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# Passover— Was It Symbolic of His Coming?

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*Not only was Passover a prophetic symbol of the Lord's sacrifice, its timing foreshadowed the coming of the Savior in the meridian of time.*

Adam was given the promise that the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, would come "in the meridian of time." ([Moses 6:57](#).) Later, Enoch specifically asked when the Savior would come, and he was given the same response: "in the meridian of time." ([Moses 7:46](#).) This phrase is again used in the Doctrine and Covenants to refer to the time of the first coming of the Savior. (See [D&C 20:26](#); [D&C 39:3](#).)

But just what does this phrase, "the meridian of time," mean?

In astronomy, the meridian is a north-south line passing exactly overhead that divides the sky in half. *Meridian* literally means "midday." The sun culminates (reaches its high point) as it passes over the meridian. Time before that "passover" is called *ante meridiem* (A.M., or "before midday"), and afterward it is *post meridiem* (P.M., or "after midday"). (See Figure 1.)

The scriptural meaning of "the meridian of time" has been interpreted by Church leaders to be essentially the same as the astronomical meaning: that is, the coming of Christ marked the high noon, so to speak, of the earth's temporal existence. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, "The meridian of time is the middle or high point of that portion of eternity which is considered to be mortal time. Since Christ lived, ministered, and worked out the atonement in time's meridian, such era was truly the high point of history." [1](#)

Let us now see how the meridian of time may have been symbolized in the calendar of the law of Moses, because the law of Moses was given to prepare Israel for the "coming of Christ." ([2 Ne. 11:4](#).)

## The Law of Moses Typified His Coming

The Nephites "did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that *the law of Moses was a type of his coming*." ([Alma 25:15](#); emphasis added.) Knowing that Christ's coming was in the meridian of time and that the Mosaic law was a pattern of his coming, we can expect to see in the law of Moses symbolism referring to the meridian of time.

The law of Moses "was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" ([Gal. 3:24](#)), wrote the Apostle Paul, offering "a shadow of good things to come" ([Heb. 10:1](#)). How? One example is the actual sacrificing of the Passover lamb, which was in similitude of the death of Jesus. (See [1 Cor. 5:7](#).) It appears that the symbolism also included the timing of the Savior's death: the Passover lamb was killed between 3:00 and 5:00 P.M. [2](#) on the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the spring month specified in the law of Moses (see [Ex. 12:1–6](#)), which was when the Lamb of God actually died as a sacrifice (see [John 19:14](#); [Matt. 27:46](#)). We are assured that not only the *death* but also the *coming* of Christ was typified in the law. Nephi rejoiced, "Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the *coming* of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given." ([2 Ne. 11:4](#); emphasis added.)

But just where in the law of Moses is the "type of his coming"? ([Alma 25:15](#).) Let us examine the

calendar associated with the law of Moses to discover the rich symbolism of the meridian of time.

**Lunisolar meridian: 15 Nisan.** In order to understand the symbolism of the meridian of time, we need to consider the calendar that the Lord commanded Moses to use in determining days on which the sacrifices and feasts were to be held. That calendar is partly described in the five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It was similar in many respects to the modern Hebrew calendar (see Figure 2) but very different from our Gregorian (Roman) calendar.

The Hebrew lunisolar calendar (*luni*: “moon”; *solar*: “sun”) uses the moon to reckon months and the sun to measure years. In contrast, our Gregorian calendar is not so complex: it is a solar calendar, meaning it keeps track of only the sun. By inserting leap days according to a fixed pattern, the spring equinox (when the sun rises due east) is always on March 20–21. Also, although we still use the word *month*—which derives from *moon*—our months are no longer tied to the moon as are Hebrew months.

The Hebrew day begins in the evening, the month begins at the new moon, and the year begins in the fall. <sup>3</sup> Because the Hebrew 24-hour day begins at sunset, the meridian—or middle point—of the full daily cycle is actually at sunrise. (See accompanying sidebar, “Sunrise Symbolism.”) The first day of any month is within two days of the new moon, and the fifteenth day of any month (of twenty-nine or thirty days) is near the full moon. Accordingly, the midpoint of every Hebrew month can be represented by the fifteenth day.

