

MEMORIAL OF THE LORD'S SUPPER: 2012

With Footnotes, Appendices and Figures

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11: 26

Note: Scripture references are to the British text of the *New International Version*, unless stated otherwise. Verses which are *not* quoted are hyperlinked and can be read online. Texts which *are* quoted are not usually hyperlinked. In this article, astronomical calculations are expressed as Universal Time (UT), in both 24- and 12-hour formats.

THE LORD JESUS COMMEMORATED the Passover in Jerusalem in the evening of its prescribed date, Nisan 14 ([Matthew 26: 17, 20](#); [Mark 14: 12, 17](#); [Luke 22: 7](#)). In keeping with Jewish tradition, the day began at *sunset* and ended 24 hours later. So Nisan 13 would end when Nisan 14 began ([Exodus 12: 1-8](#)). The 'evening' hours preceded the 'day' hours (compare with [Genesis 1: 5](#), etc.). The length of the Jewish day varied somewhat, but it would roughly correspond to a 24-hour period which began at 6:00 p.m. (18:00). Jesus instituted the 'last supper' immediately following the Passover meal ([Matthew 26: 26, 27](#); [Luke 22: 20](#); [1 Corinthians 11: 23-26](#)). It has been the practice of the Christian church since then to remember this sacred event, in one form or another.

When to Observe the Memorial?

There is long-standing disagreement among churches on the precise method which should be used not only to keep the feast, but how to calculate the date for its observance. In common with other Bible Students, those associated with *UK Bible Students* choose to commemorate it once a year, as one would an anniversary. However, we believe the date of its observance is less important than the fact of its institution. Should other Christians choose to keep it more frequently, there is no sin, and we wish them the Lord's blessing.

Using astronomical data we need to ascertain the following:

1. Date and time of the Vernal (Spring) Equinox for the given year
2. Date and time of the New Moon preceding the Equinox
3. Date and time of the New Moon following the Equinox
4. Date and time of the New Moon which occurs *closest* to the Equinox

To find Nisan 1, an additional step, is required:

5. Add *2h 21m* to account for the time difference at the meridian in Jerusalem

Depending on which astronomical tables are employed, there are minor discrepancies, down to the minutes and seconds. These differences are not usually significant in the overall calculations. [\[fn1\]](#)

For the year 2012 the data follow in Universal Time [UT] expressed by hours and minutes, and by the 12-hour clock time in parentheses:

1. Date and time of the Vernal (Spring) Equinox
March 20 at 05h 07m (*March 20, 5:07 a.m.*)
2. Date and time of the New Moon preceding the Equinox
February 21 at 22h 35m (*February 21, 10:35 p.m.*)
3. Date and time of the New Moon following the Equinox
March 22 at 14h 37m (*March 22, 2:37 p.m.*)

Therefore:

4. Date and time of the New Moon which occurs *closest* to the Equinox is
March 22 at 14h 37m (*March 22, 2:37 p.m.*)
5. To this add the time difference at the meridian in Jerusalem (*2h 21m*).
This results in: **March 22 at 16h 58m** (*March 22, 4:58 p.m.*)

Now Find the Start of Nisan 1 and Nisan 14

The calculations required to arrive at Nisan 14 are counter-intuitive and one can get confused. Remember that the day of the Memorial corresponds to a Jewish day running from sunset to sunset, unlike the customary sunrise to sunrise. To determine the hour at which Nisan 1 begins, keep in mind that in *this* instance, one must back up to 6:00 p.m. (1800) of *the previous day*. It is then necessary to apply this offset to the succeeding *13 days*. So in 2012 Nisan 1 *starts* **March 21 at 6:00 p.m.** (18:00) and *ends* **March 22 at 6:00 p.m.** (18:00), at which time Nisan 2 begins, and so on. Therefore, Nisan 14 will start at your local time of 6:00 p.m. (18:00) on **Tuesday, April 3**. To verify this calculation consult *Fig. 2* in [App. III](#).

Keeping the Feast

Jesus did not mandate, nor is there indicated anywhere in the Bible, a specific order of service, other than the general outline recorded in the New Testament. The following represents merely what appeals to the *UK Bible Students* as a tested, reasonable approach, adapted from the general practice of Bible Students elsewhere. For unleavened bread – ‘leaven’ in the Scriptures represents sin – matzo may be substituted; for the alcoholic wine, to which some may object, a good quality grape juice. These provisions can be bought from any supermarket, especially around the time of the Jewish Passover. The order of service given here may be modified if you are observing the Memorial alone. In any case, common sense as to the details should prevail, all being carried out in a spirit of reverence and humility. The service is intended to bless, not frustrate or condemn the participant. The service should not be overly long nor marred by unnecessary comments or chatter. The focus must always be the sacrifice of Jesus and the benefits to each one of us as a believer, represented by the emblems and our partaking of them. The service is not creedal. Anyone who is consecrated, committed to Christ, regardless of doctrinal affiliation, is eligible to take part.

