

Sunday, March 26, 2017—Acts 12:4 Don't Passover Easter: Why Everything You Thought You Knew Is Wrong, Part 1

## **Introduction**

- This morning we are going to take a break from our study of preservation to look at something that I have been wanting to teach on for at least the past two years. Our studies of preservation over the past seven months (since September 2016) have made known that I have been rethinking some of the common messaging used to defend the King James position.
- The question of whether or not “Easter” is an accurate translation of the Greek word *pascha* in Acts 12:4 in the King James Bible (KJB) is, in many ways, a microcosm of the larger discussion we have been engaged in over the past seven months. Particularly as it relates to the subject of verbatim identity.
- Critics of the King James in general and King James Onlyism specifically have sought to use Acts 12:4 as a case in point to prove that the KJB is not inerrant. It is alleged that “Easter” is a mistranslation of the Greek word *pascha* and, therefore, constitutes an error in the KJB.
- Defenders of the inerrancy of the KJB have sought to answer these critics and have put forth arguments for why “Easter” is not a mistake in Acts 12:4.
- The goal of these studies over the next couple weeks will be to look at both sides of this controversy with the goal of reaching a reasonable and factual conclusion. In order to accomplish this task, we will consider the following points:
  - Factual Considerations: Why the Controversy?
  - King James Only Defense of “Easter” in Acts 12:4
  - Is “Easter” Exclusively Pagan?
  - “Easter” in the English Bible: A Brief Look at the History of Translation
  - Scriptural Exposition of Acts 12:4
- In the end, it will be demonstrated that “Easter” in Acts 12:4 means “Passover” (the Jewish feast day) and is not a reference to a spring pagan festival or a Christian holiday.

## **Factual Considerations: Why the Controversy?**

- The Greek word *pascha* occurs 29 times in 27 verses in the *Textus Receptus (TR)*, the Greek text supporting the KJB.

- Of these 29 occurrences of *pascha* in the New Testament, the King James translators rendered it as “Passover” 28 times.
- Only in Acts 12:4 did the King James translators render the Greek word as “Easter” in English.
- Critics of the King James Only position routinely point to Acts 12:4 to demonstrate that the KJB is not inerrant and contains mistakes. This critical theorizing is fundamentally based upon the following two points:
  - The Greek word *pascha* ALWAYS equals “Passover” in English. *Pascha* has NEVER associated with “Easter” in English. This notion is demonstrated by pointing out that Modern Versions translate *pascha* as “Passover” every time it occurs in the text, including Acts 12:4.
  - The perceived meaning of the word “Easter”: Parties on both sides of the textual debate view “Easter” as being pagan in origin and etymology. This is partly why Modern Version advocates view “Easter” as a mistaken translation of *pascha*. Meanwhile, King James Only apologists admit that “Easter” is pagan and defend it accordingly in Acts 12:4 as an appropriate rendering of *pascha* in that context.
- The comments of James R. White in *The King James Only Controversy* regarding the use of “Easter” in Acts 12:4 by the King James translators are emblematic of the position taken by those who are critical of the KJB.
  - “One might include the KJV’s unusual rendering of Acts 12:4 as more of a mistranslation than an ambiguous rendering, and it would be hard to argue against that assertion, given the facts.

The word that the KJV translates as “Easter” appears twenty-nine times in the New Testament. In each of the other twenty-eight instances the KJV translates the phrase as “the Passover.” For example, John 19:14, “And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto Jews, Behold your King!” And there is no reason for confusion as to what Luke is referring to here, for the preceding verse said, “Then were the days of unleavened bread.” The days of unleavened bread, of course were connected with the Passover celebration. Yet in this one place the AV contains the anachronistic [belonging to a period other than the one portrayed] term “Easter.” Luke’s reference to the days of “unleavened bread” makes it clear that he is referring to the Jewish holiday season, not to some pagan festival that did not become known by the specific term “Easter” for some time to come.” (White, 233)

- In summation, Modern Version advocates such as James White view the use of “Easter” in Acts 12:4 as a translational mistake. Twice White refers to “Easter” as an anachronistic term. Therefore, the Greek word *pascha* NEVER meant “Easter” in English, according to White. Rather, it ALWAYS meant Passover. Note carefully, however, that White does not dispute the

King James Only assertion that “Easter” is a reference to a pagan holiday. Rather, he refutes the notion that Luke is speaking about a pagan holiday in Acts 12:4. This verse is routinely cited as a proof text against the notion of “perfect preservation” as it has been defined by most King James advocates i.e., “verbatim identity.”

### **King James Only Defense of “Easter” in Acts 12:4**

- Believers in the inerrancy of the King James have sought to defend the KJB’s rendering of *pascha* in Acts 12:4 in an effort to rescue their enterprise for critical scrutiny. The classic example of a King James Only defense of “Easter” in Acts 12:4 can be found in Dr. Samuel C. Gipp’s 1989 publication *The Answer Book*. As the title suggests, *The Answer Book* is written in a question and answer format in which Dr. Gipp seeks to answer some of the frequently asked questions regarding King James Onlyism. The question and answer regarding “Easter” comprise the book’s second entry.
  - QUESTION: Isn’t “Easter” in Acts 12:4 a mistranslation of the word “*pascha*” and should it be translated as “passover”?