The meridian month of the year is the spring month Nisan. <sup>4</sup> Thus, 15 Nisan represents the meridian both of the Hebrew year and of that month. In the law revealed to Moses, this meridian day of the Hebrew year was also the annual Passover feast day.

**Passover Feast: 15 Nisan.** The day 15 Nisan was the day of the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt. (See [Num. 33:3](#).) The Lord declared it to be an annual holy day in order to remind Israel of its liberation from the bondage of Egypt. (See [Ex. 12:17, 42](#); [Ex. 13:3](#).) It was a day of rejoicing, and even today Passover is practically synonymous with “liberation.”

On 15 Nisan, the Israelites began a one-week celebration called the feast of unleavened bread. (See [Lev. 23:6](#).) The first day was the feast of the Passover, at which the Passover lamb was eaten. It was a special sabbath day of rest. (See [Lev. 23:7](#).) It was held in the evening that began the day 15 Nisan, shortly after the sacrifice of the lamb in the afternoon that ended the previous day, 14 Nisan; thus, technically, the sacrifice of the lamb and the Passover feast occurred on different calendrical days. (See [Lev. 23:5–6](#).)

We shall refer to 15 Nisan as the Passover feast day, but it is also called the first day of Passover or the first day of unleavened bread. Thus, our expectations are fulfilled that a meridian would be prominent in the law of Moses: *15 Nisan, the meridian of the Hebrew year, is the Passover feast day.*

## The Exodus as a Type of His Birth

Not only did the law of Moses point to Christ, the Exodus itself is also rich in symbolism of the Savior. Let us now see how Israel’s deliverance from the house of bondage apparently prefigured Jesus’ birth.

First, the Lord told Moses, “Israel is my son, even my firstborn.” ([Ex. 4:22](#).) Thus, Israel represented Christ, the firstborn of God. (See [Col. 1:15](#); [D&C 93:21](#).)

Second, the Lord related the day that Israel was delivered to the firstborn’s opening the mother’s womb. (See [Ex. 13:2](#); [Num. 3:13](#), [Num. 8:17](#).) Because the firstborn was a type of Christ, we find here the birth of Jesus linked to the day 15 Nisan.

Third, in the light of understanding that Israel symbolized Christ, and Egypt the womb, one can find several other passages which may imply that Jesus would be born on the evening beginning 15 Nisan. For example, on the day before the Exodus the Lord told Moses, “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night.” (See [Ex. 12:12](#); compare [Ex. 13:1–4](#), [14–15](#); [Deut. 16:1](#). Nisan was originally called Abib <sup>5</sup>.) Moreover, there is a Jewish tradition that the Messiah would come on the night of the Passover feast. <sup>6</sup>

Finally, the Exodus was indeed the birth of the nation of Israel; that is, after a long gestation period in Egypt, the nation was literally born on the day it was delivered. Then followed the symbolic sojourn: crossing the water (which could symbolize birth), being led through the wilderness (which possibly symbolizes mortality), and again crossing the water into the promised land.<sup>7</sup>

Combining these correlations, we could conclude that not only was the Exodus apparently symbolic of Christ's birth but also that perhaps the very night of Jesus' birth was symbolically indicated to be the evening beginning (preceding) 15 Nisan. No wonder it was celebrated by a joyous feast; it was "that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations." (*Ex. 12:42*; italics added.) Thus, it appears that Passover was the birthday feast both of Israel and of the Savior.

## Life Transitions at Passover

The concept of Passover is closely linked to that of a transition to a new phase of life, even as the sun "passes over" the meridian at noon, when it is at the high point of its daily journey. But at sunrise each day, passage over that meridian is even more clearly symbolic of transition. This symbolism is commonly used in phrases such as "the dawning of a new age." This is the time when the sun is "born" each day, passing over into our world at sunrise; then it "dies" when it passes over the horizon at sunset.

Since the death (14 Nisan), birth (15 Nisan), and resurrection (16 Nisan) of Christ are all associated with rites during Passover, it seems that the word also symbolizes Christ's "passing over" from the premortality of the spirit world to the physical world, as well as from the physical world to the spirit world. For example, the afternoon of the fourteenth day of Nisan "is the Lord's Passover" (*Lev. 23:5*), when the lamb was killed. Using this symbolic meaning of *passover*, this verse suggests that the Savior would *pass over* into the spirit world on the afternoon of 14 Nisan. If thus interpreted, the phrase "pass over" is similar to the phrase "pass on" or "pass away," used to mean death.

