

## EASTER - PASCHA – ACTS 12:4 – Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

A typical “problem” or “unfortunate translation” offered against the King James Bible is found in Acts 12:4 where the Greek word “*pascha*” (πάσχα) is rendered “Easter” instead of “Passover”. Although “Passover” is the usual correct rendering, the *context* of Acts 12:1-4 is unmistakable that it should not so be translated in this instance. Modern versions translate “*pascha*” as “Passover” here and in so doing rather than correcting a mistake, they actually insert one. As the King James is the only English translation available today that has made this proper distinction, the apparent error sets it clearly apart from and above all others (the 1534 William Tyndale, the 1557 Geneva Bible, the 1539 Great Bible [Cranmer’s], the 1568 Bishops’ Bible as well as other pre-King James English versions also read “Easter”).

*Pascha* occurs 29 times in the New Testament. The KJB translators rendered it “Passover” the other 28 places in which it appears. As there was no Greek word for Easter at that time, the Holy Spirit also chose *pascha* at Acts 12:4. Here the reader is reminded of the meticulous procedure to which the King James Bible was subjected and the large number of different scholars throughout England that critiqued its production. The point is that these learned men clearly knew that “*pascha*” normally should mean “Passover” – for they so translated it the other 28 times. Therefore, Acts 12:4 is neither a mistranslation nor an oversight! It is the result of a deliberate calculated decision on the part of many dedicated Christian scholars of the first rank. What did the 1611 translators (and their predecessors) perceive that led them to this obviously intentional choice which modern scholars have failed to observe?

They were guided by the Holy Spirit to correctly discern the context and not merely blindly follow vocabulary and lexical studies. The Passover was to be slain on the 14th of Nisan and the seven days following were the feast of unleavened bread (Nisan 15-21). Verse 3 informs us that Peter was arrested **during** the “days of unleavened bread”. Thus, Passover had **already** come and gone – so Herod (Agrippa) could not possibly have been referring to Passover in this citation. The next Passover was a year away, and the context of these verses simply does not permit Herod’s intending to keep Peter incarcerated for so prolonged a period and then put him to death a year later. No – it is clear that Herod purposed to slay Peter very soon thereafter. The next key is that of Herod himself (12:1). Herod Agrippa was not a Jew. He was a pagan Idumaeon (Edomite) appointed by Rome. He had no attachment to a Jewish Passover. But there was a religious holy day that the whole world honored and does to this day – the ancient festival of Astarte, also known in other languages as Ishtar (almost pronounced like Easter).

This festival has always been held late in the month of Nisan (c.April). Originally, it was a commemoration of the earth’s “regenerating” itself after the “death” of winter. It involved a celebration of reproduction and fertility; hence, the symbols of the festival were the rabbit and egg – both well known for their reproductive abilities. The central figure of worship was the female deity and her child. Scripture refers to her as the “queen of heaven” (Jer.7:18; 44:15-27), the mother of Tammuz (Ezk.8:14), and Diana (or Artemis, Acts 19:23-41), and they declare that the pagan world worships her (Acts 19:27). These perverted rituals took place at sunrise on “Easter” morning (Ezk.8:13-16) whereas Passover was celebrated in the evening (Deu.16:6).

Thus, the Jewish Passover was held on Nisan 14 and the pagan festival Ishtar later that same month. As we have shown, Acts 12:4 cannot refer to Passover for the verse tells us that “**then** were the days of unleavened bread”. Thus, in context, it must be referring to **another** holy day (holiday) that is at hand but **after** Passover. This suggests Herod was a follower of that world wide cult and thus choose to wait until Ishtar (Easter) to slay Peter. As the Jews had put Jesus to death **during** Passover, Herod’s reason for delaying the execution certainly was not fear of their objection to the desecration of a Jewish holy day. As there was no Greek word “Easter”, the King James translators realized that in this instance, “*pascha*” had to be used for Easter. Passover was both impossible and erroneous. They correctly discerned that *pascha* could include any holy day occurring in the month of Nisan. Thus, the choice of “Easter” was methodical, exact, and correct.