ANSWER: No, “*pascha*” is properly translated “Easter” in Acts 12:4 as the following explanation will show. (Gipp, 3)
- Consider the following summation of Dr. Gipp’s EXPLANATION for why “Easter” in Acts 12:4 is not a mistranslation on the part of the King James translators along with supporting quotations from *The Answer Book*.
  - “Easter” is an ancient pagan holiday connected with the worship of the goddesses Astarte and Ishtar.
    - “Coming to the word “Easter” in God’s Authorized Bible, they seize upon it imagining that they have found proof that the Bible is not perfect. Fortunately for lovers of the word of God, they are wrong. Easter, as we know it, comes from the ancient pagan festival of Astarte. Also known as Ishtar (pronounced “Easter”). This festival has always been held late in the month of April. It was, in its original form, a celebration of the earth “regenerating” itself after the winter season. The festival involved a celebration of reproduction. For this reason the common symbols of Easter festivities were the rabbit (the same symbol as “Playboy” magazine), and the egg. Both are known for their reproductive abilities. At the center of attention was Astarte, the female deity. She is known in the Bible as the “queen of heaven” (Jer. 7:18; 44:17-25). She is the mother of Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14) who was also her husband! These perverted rituals would take place at sunrise on Easter morning (Ez. 8:13-16). From the references in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, we can see that the true Easter has never had any association with Jesus Christ.

Problem: Even though the Jewish passover was held in mid-April (the fourteenth) and the pagan festival Easter was held later the same month, how do we know that Herod was referring to Easter in Acts 12:4 and not the Jewish passover? **If he was referring to the passover, the translation of "pascha" as "Easter" is incorrect. If he was indeed referring to the pagan holiday (holiday) Easter, then the King James Bible (1611) must truly be the very word and words of God for it is the only Bible in print today which has the correct reading.**" (Gipp, 3-4)

- Passover occurred on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month—no event after the 14<sup>th</sup> is EVER referred to as Passover (Exodus 12:13-18; Numbers 28:16-18; Deuteronomy 16:1-8).
  - “On the 14th of April the lamb was killed. **This is the passover. No event following the 14th is ever referred to as the passover.**” (Gipp, 7)
- The Days of Unleavened Bread began on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month the day after Passover. The Days of Unleavened Bread are ALWAYS after Passover and are NEVER referred to as Passover.

- “Whenever the passover was kept, it **always** preceded the feast of unleavened bread. . .

On the morning of the 15th begins the days of unleavened bread, also known as the feast of unleavened bread.

It must also be noted that whenever the passover is mentioned in the New Testament, the reference is **always** to the meal, to be eaten on the night of April 14th **not** the entire week. The days of unleavened bread are NEVER referred to as the Passover. (It must be remembered that the angel of the Lord passed over Egypt on **one** night, **not** seven nights in a row.” (Gipp, 6-7)

- Peter was arrested during the Days of Unleavened Bread which is AFTER Passover.
  - “Verse 3 shows that Peter was arrested during the days of unleavened bread (April 15-2 1). The Bible says: "Then were the days of unleavened bread." The passover (April 14th) had already come and gone.” (Gipp, 7)
- Therefore, Herod could not possibly have been referring to Passover in Acts 12:4. The next Passover was a year away.
  - “The next Passover was a year away!” (Gipp, 7)
- Herod was a pagan Roman who worshiped the queen of heaven and had no reason to keep the Jewish Passover.

- “But the pagan holiday of Easter was just a few days away. Remember! Herod was a pagan Roman who worshipped the "queen of heaven". He was NOT a Jew. He had no reason to keep the Jewish passover.” (Gipp, 7-8)
  - Herod did not kill Peter during the Days of Unleavened Bread because he wanted to wait until later in the month after the Passing of his own holiday i.e., Easter.
    - “It is elementary to see that Herod, in Acts 12, had arrested Peter during the days of unleavened bread, after the passover. The days of unleavened bread would end on the 21st of April. Shortly after that would come Herod's celebration of pagan Easter. Herod had not killed Peter during the days of unleavened bread simply because he wanted to wait until Easter. Since it is plain that both the Jews (Matt. 26:17- 47) and the Romans (Matt. 14:6-11) would kill during a religious celebration, Herod's opinion seemed that he was not going to let the Jews "have all the fun ". He would wait until his own pagan festival and see to it that Peter died in the excitement.” (Gipp, 8)
  - God’s providence led the King James translators to choose “Easter” in Acts 12:4 given the details of the context.
    - “Thus we see that it was God's providence which had the Spirit-filled translators of our Bible (King James) to CORRECTLY translate "pascha" as "Easter". It most certainly did not refer to the Jewish passover. In fact, to change it to "passover" would confuse the reader and make the truth of the situation unclear.” (Gipp, 8)
  - “Easter” is not a mistranslation or an error in the KJB because “the Spirit-filled translators” knew that Luke was referring to the pagan festival in this context and rendered *pascha* accordingly.
- The argument presented above by Dr. Gipp in defense of the KJB’s use of “Easter” in Acts 12:4 is by no means unique to his writings. The same or very similar arguments are found in a host of pro-King James literature. The following list is a mere sampling of volumes articulating similar arguments.
  - Thomas Holland—*Crowned With Glory* see pages 183-186.
  - Floyd Nolan Jones—*Which Version is the Bible?* see pages 76-77.
  - D.A. Waite—*Defending the King James Bible* see pages 240-241.
  - D.A. Waite—*King James Bible Defined* see page 1,451.

- “*Ishtar*—ancient pagan festival. Easter was originally the name of a pagan spring festival that occurred at about the same time as the Passover.”
- In summation, the prevailing defense of “Easter” in Acts 12:4 in King James Only literature is based upon the following assumptions: 1) the Jewish Passover had already passed; 2) that “Easter” is referring to a pagan celebration that Herod, a pagan king, would have been observing.
- Mark well that on this point King James advocates agree with James R. White that “Easter” is pagan in origin, meaning, and application. White views this as justification for his position that “Easter” is a mistranslation of the Greek word *pascha* whereas King James Onlyists defend “Easter” because they believe that the context points to a pagan festival that Herod was observing.
- For the record, and in the interest of full transparency, prior to 2007, while still the Pastor of West Side Grace Church in Muskegon Heights, MI; I brought an Easter message teaching the view outlined by Sam Gipp above. In short, I accepted Dr. Gipp’s teaching on the matter in an uncritical manner.