If you are not able to keep the Memorial on the date shown here, it would be suitable to keep it *exactly one calendar month* later – that is, on the 14th of the following month. Refer to [Numbers 9: 6-11](#).

A SUGGESTED ORDER OF SERVICE

1. Start with one or more solemn hymns to guide the minds of the assembly in the direction of our Lord and His sacrificial death.
2. A prayer may then be offered for God’s blessing on the service.
3. The one officiating, or another, might read an account of the Last Supper.
4. The one officiating, or another, might give a brief account of the Passover in the Old Testament, explaining how it was a picture of Jesus, the fulfilment – the ‘Passover lamb’ ([1 Corinthians 5: 7](#)).
5. Someone may then ask a blessing over the bread and on those who will partake of it, that all might have a full appreciation of its significance as a symbol of our Lord’s body, sacrificed for all.
6. One of the pieces of bread may then be broken, and our Lord’s words spoken: ‘Take and eat; this is my body’ (Matthew 26: 26). The plate should then be served to those partaking. [*The force of this emblem is that of justification by faith, a result of the ransom-sacrifice.*]
7. When passing and partaking of the emblems, silence is recommended as the participants meditate on the sacredness of the occasion.
8. A prayer may then be invoked over the cup, expressing thankfulness, and requesting the Lord’s blessing on those participating. Jesus’ words may be repeated: ‘Drink from it, all of you’ (Matthew 26: 27). The cup should then be served in quietness. [*The force of this emblem is that of consecration, new life arising out of Jesus’ spilt blood, His death.*]
9. The service may be ended with a suitable hymn (‘When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives’; Mark 14: 26).

[^][fn1] Our data are obtained from the sources below; our final calculations use the dynamic data from *The Planets*:

1. *The Planets* software (v. 2.02, copyright 2002 Brendan Murphy) <<http://www.cpac.org.uk/download.asp>>
2. *Astronomical Tables of the Sun, Moon, and Planets*, Jean Meeus (Willmann-Bell, Inc.; 1983), pp. 3-43, 4-18.

APPENDIX I

Time Zones

By international agreement Planet Earth has been divided up into 24 theoretical increments of 15 degrees, or time zones (15×24 [hours] = 360). Although each time zone is theoretically 15 degrees wide, usually corresponding to a 1-hour difference in mean solar time, in practice the *shape* of time zones is adjusted to match internal, international, and political borders. For example, in the city of St. John's in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, the increment is 30 minutes, putting that region half-an-hour ahead of the next time zone westward.

The *prime meridian* (the '00:00' or 'zero' point) is by long tradition set at Greenwich, England. This is known as Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).^[fn2] From this point, east and west, clock time is advanced or retarded 1 hour for every time zone. For example, when it's 00:00 (12 midnight) at Greenwich, it's 01:00 (1:00 a.m.) in Paris, which is situated within the next time zone eastward. In Moscow, 3 time zones to the east of Greenwich, it would be 03:00 (3:00 a.m.). Conversely, 1 hour is deducted from GMT when moving west. Assuming 10:00 (10:00 a.m.) in Greenwich, it would be 05:00 (5:00 a.m.) in Philadelphia or Toronto, 5 time zones to the west. [These assumptions disregard the local effect of Daylight Savings Time.]^[fn3]

Wolfram Research gives this definition of the International Date Line:

An imaginary line which generally follows the 180 degrees meridian of longitude, one half of the way around the Earth from the Greenwich prime meridian. (Actually, for political and geographic reasons, the International Date Line makes detours around the Aleutian Islands in Alaska and some of New Zealand and actually follows time zone boundaries over some latitude ranges.) The date line marks the boundary between calendar days, so that the date on the New Zealand side is defined to be one day after the date on the Alaska side. Since the line passes down *the middle* of a time zone (over most latitude ranges), one would switch by an hour at 173.5 degrees W, a day at 180 degrees, and an hour again at 173.5 degrees E. The construct of a date line is necessary to prevent the continuous accumulation or loss of days as travelers move around the globe as compared to days reckoned by inhabitants remaining in a fixed location. The date line resolves this potential difficulty, but can lead to paradoxes such as a traveler on a long [aeroplane, *Ed.*] trip from Asia arriving in the United States several hours *before* leaving his point of departure.^[fn4]

^{△[fn2]} Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) is now more commonly expressed as Universal Time (UT) and is monitored and regulated by atomic clocks. Public clock time, announced by various timekeeping services, is expressed as Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). The discrepancy between UT and UTC is not more than one second. The data in this article are expressed in UT, the accepted standard for astronomical calculations.

