the Last Supper as part of the 13th and the death of the messiah as falling within the Roman day of the 14th (e.g., Clement, *Pas.*, frag. 28; Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 2:22:3).

⁴⁵ Ps.-Cyprian, 2.

Following their example up to the present time all the bishops of Asia—as themselves also receiving the rule from an unimpeachable authority, to wit, the evangelist John, who learnt it on the breast of the sovereign (Yahushua), and drank in spiritual instructions without doubt—were in the way of celebrating the Phasekh festival, without question, every year, whenever the 14th day of the moon had come, and the lamb was sacrificed by the Jews after the equinox was past.⁴⁶

With regard to the Quartodeciman practice of the apostle John, the priest Wilfrid, at the Synod of Whitby (640 C.E.), admitted:

And John, according to the custom of the Torah, on the 14th day of the first moon *ad vesperam* (= *byn ha-arabim*) began to celebrate the Phasekh Festival, not regarding whether it fell on the Sabbath day or any other day of the week.⁴⁷

Wilfrid then adds clarification when he remarks that both the apostles John and Keph (Peter) looked “for the rising of the moon *ad vesperam* (= *byn ha-arabim*)⁴⁸ on the 14th day of its age, in the first moon.”⁴⁹ This admission verifies that the period of *byn ha-arabim* was counted by the Quartodecimans from just after sunset, for while the moon was rising toward the middle of the night sky they ate their Phasekh meal.⁵⁰ Therefore, unlike the practice of the Pharisees (who began the festival at noon on the 14th), the apostles observed Phasekh from the beginning of the 14th, which is required if one is to eat the Phasekh supper at night during the 14th.

The famous Quartodeciman writer Melito of Sardis (c.161–169 C.E.), as another example, is specifically said to have observed Phasekh on the 14th.⁵¹ In

⁴⁶ Anatolius, 10.

⁴⁷ Bede, *Hist.*, 3:25.

⁴⁸ See above Chap. XIII, pp. 215f, n. 36.

⁴⁹ Bede, *Hist.*, 3:25.

⁵⁰ During the Phasekh season, the moon of the 14th actually makes its appearance on the 13th day, about an hour to one and one-half hours prior to sunset. Since Wilfrid’s reference is to those who observed the night of the 14th for their Phasekh meal, the rising of the moon on the 14th can only refer to its rising during twilight while moving toward the middle of the night sky.

⁵¹ In the letter from Polycrates to Pope Victor of Rome (written about 196 C.E.), Polycrates refers to “Melito the eunuch, who lived entirely in the sacred *ruach* (spirit), who lies in Sardis, waiting for the visitation from heaven when he will rise from the dead.” He adds that Melito was one who “kept the fourteenth day of the Phasekh according to the good news (i.e., the Synoptic Texts), never swerving, but following according to the rule of trust” (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:24).

Melito, bishop of Sardis, wrote in the time of Emperor Verus (161–169 B.C.E.) (Jerome, *Lives*, 24; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:13:8). Not long after the controversy between Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, (System A) and Anicetus, bishop of Rome, (System D), about 159 or 160 C.E., the dispute was revived again at Laodicea, upon which occasion Melito wrote his two books *On the Phasekh*. These works are dated, “in the time of Servilius Paulus, proconsul of Asia, at the time when Sagaris was martyred” (i.e., c.164–167 C.E.). In these works Melito defends the opinion of the Asiatics (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:26). More precisely, Melito of Sardis (frag. 4) writes, “Under Servilius Paulus, proconsul of Asia, at the time when Sagaris bore witness, there was a great dispute at Laodicea about the Phasekh, which had coincided according to season in those days.” The most likely date, as

quoting Exodus, 12:6, which discusses the sacrifice of the 14th, he translates the Hebrew בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים (byn ha-arabim) by the Greek πρὸς ἑσπέραν (*pros esperan*; at twilight), just as found in the LXX. Melito then connects both the Phasekh sacrifice performed at twilight (a time which Greek writers identified as a part of night)⁵² and the Phasekh supper with the same night, the 14th:

For behold, he (Yahweh) says, you will take a lamb without flaw or blemish, and πρὸς ἑσπέραν (*pros esperan*; at twilight) you will slaughter it in the midst of the sons of Israel, and at night you will eat it in haste, and not a bone of it will you break. These things, he said, you will do IN A SINGLE NIGHT. You will eat it according to families and tribes, with loins girt and staff in hand. For this is the Phasekh of the sovereign, an eternal memorial for the sons of Israel.⁵³

No Animal Sacrifice

The Quartodecimans also believed that there was no longer a need to sacrifice a Phasekh lamb, for “the messiah our Phasekh was sacrificed for us.”⁵⁴ Yet they continued with the Phasekh supper and the eating of unleavened bread, per the instructions of Saul, “Let us keep the festival, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”⁵⁵

The yearly slaughter of the Phasekh lamb came only by means of the written Torah. Therefore, its practice was seen merely as a foreshadowing of the messiah’s death. The Quartodeciman writer Melito of Sardis, for example, states of the mystery of the Phasekh, “It is old according to the Torah, but new according to the λόγον (*logon*; word).”⁵⁶ He adds:

When the thing modeled has been realized, then the model itself is destroyed; it has outlived its use. Its image has passed over to reality. What was useful becomes useless when the object of true value emerges. . . . For the sacrifice of the sheep was once of value, but now it is valueless through the life of the sovereign. The death of the sheep was once of value, but now it is valueless through the salvation of the sovereign.⁵⁷

discussed by Stuart G. Hall (Hall, *Melito*, pp. xxi-xxii) is the year 166/167 C.E. (May reckoning). Since this event coincided with the Phasekh season in those days, we would understand that the debate took place in the spring of 167 C.E. Also see Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:26:3; cf., *EEC*, p.141, 26. n. b; *BCal*, p. 160.

⁵² See above Chap. XIII, pp. 215f, n. 36.

⁵³ Melito, *Pas.*, 12f.

⁵⁴ The reference is to Saul’s comment in 1 Cor., 5:7.

⁵⁵ 1 Cor., 5:7f.

⁵⁶ Melito, *Pas.*, 3. The λόγον (*logon*), i.e., the “word” of Yahweh, is a reference to the messiah (John, 1:1–18).

⁵⁷ Melito, *Pas.*, 37, 44.

Melito continues by stating that the messiah is the Phasekh lamb that was foreshadowed by the sacrifice of the lamb under the Torah of Moses: “This is he who is the Phasekh of our salvation.”⁵⁸ Apollinarius of Hierapolis (a city in Asia located near Laodicea), a Quartodeciman who flourished in the reign of Marcus Antoninus Verus (161–169 C.E.),⁵⁹ emphasized that the 14th is the sovereign’s “true Phasekh,” since on that day the servant of the deity took the place of the lamb.⁶⁰

The lamb was killed at twilight at the beginning of the 14th and eaten that night, just as Yahushua observed his “Last Supper” Phasekh. But the lamb symbolized the death of the true lamb later that same day. Therefore, Melito speaks of the messiah’s death “in the middle of the day for all to see,” not at “πρὸς ἑσπέραν (*pros esperan* = *byn ha-arabim*).”⁶¹

Besides the Phasekh lamb as a type of the messiah, and therefore connected with the sacrifice and supper of the lamb on the 14th, Melito connects other fixtures of the Phasekh supper with the 14th. For instance, he identifies the events that occurred on the day of the messiah’s death (the 14th) with the bitter herbs and unleavened bread of the Phasekh supper and the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

That is why the Festival of Unleavened Bread is bitter, as your scripture says: You shall eat unleavened bread with bitter herbs. Bitter for you the nails which you sharpened. Bitter for you the tongue which you whetted. Bitter for you the false witnesses you presented. Bitter for you the scourges you prepared. Bitter for you the lashes you inflicted. Bitter for you Judas whom you hired. Bitter for you Herod (Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee) whom you obeyed. Bitter for you Caiaphas whom you believed. Bitter for you the gall you prepared. Bitter for you the vinegar you cultivated. Bitter for you the thorns which you gathered. Bitter for you the hands which you bloodied. For you have slain your sovereign in the midst of Jerusalem.⁶²

⁵⁸ Melito, *Pas.*, 69.