### **Is “Easter” Exclusively Pagan?**

- An article on the KJV Today’s website titled [\*“Easter” or “Passover” in Acts 12:4?\*](#) first caused me the question the explanation provided by Dr. Gipp in the previous section. This article provides a framework for the discussion outlined in this section. While The KJV Today article does a fair job of highlighting the etymological history of the English word “Easter;” it is ultimately incomplete. The article says nothing about the historic connection in the English language between “Easter” and the Jewish “Passover.” Consequently, I do not agree with the article’s overall conclusion that “Easter” in Acts 12:4 is referring to a Christian festival.
- In this section we will consider the following sub-points regarding etymology of the English word “Easter.”
  - The Influence of Alexander Hislop.
  - The Etymology of “Easter”
  - The Christian Use of “Easter”
  - The Connection Between “Easter” and Passover

#### *The Influence of Alexander Hislop*

- The true utility of the KJV Today’s article is found in that it serves to break the almost slavish connection between Easter and Ishtar/Astarte in the minds of many believers on both sides of the textual debate.

- The connection between Easter and the Semitic goddesses Ishtar or Astarte, in the minds of modern Christians can be traced back to the publication of *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop in 1853. Hislop, an outspoken critic of Roman Catholicism falsely postulated an etymological relationship between “Easter” and Ishtar or Astarte based upon phonetic similarities.
  - “What means the term Easter itself? It is not a Christian name. It bears its Chaldean origin on its very forehead. Easter is nothing else than Astarte, one of the titles of Beltis, the queen of heaven, whose name, as pronounced by the people of Nineveh, was evidently identical with that now in common use in this country. That name, as found by Layard on the Assyrian monuments, is Ishtar.” (Hislop, 103)
- According to the KJV Today’s article, “Easter” and Ishtar/Astarte are not etymologically related.
  - “While it is true that Ishtar (a form of Astarte) sounds similar to “Easter” the two words are not etymologically related. Astarte is "עַשְׂתָּרוֹת (ashtarot)" in Hebrew. This name is derived from the word "עַשְׂתָּרָה ('ashterâh)" which means "increase" or "flock" (*Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions*). "עַשְׂתָּרָה ('ashterâh)" is translated as "flocks" four times in the KJV. Hence, the name "Astarte" or "Ishtar" is a Semitic word related to animal fertility. This makes sense because Astarte was regarded as a goddess of fertility.” ([\*“Easter” or “Passover” in Acts 12:4?\*](#))
- Hislop’s false etymological connection between “Easter” and Ishtar/Astarte was only one of his mistakes. As we will see in the next sub-point, the true origin of “Easter” is connected with the Anglo Saxon goddess Eostre. More importantly, however, is his advancement of the notion that any word derived out of paganism mandates an absolute pagan meaning/connection in later/modern usage. For example, if I make a dinner appointment for Thursday night am I automatically worshipping the Norse god Thor; from whose name “Thursday” is derived? No, I am just talking about what day of week I am going to meet someone for dinner. This highlights that the true error of Hislop is found in his confounding of a word’s origin with its later/modern usage. Just because a given English word is of pagan origin does not mandate pagan meaning in modern usage.
- Brian Tegart is the author of an internet article titled, *Acts 12:4 – Passover and Easter* in which he states the following regarding the errors of Hislop.
  - “. . . the idea that Easter is derived from Astarte/Ishtar seems to come first- or second-hand from Alexander Hislop's 1853 book *The Two Babylons*. As far as I can see, Hislop repeatedly makes the assertion of the connection between Easter and Astarte, but never provides any sources for his claim. What is entirely ironic is that Hislop is *not* arguing that "Easter" was associated with Astarte *at the time of Herod* - his argument is that "Easter" was originally entirely Christian but was corrupted by the Roman Catholic Church incorporating elements of pagan religions (including Astarte) **in the 5th century A.D., long after Herod died**. Despite this alleged connection of Astarte with Easter,

many scholars now think this connection is a "false etymology," meaning that it is only assumed correct because of the similar sounds between "Easter" and "Ishtar". Instead, the *name* "Easter" is probably derived from the Anglo-Saxon pagan goddess (post-dating Herod) of "Eostur"<sup>8</sup> (and for those anti-Easter folk out there: even if the *name* has some pagan origins does not mean the Christian commemoration is therefore also pagan)." (Tegart, [Acts 12:4 – Passover and Easter](#))

- Once Hislop connected “Easter” and Istar/Astarte it was picked up on by Protestants and Fundamental believers and advanced in an uncritical manner. In this way, the influence of Hislop looms large over the entire discussion of “Easter” in Acts 12:4.