^{△[fn3]} To see a plane view of the time zones, go to <<http://www.worldtimezone.com/>> (retrieved 21 January 2012)

^{△[fn4]} <<http://scienceworld.wolfram.com/astronomy/InternationalDateLine.html>> (retrieved 21 January 2012)

APPENDIX II

Did Jesus break the bread into eleven pieces (Judas was absent), or into two, each disciple then breaking off a piece for himself? How should we carry out the service?

The accounts of the institution of the Memorial supper state that Jesus ‘broke’ the unleavened bread before passing it to His disciples. (For internal consistency, citations throughout this Appendix are to the *King James [Authorised] Version*, except where indicated otherwise):

Matthew 26: 26: ‘And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.’

Mark 14: 22: ‘And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.’

Luke 22: 19: ‘And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.’

1 Corinthians 11: 23, 24: ‘For I [*Paul*] have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.’

Institution of the Memorial Service

At the time Jesus inaugurated the Memorial service He was the only one who *could* break the bread as symbolic of His own body being broken. Of those assembled in the upper room He alone was righteous (actually ‘justified’, or ‘just’), His sacrifice being then future and the holy spirit of begettal not having come upon the disciples. Looked at this way, one might conclude that since only He would or could offer His body as a ransom-sacrifice, we should read this inference back into the original service.

The difficulty with this assumption, however, is that the Memorial service was intended as a perpetual anniversary – or until Christ would come *again* – in His Second Advent (1 Corinthians 11: 26): ‘For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.’ This meaning, therefore, rises above the temporal. In other words, the ages-long *significance* of the symbol is what is in view. Jesus was setting forth a model remembrance for subsequent generations of Christians to follow. The singular event in the upper room therefore transcends the time in which it occurred, the signification of the emblems – the bread and the wine – enduring through the centuries, particularly in relation to the Gospel-Age Church. (For information on the sin-offering of the Church, see the articles on our Website, ‘[Dying for the Dead](#)’ and ‘[Consecration of the Priests](#)’. For information regarding the distinction between the Church proper – the ‘Little Flock’ – spirit-begettal, and other features relating to the ‘high calling’, you may [contact us](#) by e-mail.)

‘Breaking’ Bread

The Jewish Passover which Jesus and His disciples kept prior to Jesus’ inauguration of the ‘last supper’ proceeded along customary lines. We have no evidence that Jesus varied this routine. As a Jew brought up under the Law He observed the statutory Jewish feasts. He also honoured the extra-Biblical winter festival known variously as the ‘feast of the dedication’, the ‘feast of lights’ or, today, as Hanukkah, a tradition dating back to the 2nd-century revolt of the Maccabees ([John 10: 22, 23](#)).

‘Breaking bread together’ was a custom of the day. Indeed, the practice of blessing the bread before breaking it is mentioned several times in the Scriptures, the same formulation (bless-brake-gave) appearing often. At the feeding of the (more than) 5,000 with the five loaves and two fishes, we read that Jesus ‘blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves’ to his disciples ([Matthew 14: 19](#)). On the later occasion when He fed the (more than) 4,000, this time from a supply of seven loaves and a ‘few’ fish, the narrative also records that He ‘gave thanks, and brake them, and gave’ to His disciples ([Matthew 15: 34-36](#)). The ‘fragments’ left over from these community meals – twelve and seven baskets respectively – testify that the people did most of the ‘breaking’. See [Matthew 14: 20, 21](#); [15: 37, 38](#); [Mark 6: 35-44](#); [8: 1-9](#); [Luke 9: 12-17](#); [John 6: 1-13](#).

Any doubt about there being two separate mass feedings may be settled by reading [Matthew 16: 9, 10](#), in which our Lord refers to those events. [The Greek word, *klao* (κλάω), translated ‘brake’ (‘broke’) is used also in [John 19: 32, 33](#), with reference to the soldiers breaking the legs of the criminals crucified with Jesus.]

The sociable practice of breaking bread together was maintained by the early Church, going ‘house to house’ ([Acts 2: 42-46](#)). On one of Paul’s missionary journeys he reached Troas and met on Sunday to ‘break bread’ with the brethren ([Acts 20: 7-11](#)). And shortly before the shipwreck which stranded Paul and his fellow passengers on the island of Malta, the Apostle ‘took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat’ ([Acts 27: 35](#)).

What Sort of Bread?