On 15 Nisan, the day of joyous feast of Passover when the firstborn were sanctified and Israel was born, the Savior passed over from spirit-world pre-mortality at his birth. On 16 Nisan, when the firstfruits of the harvest were offered (see *Lev. 23:10–11*), he again passed over from the spirit world into his body at the Resurrection (see *Ensign*, July 1985, p. 57) and became the firstfruits of them that slept. (See *1 Cor. 15:20*.)

In addition to meridian symbolism, then, the term *Passover* can be used to symbolize transitions to new phases of life, such as birth, death, and resurrection.

## His Coming to Minister at Passover

Following the baptism and temptation of Jesus, the first event mentioned in the synoptic Gospels is the Savior's return to Galilee after John the Baptist had been cast into prison. (See *Matt. 4:12*; *Mark 1:14*; *Luke 4:14*.) The Gospel of John, however, includes more than two chapters of events that occurred before John the Baptist was imprisoned (see *John 1:29–4:43*), as specifically stated (see *John 3:24*). Thus, only the Gospel of John describes the beginning of the Savior's ministry.

John makes mention of only one miracle that the Savior performed between his baptism and the Passover the following spring. John states that changing water into wine at the marriage in Cana was the "beginning of [the Savior's] miracles." Yet even this miracle was not public. Only the Lord's disciples and the servants knew of it. (See *John 2:1–11*.) Apparently it was not until the Passover, which followed "not many days" later, that Jesus began to perform miracles openly, marking the beginning of his public ministry. Further, John indicates the exact day these public miracles began: "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, *in the feast day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." (*John 2:23*; emphasis added.) Thus, appropriately, it appears that Christ began his public ministry on the celebration day of the Passover feast, 15 Nisan.<sup>8</sup> If so, then according to conclusions above, it would have also been on his birthday. But which birthday? It would have been near his thirtieth because he was "beginning to be about thirty" at his baptism shortly before (*Luke 3:23*). Let us also consider law of Moses symbolism to help answer this question.

**Levites typified Christ.** The Lord told Moses, “I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn.” ([Num. 3:12](#); see also [Num. 8:18](#).) Because the Levites were thus a symbol of Christ as the Firstborn, perhaps we can also expect to learn part of the pattern of the Savior’s life from the laws given to the Levites. The law of Moses stated that Levites “thirty years old and upward” should enter into the service of the Lord. ([Num. 4:3, 23, 30](#).) Consequently, if the law was symbolic of Him, we might expect that Jesus would also begin his ministry at age thirty.

That Jesus was thirty when he began his ministry is independently verified by the combined witnesses of John and the Book of Mormon. The latter tells us that he lived very nearly thirty-three Nephite years ([3 Ne. 2:8](#); [Hel. 14:20](#); [3 Ne. 8:3–5](#)), and John describes a three-year ministry ending at his death at Passover. Thus, the feast day birthday on which he apparently began his ministry was his thirtieth birthday. If so, we can conclude that the Savior fulfilled the symbolism of the law of Moses to the very day.

**Cleansing the temple.** The Savior cleansed the temple just before Passover both at the beginning of his ministry (see [John 2:13–16](#)) and at the end (see [Matt. 21:12–3](#)). In terms of our having a fuller understanding of Passover, note that the cleansing of the temple also fits the pattern of Passover. That is, part of the prescribed actions at Passover include searching the house for any leaven and putting it entirely outside the house. (See [Ex. 12:15](#).) It would seem that leaven could symbolize false teachings (see [Matt. 16:12](#)), hypocrisy (see [Luke 12:1](#)), or wickedness (see [1 Cor. 5:7–8](#)), which the Savior put out of his Father’s house, the temple, by “cleansing” it of those who defiled it.

## His Coming to the Spirit Prison

The climax of the Savior’s mission in the meridian of time was the act of delivering mankind out of bondage by loosing the chains of hell and breaking the bands of death. (See [Alma 5:6–9](#).) It was the apex of a crescendo that had been swelling since the fall of Adam, culminating in the three days of the Atonement (Friday [9](#) to Resurrection (Sunday).