### *The True Etymology of “Easter”*

- The etymology of "Easter", on the other hand, has nothing to do with "flocks" or animal fertility, according to the KJV Today. "Easter" ("Ostern" in German) is a Germanic word derived from the word "east" ("Ost" in German). The *Online Etymological Dictionary* is quoted in support:
  - "Old English *east* "east, easterly, eastward," from Proto-Germanic *\*aus-to-*, *\*austra-* "east, toward the sunrise" (cf. Old Frisian *ast* "east," *aster* "eastward," Dutch *oost* Old Saxon *ost*, Old High German *ostan*, German *Ost*, Old Norse *austr* "from the east"), from PIE *\*aus-* "to shine," especially "dawn" (cf. Sanskrit *ushas* "dawn;" Greek *aurion* "morning;" Old Irish *usah*, Lithuanian *auszra* "dawn;" Latin *aurora* "dawn," *auster* "south"), literally "to shine." The east is the direction in which dawn breaks." ([Online Etymological Dictionary](#))
- The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, the recognized authority on the history of the English language, is in complete agreement with the *Online Etymological Dictionary* as to the etymology of the English word “Easter.” Interested parties are encouraged to consult Appendix A on page 14 to read the *OED*’s etymological history for the word “Easter.”
- There is nothing in "East" that suggests animal fertility. Hence the word has nothing to do with Astarte or Ishtar. Relating the Germanic word "Easter" to the Semitic word "Ishtar" is as fallacious as relating the English word "Baby" to the Semitic word "Babylon," according to KJV Today’s article.
- Today, "east" refers to the direction from which the sun rises. The direction of east goes by that name because the Saxon word "east" meant "dawn", "sunrise" or "morning." Therefore, etymologically “Easter” basically means “dawn.” According the Venerable Bebe (672-735), the Old English word for the month of April was "Eosturmonað" or “East/Sunrise month.” “Eostre” came from the name of a Saxon spring fertility goddess who went by that name.
  - See [“Easter” or “Passover” in Acts 12:4?](#) for more details on the historical development of the word “Easter.”



### *Christian Use of "Easter"*

- The fact that a Saxon goddess went by the name "Eostre" does not mean that "Easter" is a pagan word. Those who hold this myth make it sound as if there was once a goddess with a certain name and Saxon Christians simply took that name arbitrarily without any biblical basis. If, for example, the pagans worshiped a goddess by the name of "Sally" and Christians today refer to the day of the Lord's resurrection as "Sally", then surely we have a problem. But that is not the case for Saxon Christians using "Easter" as the name of the day of the Lord's resurrection. As "easter" was a descriptive word that referred to the dawn or sunrise, we can understand why both pagans and Christians wished to use the word "east" for their respective purposes. Pagans wished to worship a goddess of sunrise so they called her "Eostre". Christians on the other hand wished to celebrate a very special dawn, so they called the day "Easter."
- The Bible describes Christ's resurrection as being discovered in the "morning" at "dawn" or at "the rising of the sun." One could view the resurrection morning as "dawn" par excellence.
  - Matthew 28:1—" . . . as it began to **dawn** toward the first day of the week . . ."
  - Mark 16:2—"And very **early in the morning** the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at **the rising of the sun.**"
  - Luke 24:1—"Now upon the first day of the week, very **early in the morning** . . ."
  - John 20:1—"The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark. . ."
- Per the *OED*, "Par excellence" means "By virtue of special excellence or manifest superiority; pre-eminently; supremely, above all." There have been many dawns throughout history, but that special dawn on the day of the resurrection is deserving of that noun more than any other. We often refer to notable biblical events using par excellence nouns, such as "the fall", "the flood", "the exodus", "the exile", "the advent," "the cross," etc. "Easter" is the Saxon word for this greatest dawn in all of history. By way of metonymical association, this term which refers to the "dawn" of the resurrection came to refer to the entire day of the resurrection. ([\*"Easter" or "Passover" in Acts 12:4?\*](#))
- The imagery of "dawn" and the "rising of the sun" is not reserved for the morning of Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead. The scriptures utilize the same imagery to describe the second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ back to earth.
  - Isaiah 60:1-3—" . . . to **the brightness of thy rising.**"
  - Malachi 4:2—"But unto you that fear my name shall **the Sun of righteousness** arise with healing in his wings;"

- Luke 1:76-79—“. . . whereby **the dayspring from on high** hath visited us . . .”
- II Peter 1:19—“. . . until the day dawn, and **the day star arise** in your hearts”
- Revelation 22:16—“I am the root and the offspring of David, and **the bright and morning star.**”
- Some Christians try to avoid anything that has to do with sunrise imagery, presuming that it is pagan. Yet God in his word compares Christ’s second coming to the rising of the Sun. The word, “Easter,” with its connotation to sunrise, pays tribute to this biblical imagery of Christ as the "Sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2). The Old West-Saxon version of the Gospel of Luke translates the word as "eastdæle", which is the Saxon word for "east/sunrise". This is another proof that the word "Easter" came from the biblical language of the Saxons. Luke 1:78 in the [West-Saxon](#) translation of 990 reads:
  - "Purh innoþas ures godes mildheortnesse. on þam he us geneosode of **eastdæle** up springende;”
- “Easter” is etymologically related to "east" (the direction) and refers to the "rising" of our Lord from the dead. This connection between the eastern direction and the resurrection makes some Christians nervous about a possible pagan influence. However, there is no reason for such concern because this connection between the eastern direction and the verb "to rise" can be found in the New Testament itself.
  - “The Greek verb "ανατελλω (anatello)" means "to rise" (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*) and it is the word translated as "arise" in the above passage in 2 Peter 1:19 about Christ rising in our hearts.” ([“Easter” or “Passover” in Acts 12:4?](#))
- Biblically there is a connection between the eastern direction and the verb "to rise" even in the language of the New Testament. The writers of the New Testament did not avoid using the verb "ανατελλω" (to rise) despite its derivation from the Greek word for “east.”
- Despite any explanation that "Easter" is derived from a generic Saxon word for "dawn" that is not pagan in and of itself, the mere possibility that a goddess went by the name of "Eostre" appears to scare some Christians into avoiding the word "Easter". These Christians need to realize that pagans should not be given monopoly over valid words in the English lexicon (See the KJV Today article for a discussion of pagan words that believers use every day such as the days of the week.). We just have to admit that the English language is the language of a people who were once pagan and that there are many vestiges of pagan etymology in English. Also to be noted is the irony that this word "Ishtar", which some Christians wish to avoid, appears to be related to "Esther" which is the name of an entire book of our Holy Bible. Esther lived in a pagan culture and was given a pagan name as with Mordecai (which is related to the pagan god Marduk). While it has been demonstrated that Easter has nothing to do with Ishtar, the Bible itself shows

that God can redeem a name even if it is in fact related to Ishtar. ([“Easter” or “Passover” in Acts 12:4](#))