Bread was usually made of wheat or barley; the sort used in the Passover and, therefore, the Memorial supper which superseded it, would have been baked without leaven – that is, without yeast, without which the bread would not rise. It probably resembled a thick, flat disc, not unlike pitta bread in general appearance. In connection with the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 the Scriptures state that the lad of [John 6: 9](#) had barley loaves with him, the staple of the poorer classes. The Greek is *artos* (ἄρτος). The same word is used in a *generic* sense by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10: 16, 17 (*NIV-UK*):

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread [*artos*] that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf [*artos*], we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. **[fn5]**

The Apostle’s use here of ‘bread’ does not mean that the Memorial bread itself was of the leavened variety. Rather, his point is that the suffering of the Gospel-Age Church demonstrates their participation in the ‘one loaf’. The *primary* implication is that the elect Body of Christ is ‘broken’ or sacrificed with Jesus; not as a part of His *ransom*-sacrifice – which *only* Jesus could provide – but as a part of the ‘sin offering’. This is a complex and profound doctrine, well beyond the scope of this article; if you are interested in this subject, please [contact](#) us by e-mail. Suffice it to say that, for several reasons, the privilege of taking part in the Memorial service is not confined to the saints of yesteryear.

How to Proceed?

In light of the evidence, the following approach seems reasonable:

1. The one in charge of the service breaks the bread/matzo in two, representative of the actions of Jesus, but does not eat it just yet.
2. As each member of the congregation receives the plate, he or she breaks off a piece and eats it.
3. After all have eaten, the plate is returned to the one in charge who now, as a recipient, breaks off a piece and eats it.
4. The same procedure may be adopted for the cup.

[fn5] The order of the bread and cup is here reversed. Compare with [Matthew 26: 26, 27](#), and Paul’s own rehearsal of it in [1 Corinthians 11: 23-26](#), in which the distribution of the bread *precedes* that of the cup.

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^APPENDIX III

FIGURE 1

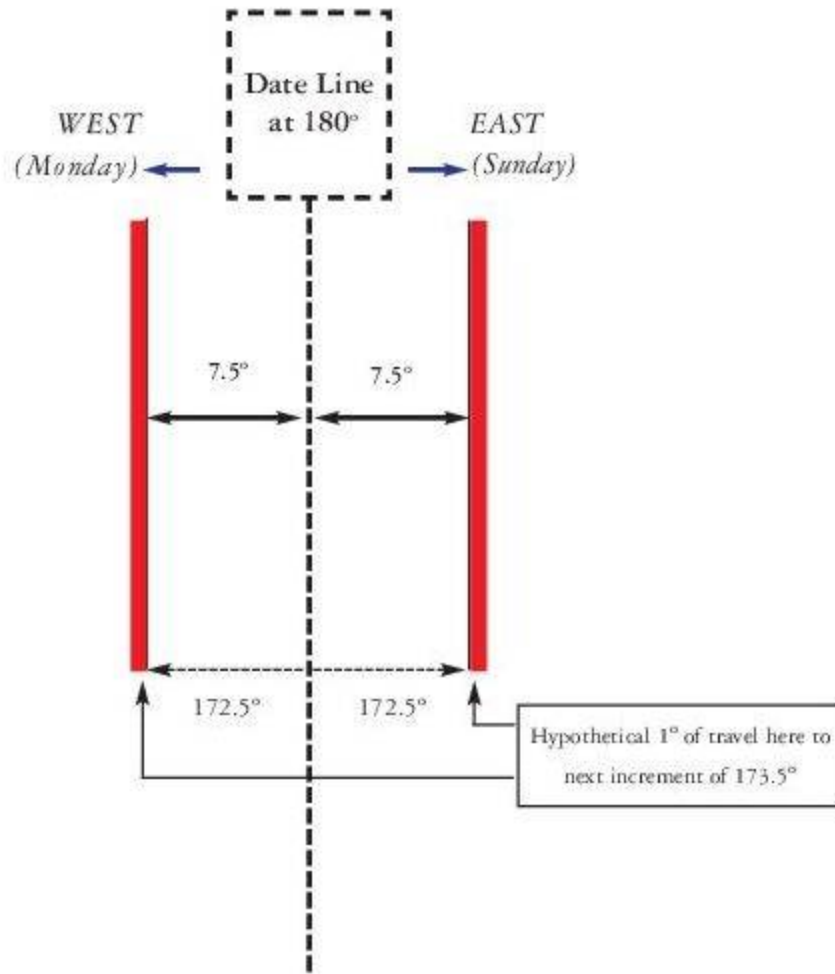


FIGURE 2
Counting to Nisan 14, 2012
All times local to you