⁵⁹ Jerome, *Lives*, 26; Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:26.

⁶⁰ Chron. Paschale, 1, p. 14.

⁶¹ Stuart G. Hall also recognized this apparent contradiction (Hall, *Melito*, p. 53, n. 56). It is true that Melito makes the analogy that the messiah, as the lamb of the flock, was dragged to slaughter and was “an ἑσπέρας (*esperas*; twilight) sacrifice; a nighttime burial” (Melito, *Pas.*, 71). Hall thinks the analogy is “forced” (Hall, *Melito*, p. 39, n. 38), but this phrase conforms to the parable of the Phasekh lamb used in this same section. For example, we know that the messiah was not buried at night but buried in the daytime before the arrival of sunset and the new day (Mark, 15:42–47; Luke, 23:50–54; John, 19:31; cf., Deut., 21:22f). The mentioning of a nighttime burial, therefore, is merely a reference to the parable allowed for by the command to eat the Phasekh at night (Exod., 12:8). It is an analogy pointing to the messiah’s death, for night and darkness are a metaphor for death. Also see Matt., 27:45–51; Mark, 15:33–37; Luke, 23:44–47, where darkness covered the land at the time of the messiah’s death. The imposition of darkness in mid-afternoon on the day that the messiah died was a demonstration of divine twilight meant for the sacrifice of the divine Phasekh. This divine Phasekh was itself symbolized by the natural twilight after sunset wherein the natural Phasekh lamb was sacrificed.

⁶² Melito, *Pas.*, 93.

Accordingly, the things of the Phasekh supper, which they held to have taken place during the night of the 14th, expressed the events for that day. In the same manner, the sacrifice of the Phasekh lamb at the beginning of the 14th foretold the death of the messiah later that same day.

According to Messiah and Scriptures

The Quartodecimans claimed scriptural authority for their practice of Phasekh and, though they considered themselves not to be under the written Torah, they followed the guides of the Torah with regard to “all the festivals.” Chrysostom (347–407 C.E.), a strong advocate of the Roman Catholic System E, for example, demonstrates this point in his work entitled *Adversus Judaeos*, where he condemns the Quartodeciman Christians because of their practice of celebrating such scriptural high Sabbath days as the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Festival of Tabernacles.⁶³ Chrysostom could not condemn Pentecost (the Festival of Weeks) because all of the assemblies, including the Roman Catholic Church, continued to observe that day as a high Sabbath.⁶⁴

In reference to Phasekh, the Quartodecimans claimed that they had based their practice upon the custom followed by the messiah and his disciples as well as upon the commandments found both in the Old and New Testaments. To demonstrate, Eusebius records that the 14th (the night of the Phasekh full moon)⁶⁵ was observed as Phasekh by the Asian assemblies.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, the Quartodeciman from Asia named Apollinarius of Hierapolis writes:

The 14th is the true Phasekh of the sovereign, the great sacrifice: the son (the messiah) of the deity in the place of the lamb . . . who was buried on the day of the Phasekh with the stone placed over the tomb.⁶⁷

The 14th (Hebrew reckoning), accordingly, was not only the day when the messiah ate the Phasekh lamb; it was also the day on which his murder took place. Peter of Alexandria, with a specific reference to the 14th of Abib, notes that the Quartodecimans “affirm that after he (Yahushua) had eaten the Phasekh, he was betrayed.”⁶⁸ Within this context, a Quartodeciman told Hippolytus (c.200–236 C.E.):

The messiah kept the Phasekh ON THAT DAY (the 14th) and he suffered; whence it is needful that I, too, should keep it (the Phasekh supper) in the same manner AS THE SOVEREIGN DID.⁶⁹

⁶³ Chrysostom, *Adver. Jud.*, 1 (PG, 48, p. 848).

⁶⁴ For example see Tertullian, *de Orat.*, 23:1–2, *de Bapt.*, 19:2; Origen, *Celsus*, 8:22; Eusebius, *Pas.*, 4; Athanasius, *Fest. Let.*, 1:10, *Fest. Let.*, 14:6; Didymus, 5:88; Syn. Elvira, *Can.*, 43; Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, 10:34; Apost. Constit., 5:20:2; Theophilus Alex., 20:4; Egeria, 43; ACC, 2, pp. 1157–1161. Pentecost also went through a transition among Christians. “By the beginning of the 4th century C.E., Pentecost has lost its ancient christological content and it is seen as the feast of the descent of the Holy Spirit” (EEC, p. 208, 123, n. c; cf., Paulinus, *Poem*, 27; Augustine, *Serm. Mai.* 158:4).