### *The Connection Between “Easter” and Passover*

- In addition, to being used as a reference to the dawn/day of Christ’s resurrection, “Easter” also has a long history of being used as a reference to the Jewish Passover, according to the *OED*. The KJV Today’s article completely overlooks this important and extremely relevant fact. The second definition provide for “Easter” in the *OED* reads as follows:
  - “2. = Passover *n.* 1. Now only in ***Jewish Easter*** or with other contextual indication.”
- Therefore, the *OED* states that the second definition of “Easter” is equal to the first definition of “Passover.” The first definition of Passover in the *OED* reads as follows:
  - “The major Jewish spring festival which commemorates the liberation of the People of Israel from Egyptian bondage, lasting seven days (in Israel) or eight days (in the Diaspora) from the 15th day of Nisan.”
- The [Middle English Dictionary](#) confirms this by offering the following as its second definition for “Easter:”
  - “The Jewish Passover.”
- Moreover, the *Middle English Dictionary* offers usage examples of “Easter” meaning “the Jewish Passover” from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Therefore, ample historical evidence exists from a host of English language resources that “Easter” was used to refer to the Jewish feast day before the word “Passover” was coined by Tyndale in 1530 in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.
  - See Appendix B on page 15 for photos of the dictionary entries quoted in this section.

### **Conclusion**

- While there is no doubt that many practices associated with the current cultural celebration known as “Easter” are pagan in origin; the word itself is not inextricably tied to paganism as many have asserted. In order for one to truly understand the motives of the King James translators in rendering *pascha* as “Easter” in Acts 12:4, the slavish connection between the English word “Easter” and paganism must be broken as an important first step.
- Let the 1611 King James Bible stand as a case in point. If the King James translators understood “Easter” to be a reference to a pagan festival in Acts 12:4, why did they include a table in the front of the 1611 that would help the reader “To find Easter for ever?”

- See Appendix C on page 17 for a photo of the chart from the 1611.
- Translating nearly two hundred years before Hislop, the King James translators apparently knew something about the English word “Easter” that Hislop did not know. If they thought “Easter” was exclusively pagan, they certainly would not have included such a table in the front of their translation.
- While the KJV Today’s article is excellent in terms of highlining the etymological history of the English word “Easter;” I do not agree with their overall conclusion about the meaning of “Easter” in Acts 12:4. Luke is not referring to the Christian festival of Easter but to Jewish feast day of “Passover” as we will demonstrate next week when we look at point four: “Easter” in the English Bible: A Brief Look at the History of Translation. Not only does the English word “Easter” refer to the morning of the resurrection, but it was also used interchangeably with the word “Passover” to refer to the Jewish festival.
- As we conclude this Lesson, here are a couple of points for you to ponder.
  - Why did Samuel C. Gipp, an outspoken proponent of the 1611 edition of the KJB, not take into account the table found therein for calculating the date of “Easter” into his explanation of the words meaning?
  - Recall from the beginning that James R. White also embraced the notion that “Easter” was an exclusively pagan word and therefore not an appropriate translation of *pascha* in Acts 12:4. Why does White, an opponent of Gipp’s, not refute the King James Only understanding of the word “Easter” based upon a more accurate etymological history of the word?
- It turns out that the scholars on both side of the textual debate have not been very scholarly.

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## Appendix A

### Etymological information on “Easter” provided by the Oxford English Dictionary

**Pronunciation:** Brit.  /'i:stə/, U.S.  /'istər/

**Forms:** ... [\(Show More\)](#)

**Frequency (in current use):** ●●●●●●●●

**Origin:** A word inherited from Germanic.

**Etymology:** Cognate with Old Dutch *ōster-* (in *ōstermānōth* April, lit. ‘Easter-month’), Old Saxon *ōstar-* (in *ōstarfrisking* paschal lamb; Middle Low German *ōsteren*, *ōstern*, plural), Old High German *ōstara* (usually in plural *ōstarūn*; Middle High German *ōster* (usually in plural *ōstern*), German *Ostern*, singular and (now chiefly regional) plural), probably < the same Germanic base as *EAST adv.* (and hence ultimately cognate with Sanskrit *uśas*, Avestan *ušah-*, ancient Greek (Ionic and Epic) *ἠώς*, (Attic) *ἑως*, classical Latin *aurōra*, all in sense ‘dawn’). For alternative (and less likely) etymologies see the references cited below. It is noteworthy that among the Germanic languages the word (as the name for Easter) is restricted to English and German; in other Germanic languages, as indeed in most European languages, the usual word for Easter is derived from the corresponding word for the Jewish Passover; compare *PASCH n.*