We read that those in the spirit world had been “assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world.” In fact, they were already “rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death,” when the Redeemer would come to declare “liberty to the captives who had been faithful.” ([D&C 138:16, 18](#).) Thus, they clearly expected the Lord to come at that very time. But why? Apparently it was because *it was Passover*, the day when Israel had been “redeemed” from the “house of bondage” at the Exodus (see [Deut. 13:5](#)), foreshadowing the day when “the Redeemer” would proclaim “the opening of the prison,” and deliver the “spirits in prison” from “bondage.” (See [D&C 138:42, 28](#).)

Inasmuch as Jesus died in the closing hours of 14 Nisan, his coming to the spirit world was at the beginning of the Passover feast day, 15 Nisan, the day symbolic of deliverance from the house of bondage. (See [D&C 138:50](#).) This coming fulfilled one Jewish tradition which insisted that the Redemption could take place only on 15 Nisan, as foreshadowed by the Exodus. The tradition is: “God said, ‘Let this sign be in your hands: on the day when I wrought salvation for you, and on that very night know that I will redeem you; but if it is not this night, then do not believe.’” A footnote clarifies: “This apparently means: Should a pretended redeemer come at any other time, do not believe him, for the redemption will take place on that day and on no other.” [10](#)

## The Passover Time Pattern

During this look at the time pattern of the law of Moses, it has been unnecessary to refer to our calendar. Now the pattern we have seen may be used as a chronological template (compare [D&C 52:14](#)) to date the coming of Christ in the meridian of time to mortality, to the ministry, and to the spirit world.

**Birth: Thursday, 6 April 1 B.C.** Since the organization of the Church on 6 April 1830, members have been informed that Jesus was born on 6 April 1 B.C. (on our Gregorian calendar [11](#)). Modern scripture states that the Church was organized 1,830 years “since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh.” ([D&C 20:1](#).) It seems the Lord intended this verse to be accurate to the very day: both

President Harold B. Lee and President Spencer W. Kimball have affirmed that 6 April on our calendar is the anniversary of the Savior's birth. (See *Ensign*, July 1973, p. 2; May 1980, p. 54.)

This date has an important confirmation in the Lord's pattern of the law of Moses that Christ would be born on the evening preceding 15 Nisan. Astronomical calculations show that 6 April of 1 B.C. was appropriate for Passover that year. In view of the tight symbolic connection of Passover to the birth of the firstborn discussed earlier, this is further strong support for the view that Jesus was born on the night of, or preceding, 6 April. [12](#)

**Beginning the Public Ministry: Saturday, 6 April** A.D. 30. The most likely date for the feast day (15 Nisan) on which the Savior began his ministry on his thirtieth birthday is Saturday, 6 April A.D. 30. The day 15 Nisan can fall on any date from about 21 March to 23 April, but it only falls on the same day of the solar year (that is, on 6 April) after certain intervals of time. One of those intervals is thirty years. Even then, it does not happen after every thirty-year interval; it depends on the details of the moon's motion. But in this case, 6 April is clearly the most likely candidate for 15 Nisan in A.D. 30.

**The Spirit World: Saturday, 2 April** A.D. 33. Similarly, the most likely date for the Passover feast day on the Judean calendar three years later, at the end of Christ's ministry, appears to be Saturday, 2 April A.D. 33. It would have begun after sunset following the death of the Savior on Friday, 14 Nisan. Thus, if this view is correct, both the Savior's ministry in life and in the spirit world would have begun on Saturday, the Sabbath at that time, these particular Sabbaths being doubly sacred by also being the Passover feast day.

So we see that the Mosaic calendar, used to determine the timing of the sacred feasts, which were "types of things to come" ([Mosiah 13:31](#)), apparently pointed to the dates of the coming of Jesus Christ in the meridian of time. Moreover, the date noted in Doctrine and Covenants 20:1 [[D&C 20:1](#)] as the day of Jesus' birth fits the scriptural pattern perfectly. In its ability to have summarized so much, the simple statement that the Lord would "come in the meridian of time" is remarkable.