⁶⁵ Philo, *Exod.*, 1:9, *Spec.*, 2:27.

⁶⁶ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:24.

⁶⁷ Chron. Paschale, 1, pp. 13f.

⁶⁸ Peter Alex., frag. 5:7.

⁶⁹ Hippolytus, frag. 1; Chron. Paschale, 1, pp. 12f, “λέγει γὰρ οὕτως ἐποίησε τὸ πάσχα ὁ χριστὸς τότε τῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἔπαθεν.”

As F. E. Brightman observes, this statement “implies that the speaker reckoned the day as from sunset to sunset” for the reasons that “only so would the Last Supper and the Passion fall on the same day.”⁷⁰ Following Saul’s words to the Corinthians, the assemblies ate “the sovereign’s supper,” i.e., the Phasekh supper, “in the night in which he was delivered up.”⁷¹ The Quartodeciman *Epistula Apostolorum* (140–170 C.E.) shows that this Phasekh meal and its night of remembrance continued until the cockcrow (3 A.M.) on the 14th, the time of Keph’s denial.⁷² This data also proves that the Quartodecimans understood the scriptural day as beginning with sunset and *byn ha-arabim*.

The Quartodecimans also based their practice upon the writings of the New Testament. In the second century C.E., for example, the leader of the Quartodecimans of Asia was Polycrates, bishop of the diocese of Ephesus.⁷³ In a letter from Polycrates to Victor, bishop of Rome, he gave a long list of famous people from the Asian assemblies who supported their stand.⁷⁴ Polycrates then adds:

ALL THESE KEPT THE 14TH DAY OF THE PHASEKH ACCORDING TO THE GOOD NEWS (New Testament), NEVER SWERVING, BUT FOLLOWED ACCORDING TO THE RULE OF THE TRUST. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, live according to the tradition of my kinsmen, and some of them have I followed. For seven of my family were bishops and I am the eighth, AND MY KINSMEN ALWAYS KEPT THE DAY WHEN THE PEOPLE PUT AWAY THE LEAVEN. Therefore, brothers, I who have lived sixty-five years in the sovereign and conversed with brothers from every country, and have studied all sacred Scripture, am not afraid of threats, for they have said who were greater than I, “It is better to obey the deity rather than men.”⁷⁵

⁷⁰ JTS, 25, p. 262.

⁷¹ 1 Cor., 11:20–27, esp. v. 23; cf., Mark, 13:17–30; Matt., 26:20–35.

⁷² Epist. Apost., 15. The section intends to foretell the imprisonment of Keph during the days of unleavened bread in the story of Acts, 12:1–19. In this passage of the *Epistula Apostolorum* the Quartodecimans were advised to “celebrate the remembrance of my death,” “celebrate the Phasekh,” and the “Agape (Love Feast).” Phasekh was to be spent as a “night of watching” and “remembrance” that ended at “the cockcrow,” i.e., 3 A.M. Cockcrow was the time of Keph’s third denial of the messiah on the night of the Last Supper (Matt., 26:34, 74f; Mark, 14:30, 68–72; Luke, 22:34, 60f; John, 13:38, 18:27). Unfortunately, the above passage from the *Epistula Apostolorum* has been construed by some to mean that the Quartodecimans were fasting until 3 A.M. (e.g., EWJ, p. 123). This view is a matter of overinterpretation; nothing of the sort is even suggested in the text. To the contrary, the Agape or Love Feast and the “celebration” of the Phasekh are references to the Eucharist (the ritual of the bread and wine) and Phasekh supper. To superimpose a fast is totally unwarranted.

⁷³ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:22; Jerome, *Lives*, 45.

⁷⁴ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:24:1–5.

⁷⁵ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:24:6f; cf., Jerome, *Lives*, 45.