Bede (*De Temporū Ratione* 15. 9; see quot. below) derives the word < *Eostre* (a Northumbrian spelling; also *Eastre* in a variant reading), according to him, the name of a goddess whose festival was celebrated by the pagan Anglo-Saxons around the time of the vernal equinox (presumably in origin a goddess of the dawn, as the name is to be derived from the same Germanic base as *EAST adv.*; see above). This explanation is not confirmed by any other source, and the goddess has been suspected by some scholars to be an invention of Bede’s. However, it seems unlikely that Bede would have invented a fictitious pagan festival in order to account for a Christian one. For further discussion and alternative derivations see D. H. Green *Lang. & Hist. Early Germanic World* (1998) 351–3; J. Udolph & K. Schäferdieck in *J. Hoops’s Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* (ed. 2, 2003) XXII. 331–8, and for a parallel development compare *YULE n.* Bede’s etymology comes in a passage explaining the origin of the Old English names of the months:

4735 BEDE *De Temporū Ratione* xv. Eostur-monath, qui nunc paschalis mensis interpretatur, quondam a dea illorum quae Eostre vocabatur, et cui in illo festa celebrabant, nomen habuit, a cuius nomine nunc paschale tempus cognominant, consueto antiquae observationis vocabulo gaudia novae solemnitatis vocantes.

Compare Old English *Ēastermōnad* April, cognate with or formed similarly to Old Dutch *ōstermānōth* (in a translation from German), Old High German *ōstarmānōd* (Middle High German *ōstermānōt*, German *Ostermonat*, now archaic) < the Germanic base of *EASTER n.* + the Germanic base of *MONTH n.*

A borrowing of the Old English word into West Slavonic (during the time of the Anglo-Saxon mission to Germany) perhaps underlies Polabian *jostrāi*, Lower Sorbian *jatšy*, (regional) *jastry*, Kashubian *jastrĕ*, all in sense ‘Easter’; however, it has been argued that these are rather to be derived from a native base meaning ‘clear, bright’, and thus (via a connection with the coming of spring) show a parallel development to the Germanic word.

The form of the word in Old English shows much (especially dialectal) variation: in West Saxon usually a weak feminine plural (*Ēastran*; frequently in form *Ēastron* (also *Ēastrun*), probably reflecting a variant form of the Germanic thematic element; see A. Campbell *Old Eng. Gram.* (1959) §619.1), also occasionally found in the singular (*Ēastre*); an apparently strong feminine plural by-form (*Ēastra*), apparently Mercian, is rarely attested; in Northumbrian usually a strong neuter plural (*Ēostru*, *Ēostro*), also occasionally found in the singular (sometimes apparently invariably as *Ēostro*, sometimes in inflected forms, e.g. genitive *Ēostres*). The combining form *Ēaster* is widely attested.

The *β*. forms represent Old English *Ēastran* (the form of both the weak feminine plural and the inflected form of the weak feminine singular) and its later reflexes. The forms of some compounds in Middle English and early modern English may reflect compounds of the Old English weak feminine genitive singular or plural (respectively *Ēastran* and *Ēastrena*).

[\(Show Less\)](#)

## Appendix B

### Relevant Dictionary Entries

#### “Easter” 1.a. from the *Oxford English Dictionary*

a. The most important and oldest of the festivals of the Christian Church, commemorating the resurrection of Christ and observed annually on the Sunday which follows the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Also (more generally): Easter week or the weekend from Good Friday to Easter Monday, Eastertide. In Old English freq. in *pl*.

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Easter is observed on the first Sunday after the paschal full moon (not the astronomical full moon) which occurs on or after 21 March. The actual date varies according to the calendar used in its calculation.

- eOE *Cleopatra Gloss.* in W. G. Stryker *Lat.-Old Eng. Gloss. in MS Cotton Cleopatra A.III* (Ph.D. diss., Stanford Univ.) (1951) 365 *Phase, eastran.*  
 OE *ÆLFRIC De Temporibus Anni* (Cambr. Gg. 3.28) (2009) iv. 84 On sumon gear e bið se mona twelf siðon geniwod, fram ðære halgan eastertide oð eft *eastron.*  
 OE tr. *Bede Eccl. Hist.* (Cambr. Univ. Libr.) v. xix. 470 Ic þonne nu [eow] openlice andette.., þæt ic ðas tide *Eaстрena* ecelice healdan wille mid ealre minre ðeode.  
 10E *Anglo-Saxon Chron.* (Laud) anno 1101 To Cristesmaessan heold se cyng Heanrig his hired on Westmynstre & to *Eastran* on Winceastre.  
 a1225 (\*?a1200) *MS Trin. Cambr.* in R. Morris *Old Eng. Homilies* (1873) 2nd Ser. 101 (*MED*), Þe þre dage biforen *estre* [ben] cleped swidages.  
 c1275 (\*?a1200) *Laȝamon Brut* (Calig.) (1978) l. 9230 He ferde to Lunden. He wes þere an *Æstre.*  
 c1300 *St. Brendan* (Harl.) l. 151 in C. Horstmann *Early S.-Eng. Legendary* (1887) 224 Þer ȝe schulle þis *ester* beo, & þis wit-sonedai also.  
 a1325 (\*c1250) *Gen. & Exod.* (1968) l. 3289 Ðor-of in *esterne* be we wunen Seuene siðes to funt cumen.  
 1389 in J. T. Smith & L. T. Smith *Eng. Guilds* (1870) 35 Þe soneday fourtnythe after *esterne.*  
 \*1440 *Promptorium Parvulorum* (Harl. 221) 143/2 *Eesterne, Pascha.*  
 a1450 *St. Edith* (Faust.) (1883) l. 3140 Þis miracle was þus..y-do, In þe *astere* nexste after hurre body-dyenge.  
 1480 *CANTON Chron. Eng.* cexxxiii. 254 The clergie..wold not graunte wnto *Estre* next comyng.  
 1530 *Myroure Oure Ladye* (Fawkes) (1873) ii. 278 From passyon sonday tyl *Esterne.*  
 1593 R. HOOKER *Of Lawes Eccl. Politie* iv. xi. 194 Keeping the feast of *Easter* on the same day the Iewes kept theirs.  
 1655 T. FULLER *Church-hist. Brit.* ii. 55 The Spring-time, wherein the Feast of *Easter*..was celebrated.  
 1680 DRYDEN *Kind Keeper* iv. i. 39 He made me keep Lent last year till Whitsontide, and out-fac'd me with Oaths, it was but *Easter.*  
 a1712 G. MARTINE *Reliquiæ Divi Andree* (1797) 188 The senȝie mercat..beginning the second week after *Easter.*  
 1782 J. PRIESTLEY *Hist. Corruptions Christianity* II. viii. 129 The first..festival..that was observed..was *Easter.*  
 1838 W. HOWITT *Rural Life Eng.* II. iii. iv. 166 *Easter* was the great festival of the church.  
 1863 G. MEREDITH *Let.* 15 Apr. (1970) I. 199 By the way, my darling little man came home at *Easter.*  
 1916 'TAFFRAIL' *Pincher Martin* viii. 142 Most of the younger men were past caring whether it was Christmas or *Easter.*  
 1954 *Los Angeles Times* 12 Apr. ii. 10/4 A bowlful of pysanky, blessed at *Easter*, guards a Ukrainian home against lightning and fire.  
 1993 *Independent* 22 Feb. 10/4, I used to visit her at *Easter* and the summer hols, and cried buckets when I left her.  
 2006 *St James' Parish Mag.* (Blackburn) Apr. 9 The sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross, enfolded in the glory of *Easter.*