Let us look at other witnesses confirming these dates from both the Book of Mormon and secular sources.

## Witness of the Book of Mormon

The Bible, Book of Mormon, and Doctrine and Covenants appear to be consistent to the very day concerning Jesus Christ's birth date, the length of his life, and the date of his resurrection. [13](#) An exact length for the Savior's life can be deduced from the Book of Mormon, which records that Nephite reckoning began at the sign of his birth (see [3 Ne. 2:8](#)) and that he died on the fourth day of the thirty-fourth year (see [3 Ne. 8:5](#)). If Jesus was born on the first day of the first Nephite year (which may be implied), and if the years each had 365 days (consistent with the Egyptian and Mesoamerican calendars used before and after the Nephites), then Jesus lived 12,048 days. Counting 12,048 days after a Passover feast day on Thursday, 15 Nisan—6 April 1 B.C.—brings one precisely to a Passover sacrifice day: Friday, 14 Nisan—1 April A.D. 33—the day indicated by the pattern in the law of Moses as the day of the death of the Lamb of God. Moreover, that is most likely the very day indicated by the Bible as the day that Jesus died. Such interscriptural consistency in these details provides a strong witness to the proposed dates of both the birth and the death of the Savior.

## Witness of Secular History

Let us look at a summary of facts from external histories that support these dates.

**Birth.** Little is known about the date of the birth of Christ from secular histories. Most of the potentially useful biblical clues, such as the star of Bethlehem (see [Matt. 2:2](#)), the slaughter of the infants (see [Matt. 2:16](#)), or an empire-wide taxation (registration or census; see [Luke 2:1](#)) while King Herod reigned (see [Luke 1:5](#); [Matt. 2:1](#)), have not been clearly identified in secular histories. Accordingly, dates from 7 B.C. to 1 B.C. have been proposed.

The only secular thread to which the birth of Jesus has consistently been tied is the death of King Herod, who was visited by the Magi after the birth of the Savior. For several centuries it has been believed that Herod died in 4 B.C., and so the birth of Christ has been placed about two years before (see [Matt. 2:1, 16](#)), in 6 or 5 B.C. However, recent reevaluation of the evidence suggests that Herod died some time later, in 1 B.C. [14](#), or A.D. 1. [15](#) It is now a field of intense study [16](#), but with no clear solution in sight. The problem is the same as with the other biblical clues: lack of solid evidence. The Jewish historian Josephus is the only source for details about Herod's life, and even he does not mention the year of Herod's death. [17](#)

One new historical argument for the occurrence of the birth of Christ somewhere in the 2 to 1 B.C. period is the view that the decree "that all the world should be taxed" (enrolled or registered; see [Luke 2:1](#)) has finally been identified as an empire-wide census and oath of allegiance to Augustus in 2 B.C. [18](#) Josephus apparently mentions that oath [19](#), which, according to his history, would have been a year or so before Herod's death. These new dates fit well with the Passover pattern discussed above—that Christ was born in the spring of 1 B.C. and that Herod died in early A.D. 1.

It has been pointed out [20](#) that the 6 April 1 B.C. date also explains certain aspects of the New Testament account. For example, the date is during the short lambing season, which would explain why the shepherds were "keeping watch over their flock by night." ([Luke 2:8](#).) Moreover, the fact that "there was no room for them in the inn" ([Luke 2:7](#)) suggests that the birth probably occurred at the time of one of the three feasts, such as Passover, at which Jews were required to be in Jerusalem. [21](#) That proposal is also consistent with the 6 April date.

Fortunately, although secular histories are not very useful in helping us to determine Christ's date of birth, they offer clear testimony for the dates of his ministry and death.

**Ministry.** Secular evidence for the year of the beginning of Christ's ministry is perhaps the strongest for any date in the New Testament, because it is closely tied to the reign of a Roman emperor. [Luke 3:1–3](#) states that John the Baptist began his ministry during the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, which Roman historians equate to the Julian calendar year A.D. 29. [22](#) Some months later, Jesus began his ministry at the Passover of A.D. 30.