Anatolius likewise states that the Quartodecimans “kept the Phasekh day on the 14th of the first moon, according to the good news (New Testament), as they thought, adding nothing of an extraneous kind, but keeping through all things the rule of trust.”⁷⁶

In turn, the Quartodecimans maintained that the New Testament followed the guide of the written Torah, “that Phasekh should be kept on the 14th day of the first moon, according to the commandment of the Torah, on whatever day (of the week) it should occur.”⁷⁷ Melito of Sardis, in reference to the Phasekh, states, “the teachings of the good news (New Testament) have been proclaimed in the Torah.”⁷⁸ In the early third century C.E., a Quartodeciman named Blastus was keeping the festival and supper on the 14th in Rome. In Pseudo-Tertullian’s epitome of Hippolytus’ lost work entitled *Syntagma*, we read that Blastus “says that the Phasekh is not to be kept otherwise than according to the Torah of Moses on the 14th of the moon.”⁷⁹

These statements are vitally important in that they express the Quartodeciman understanding that the written Torah, and not just the messiah and his apostles, taught that the Phasekh supper was to be kept on the 14th.

Another important example comes from the records retained from the debate in 196 C.E. between the Quartodecimans of Asia and the leadership of the Roman Church,⁸⁰ then headed by Victor. Eusebius (who supported the Roman side of this argument) records the history of this conflict, stating:

At that time no small controversy arose because ALL THE DIOCESES OF ASIA thought it right, αἱ παροίκιαι ὡς ἐκ παραδόσεως ἀρχαιοτέρας (*ai paroikiai os ek paradoses arkhaioteras*; since sojourning in that manner from a more ancient tradition), to observe for the festival of the saviour’s Phasekh the 14th day of the moon, on which the Jews had been commanded to kill the lamb.⁸¹

The problem with the Quartodeciman view for those living during the latter half of the second century C.E. in the West and under Western and Roman guidance was that the Quartodeciman Phasekh too closely resembled the dominant practice of the Jews. True, these Jews did not eat their Phasekh supper until the 15th, while the Quartodecimans held their festival and supper on the 14th. Nevertheless, the Jews did celebrate the 14th as Phasekh, for it was on that day that they “had been commanded to kill the lamb.” This common point of reference, as we shall demonstrate in our second volume of this series, gave the opponents of the Quartodecimans a weapon that enabled them to discourage and suppress the use of the Christian form of System A.

⁷⁶ Anatolius, 10.

⁷⁷ A Quartodeciman quoted by Hippolytus, *Ref. Her.*, 8:11.

⁷⁸ Melito, *Pas.*, 39.

⁷⁹ Ps.-Tertullian, 8. This work is an epitome of Hippolytus’ lost *Syntagma*. Chap. 8 deals with the Quartodeciman named Blastus (JTS, [NS] 24, p. 83, n. 2).

⁸⁰ Jerome associates this debate with the fourth year of Emperor Severus (196/197 C.E., May reckoning) (Jerome, *Euseb.*, year 2212).

⁸¹ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:23:1. Cf., translations in Lake, *Euseb.*, i, p. 503; EEC, p. 33.

Conclusion

The Quartodeciman practice was the earliest known for the original Christian assemblies. For the Quartodecimans, System A established the correct method of observing the Phasekh supper as instructed by the written Torah. It was in the nighttime portion of the 14th day of the moon of Abib (Hebrew reckoning) that the messiah kept the Phasekh. Since this Phasekh occurred on the date of his death, it was his Last Supper. After that dinner Yahushua was betrayed; and during the remaining parts of that same 14th day (Hebrew reckoning), he suffered and died.

In the opinion of the Quartodecimans, the state religion practiced by the Jews (i.e., the Pharisaic form of the Hasidic religion), which observed the Phasekh supper on the night of the 15th of Abib, was a false system. Therefore, when the Scriptures speak of those Jews who on the morning of the messiah's death were still waiting to observe their Phasekh supper and great Sabbath,⁸² the Quartodecimans believed it was based upon a Pharisaic misinterpretation of Scriptures. Yet it was also necessary for Scriptures to mention this Phasekh of the Pharisees, since it was the historical occasion and backdrop for the messiah's martyrdom.

⁸² John, 18:28, 19:31.