(Hide quotations)

#### “Easter” 2. from the *Oxford English Dictionary*

2. = PASSOVER *n.* 1. Now only in *Jewish Easter* or with other contextual indication.

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#### Passover 1.a. from the *Oxford English Dictionary*

I. Senses relating to the Jewish festival.

1.

a. The major Jewish spring festival which commemorates the liberation of the People of Israel from Egyptian bondage, lasting seven days (in Israel) or eight days (in the Diaspora) from the 15th day of Nisan. Cf. *PESACH n.*

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## Ēster 1. from the Middle English Dictionary

1.

The church festival of Easter; Easter Sunday; the Easter season;-- usually without article.

[a1121 Peterb.Chron.\(LdMisc 636\)](#) an.1103: To þan Eastran heold se cyng his hired on Winceastre. [a1121 Peterb.Chron.\(LdMisc 636\)](#) an.1106: Se Duures deg toforan Eastran. [a1121 Peterb.Chron.\(LdMisc 636\)](#) an.1111: On þison gearre ne ber se kyng Henri his coronan to Xpes maessan ne to Eastron. [a1131 Peterb.Chron.\(LdMisc 636\)](#) an.1130: Ðes ilces gearre com se abbot. æfter Æsterne to Burch. [c1175\(COE\) Bod.Hom.\(Bod.343\)](#) 12/18: On þare Frigenihte ðe ætforen Eaстре bið. [a1225\(2a1200\) Trin.Hom.\(Trin.C B.14.52\)](#) 101: Ðe þre dage biforen estre [þen] cleped swidages. [c1275\(2a1200\) Lay.Brut.\(Clg.A.9\)](#) 18496: He ferde to Lunden. He wes þere an estre. [c1275\(2a1200\) Lay.Brut.\(Clg.A.9\)](#) 24143: Hit wes an ane æstere [Otho: in on easter]. [c1275\(2a1200\) Lay.Brut.\(Clg.A.9\)](#) 24195: Ða æstre [Otho: easter] wes aþonge. [c1230\(2a1200\) Ancr.\(Corp.C 402\)](#) 111b: From easter aþet to hali rode dei. [c1300 SLeg.Brendan \(LdMisc 108\)](#) 551: Fram þe bi-gyvnunge of estur. [a1325\(c1280\) Gen.& Ev.\(Corp.C 444\)](#) 3289: Ðor-of in esterne be we winnen Seuene sides to fiunt cumen. [a1325\(c1280\) SLeg.Pass.\(Pep 2344\)](#) 1: By-ffore six dayes of Ester as a palme-sone eue Iesus wente to Bethanye. [c1325\(c1300\) Glo.Chron.A \(Clg.A.11\)](#) 7723: Bre siþe he ber crowne aþer, to midewinter at gloucestre. To witesonetið at westmunstre, to ester at wincestre. [c1325\(c1300\) Glo.Chron.A \(Clg.A.11\)](#) 8458: Þere hii helde hor ester. [\(1340\) Avenb.\(Arms 57\)](#) 213: Þe festes principals. uor god to. worþspisse. At yestere his oparizing. Hou he aros uram dyaþe to liue. [\(a1387\) Trev. Higd.\(StJ.C.H.1\)](#) 5:19: Þe Lente fastinge to forne Esterne. [1389 Nrf.Gild Ret.](#) 71: Ye sunday fowrtentyz aftere hestere. [c1390 Mannyng HS, Mtr.CC \(Vrn\)](#) 205/277: And hit felde on an Astere. [\(c1396\) Doc.in Bk.Lond.E.](#) 234: Þe friday folwinge in þe same Woke of Estarne. [\(a1398\) Trev. Barth.\(Add 27944\)](#) 127b/a: And at Estir alla is I songe ofte wiþ opir songes of roye and of mirþe. [\(a1398\) Trev. Barth.\(Add 27944\)](#) 128b/b: Also to speke largeliche of Estir, oure estir steechþ [read: steechþ] to mony dayes, and first to palmesonday. [\(1417-18\) EEWllb](#) 39/26: To be paid at Esteren next commyng. [\(c1426\) Audelay Poems \(Dc 302\)](#) 38/765: Ðai [the priests] shuld syng bot twyse a þere. At Crystymas and Astere. [\(a1438\) McKenpe A \(Add 61823\)](#) 99/31: When tyme of Estern er ellys Paske was come. [c1440\(2a1400\) Morte Arth.\(1\) \(Thrn\)](#) 554: 'Bee Estyre', sais þe emperour. I ettyll my selfen To hostaye in Almayne. [\(1444\) Acc.St.Mary Thame in BBOA.18](#) 51: Halso at hlyster for, the hester tapyr. [a1450 St.Editha \(Fst B.3\)](#) 3140: Þis miracle was þus at Wyltone y-do. In þe astere nexste after hurre body-dyenge. [c1450\(a1425\) Mirr IPP \(Clg A.2\)](#) 143: Alle þe chyldren þat ben l-bore Byfore aster. [\(a1470\) Malory Wks.\(Win-C\)](#) 15/35: The barons. put it of in delay till the hyghe feste of Eester.