**Death and Resurrection.** Evidence for the very day of the Savior's death and for the day of his resurrection is strong from the New Testament account. (See *Ensign*, June 1985, pp. 59–68.) First, we can conclude that it was three years after the beginning of the ministry, because four Passovers are mentioned or implied in the Gospels. Second, it is stated that Jesus was crucified on the day of the preparation of the Passover (see [John 19:14](#)), which would be 14 Nisan. Finally, the day of his death is indicated as Friday (see [Matt. 27:62](#)), which at the time was called simply the "preparation"—a day of preparation, that is, for Saturday, the Sabbath. Counting the day of his trial and death as the first day, Christ's resurrection occurred on the third day (see [Luke 24:20–21](#)), which is given in all four Gospels as "the first day of the week"—Sunday. (See [Matt. 28:1](#); [Mark 16:2](#); [Luke 24:1](#); [John 20:1](#).) In the implied crucifixion year, A.D. 33, astronomical calculations indicate that that Friday, 1 April A.D. 33 on our calendar [23](#), was most likely to have been 14 Nisan that year.

Another witness comes from Phlegon, a Greek secular historian from Caria (in Asia Minor), writing soon after A.D. 137, who "reported that in the fourth year of the 202d Olympiad there was 'the greatest eclipse of the sun' and that 'it became night in the sixth hour of the day [i.e., noon] so that the stars even appeared in the heavens. There was a great earthquake in Bithynia, and many things were overturned in Nicaea.'" [24](#)

The year mentioned began on 1 July A.D. 32 and ended 30 June A.D. 33, a period which includes the time identified as that of the Savior's crucifixion. The fact that Phlegon records both darkening of the sun at noon and earthquakes, just as Matthew describes (see [Matt. 27:45, 51](#)), in that same year, makes it apparent that he is describing the same events that were also witnessed in distant cities in modern-day Turkey. This also confirms traditions that "the terror of the earthquake continued from the sixth hour of the preparation until the ninth hour" (from noon till 3:00 P.M. on Friday; compare [3 Ne. 8:17–19](#)), and that

“when he was crucified darkness came over all the world,” “the sun was altogether hidden,” “the stars were seen,” and “in all the world they lighted their lamps from the sixth hour until evening.” [25](#)

Thus, the Passover pattern in the law of Moses, the reckoning from the Bible and the Book of Mormon, and related secular sources all supply corroborative evidence that the Savior was born on the night of, or preceding, Thursday, 6 April 1 B.C.; that he began his ministry Saturday, 6 April A.D. 30; that he died on the cross on Friday, 1 April A.D. 33; that he ministered in the spirit world on Saturday, 2 April A.D. 33; and that he was resurrected on Sunday, 3 April A.D. 33.

Such order in the remarkable timing of the Savior’s birth, ministry, and death bears eloquent testimony that his advent in the meridian of time had been planned long before and that the law of Moses, as the ancient prophets declared, truly did foreshadow the Lord’s coming.

## Sunrise Symbolism

The word *day* has two distinct meanings: the daily period of light, and also the full cycle of both darkness and light. Both meanings are indicated in the Lord’s account of the Creation:

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

“And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

“And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.” ([Gen. 1:3–5.](#))

Note that in the last verse, *day* refers first to the period of light, and then to the entire cycle. Each of these days has its own meridian. The meridian of the period of light occurs at noon (see figure 1); but the full cycle of the day, as the Lord told Moses (see [Gen. 1:3–5](#)) and Abraham (see [Abr. 4:5](#)), begins with the night and ends with the day. That means that the symbolic meridian of the full daily cycle occurs at sunrise, which is both the midpoint of the entire cycle and also the division between light and darkness. Note that both the meridian of the twelve-hour day at noon and of the twenty-four-hour day at sunrise are valid symbols; they are simply the midpoints of two different “days.”

The coming of light to darkness at the meridian of the first day of creation suggests that even those events bear record of Christ. (See [Moses 6:63.](#)) That is, on the first day God created light, and Christ is the Light of the world (see [John 8:12](#), [John 12:46](#)), the Firstborn of creation (see [Col. 1:15](#)). Further, the light came to the darkness at the meridian of that first “day” of creation, just as the light of Jesus would come into the dark world (see [John 3:19](#)) in the meridian of time.

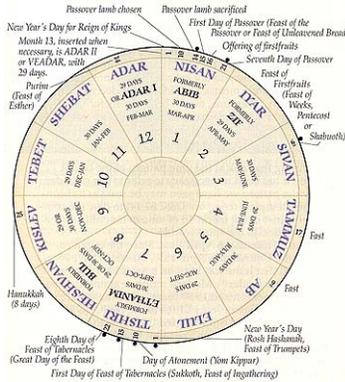
A clear example of the rising sun representing Christ is the prophecy that unto the righteous “shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” ([Mal. 4:2.](#)) This reference to the sun so clearly meant Christ that the phrase “Son of righteousness” is interchangeable with it. (See [3 Ne. 25:2](#); [2 Ne. 26:9.](#)) Nephi pointed out that Christ would rise “with healing in his wings” at His resurrection. (See [2 Ne. 25:13.](#)) Mark wrote that when the women arrived at the tomb, the sun had risen, and Christ also had risen (see [Mark 16:2, 9](#)), but it is not clear whether Mark intended an association of Christ with the sun. The tie of the rising of the Son at the Resurrection and the rising of the sun on that day is often noted during Easter sunrise services.

## Figure 1

[illustration] ANTE MERIDIEM; MERIDIAN; POST MERIDIEM

Figure 1. The meridian divides the sky, and the twelve-hour day, in half. The hours before the sun passes over the meridian are ante meridiem (A.M.) or “before midday,” and the hours after the sun has passed over the meridian are post meridiem (P.M.) or “after midday.”

## Figure 2



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Figure 2. The Modern Hebrew Calendar. The lunar months all begin near a new moon, and an extra month is inserted seven times every nineteen years before Nisan to keep that month in the spring because twelve lunar months are about eleven days short of a solar year of 365.24 days. Note that Nisan is numbered as the first month ([Ex. 12:2](#)) even though the civil year begins with the planting season in the fall ([Lev. 25:3–22](#)) on 1 Tishri. The original seven holy days of the law of Moses are indicated with black dots. This modern calendar is based entirely on calculations; the Judean calendar used at the time of Christ was based on actual observation of the thin crescent of the new moon to determine the beginning of the month.

For some purposes, years are reckoned from Nisan, and months are always numbered beginning with Nisan, but the official civil year begins on 1 Tishri.

**NISAN 1** Formerly **ABIB** 30 days Mar–Apr  
 1 New Year's Day for Reign of Kings  
 10 Passover lamb chosen  
 14 Passover lamb sacrificed  
 15 First Day of Passover (Feast of the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread)  
 16 Offering of firstfruits  
 21 Seventh day of Passover

**IYAR 2** Formerly **ZIF** 29 days Apr–May

**SIVAN 3** 30 days May–June  
 6 Feast of Firstfruits (Feast of Weeks, Pentecost or Shabuoth)

**TAMMUZ 4** 29 days June–July  
 17 Fast

**AB 5** 30 days July–Aug  
 9 Fast

**ELUL 6** 29 days Aug–Sept

**TISHRI 7** Formerly **ETHANIM** 30 days Sept–Oct  
 1 New Year's Day (Rosh Hashanah, Feast of Trumpets)  
 10 Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)  
 15 First Day of Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth, Feast of Ingathering)  
 22 Eighth Day of Feast of Tabernacles (Great Day of the Feast)

**HESHVAN 8** Formerly **BUL** 29 or 30 days Oct–Nov

**KISLEV 9** 29 or 30 days Nov–Dec  
 25 Hanukkah (8 days)

**TEBET 10** 29 days Dec–Jan

**SHEBAT 11** 30 days Jan–Feb

**ADAR 12** 29 days or **ADAR I** 30 days Feb–Mar  
 14 Purim (Feast of Esther)

Month 13, inserted when necessary, is **ADAR II** or **VEADAR**, with 29 days.

[photo] Background photo by John Luke

[illustration] *My Father's House*, by Al Rounds

[illustration] Detail from *The Crucifixion*, by Carl Heinrich Bloch, original at the Chapel of Frederiksborg,

Denmark; used by permission of the Frederiksborgmuseum.