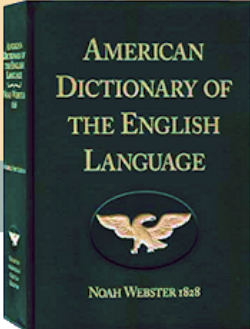
## Ēster 2. from the Middle English Dictionary

2.

The Jewish Passover.

[\(a1387\) Trev. Higd.\(StJ.C.H.1\)](#) 4:341: At þe fourþe Esterne Criste suffrede deþ. [\(a1398\) Trev. Barth.\(Add 27944\)](#) 128b/a: Ester hatte pascha in grewe and. is I clepid in ebrewe phase. þat is passinge opir passage. And þis estir of lewis was figure and bodyge of þe estir of cristene men. [a1400 Pep.Gosp.\(Pep 2498\)](#) 75.1: Ðo neized þe feste of ester And þe folk of alle þe londes aboute comen to Jerusalem. [c1450\(c1400\) Pices & Y.\(2\) \(Hnt HM 147\)](#) 131/36: Wiþ grete desire I haue desired þis Eestren. þat is þis Paske. [\(a1475\(2a1425\) Higd.\(2\) \(Hrl 2261\)](#) 6:189: The childer Israel. kepede Ester in that oþer day. [\(c1475\) Trev. Nicod.\(Sal 39\)](#) 134a: Hyt hys costum and vsayge þat yh schal deluyere gou at estur on af þe prisoneres.

## “Easter” from American Dictionary of the English Language (1828)



# American Dictionary OF THE English Language

Dictionary Search

Home

Preface

History

Quotations

## Easter

**E'ASTER**, *noun*

A festival of the christian church observed in commemoration of our Savior's resurrection. It answers to the pascha or passover of the Hebrews, and most nations still give it this name, pascha, pask, paque.



### Appendix C

1611 Chart for Determining the Date for Easter

**To finde Easter for euer.**

Sabbath Number	A.	B.	C.	D.	E.	F.	G.
1	April 10.	r	ri	rii	bi	bii	bij
2	March 29th.	xxviii.	xxviii	xxix	xxx	xxxi	April 1.
3	April 26th.	xvii.	xviii	xix	xx	xxi	2d
4	April 19th.	xi.	xii	xiii	xiiii	xv	3d
5	March 18th.	xxvi.	xxvii	xxviii	xxix	xxx	4d
6	April 15th.	xiiii.	xv	xvi	xvii	xxviii	5d
7	April 8th.	viii.	ix	x	xi	xii	6d
8	April 1st.	ii.	iii	iiii	v	vi	7d
9	March 24th.	xxv.	xxvi	xxvii	xxviii	xxix	8d
10	April 21st.	xiii.	xiiii	xv	xvi	xvii	9d
11	April 14th.	vi.	vii	viii	ix	x	10d
12	April 7th.	0.	i	ii	iii	iiii	11d
13	March 31st.	xxiii.	xxiiii	xxv	xxvi	xxvii	12d
14	April 28th.	xi.	xii	xiii	xiiii	xv	13d
15	April 21st.	iv.	v	vi	vii	viii	14d
16	April 14th.	0.	i	ii	iii	iiii	15d
17	March 7th.	xxviii.	xxviiii	xxviiii	xxviiii	xxviiii	16d
18	April 30th.	xvi.	xvii	xviii	xix	xx	17d
19	April 23rd.	ix.	x	xi	xii	xiii	18d
20	April 16th.	ii.	iii	iiii	v	vi	19d
21	April 9th.	0.	i	ii	iii	iiii	20d
22	April 2nd.	xxv.	xxvi	xxvii	xxviii	xxix	21d
23	March 26th.	xiii.	xiiii	xv	xvi	xvii	22d
24	April 19th.	vi.	vii	viii	ix	x	23d
25	April 12th.	0.	i	ii	iii	iiii	24d
26	April 5th.	xxviii.	xxviiii	xxviiii	xxviiii	xxviiii	25d
27	March 29th.	xviii.	xviiii	xviiii	xviiii	xviiii	26d
28	April 22nd.	xi.	xii	xiii	xiiii	xv	27d
29	April 15th.	iv.	v	vi	vii	viii	28d
30	April 8th.	0.	i	ii	iii	iiii	29d
31	April 1st.	xxv.	xxvi	xxvii	xxviii	xxix	30d

When ye haue found the Sunday letter in the uppermost line, guide your eye downward from the same, till ye come right over against the Prime, and there is shewed both what Moneth, and what day of the Moneth Easter falleth that yeere.

The