[illustration] *Christ Triumphs over Satan*, by Robert T. Barrett

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## Notes

1. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft), 1966, p. 486.
2. Josephus, *Wars* 6.9.3. In *Josephus: Complete Works*, William Whiston, trans. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1960), p. 588. The “ninth hour” of the Judean day was 3:00 P.M.
3. For some purposes, the year begins on 1 Nisan in the spring, but the usual civil year (required in sabbath and jubilee year counts; see [Lev. 25:3–22](#)) begins on 1 Tishri (Rosh Hashanah), at the beginning of the planting season in the fall.
4. Nisan is the month beginning nearest the spring equinox, which is the meridian of a solar year that began in the fall, just as sunrise is the meridian of the full twenty-four-hour day that started the previous evening. The one meridian divides the bright summer from the dark winter, just as the other divides the day from the night.  
On 16 Nisan, the firstfruits of the harvest were offered (see [Lev. 23:5–6, 10–11](#)), so this ritual required the month to be at the same season each year. The Israelites planted barley in the fall and harvested it in the spring after the winter rains. If it would not have been ripe for the offering, an extra month was inserted before Nisan. The offering of the firstfruits was symbolic of the time when Jesus would rise from the earth and become the firstfruits of the harvest of the resurrection ([1 Cor. 15:20](#); [John 12:24](#)) on Sunday, 16 Nisan.
5. *Abib* means “the ripening ears.” Even the name of this month might indicate the time that Jesus, symbolized by the grain ([John 12:24](#)), would be ripe to come forth as the firstfruits of the womb ([Luke 1:42](#)) and of the earth ([1 Cor. 15:20](#)).
6. S. M. Lehrman, trans., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus* (London: Soncino Press, 1983), pp. 227–28.
7. Lehi may also have left Jerusalem at Passover because the time was linked to the birth of Christ ([1 Ne. 19:8](#)) and he was also delivered from bondage ([Alma 36:28–29](#)), led through the wilderness ([Alma 9:9](#); [D&C 17:1](#)), and crossed the water to a promised land ([1 Ne. 5:5](#)).
8. If the coming of Christ to the Nephites was near the end of their thirty-fourth year (see [3 Ne. 10:18](#)), then that coming might also have been at Passover, in the year following the crucifixion, which had occurred early that year (see [3 Ne. 8:5](#)). If so, it might explain why a great multitude was gathered at the temple (see [3 Ne. 11:1](#)) as was customary at Passover, and also why he came to the lost tribes on the very same day that he came to the Nephites (see [3 Ne. 17:3–4](#)). See also S. K. Brown and J. Tvedtnes, “When Did Jesus Appear to the Nephites in Bountiful?” (Provo, Utah: F.A.R.M.S., 1989).
9. On the Hebrew calendar, the Friday on which Jesus was crucified includes the preceding evening in Gethsemane.
10. Lehrman, *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*, pp. 227–28.
11. Because our calendar is fixed, one can easily compute dates projected back before the calendar was used. The Gregorian calendar is used that way in this article because it is accurate (fits the season) throughout history. On the Julian calendar, which was used from 45 B.C. until replaced by the Gregorian calendar in modern times, the date would have been 8 April 1 B.C. Note that there was no year 0 B.C.; the year preceding A.D. 1 was 1 B.C.
12. On the observational Judean calendar used at the time, 15 Nisan most likely began on the night of 6 April. Jesus was probably born, however, on the preceding evening (part of 6 April on their calendar), when Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem prior to the feast.

13. John Lefgren, *April Sixth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980), p. 52.
  14. John Mosley, *The Christmas Star* (Los Angeles, California: Griffith Observatory, 1987).
  15. J. P. Pratt, "Yet Another Eclipse for Herod," *The Planetarian*, 19 (Dec. 1990): 8–14.
  16. A symposium of several papers is found in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1989).
  17. He gives the beginning year of his reign and its length, both of which include uncertainties.
  18. Orosius, *Adv. Pag.* 6.22.7; 7.2.16; *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. P. J. Deferrari (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1964), 50:281, 287.
  19. Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.2.4 (42). In *Josephus: Complete Works*, p. 358.
  20. John Lefgren, *April Sixth*, p. 15.
  21. G. MacKinlay, *The Magi, How They Recognized Christ's Star* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897); quoted by C. J. Humphreys, *Quarterly Journal, Royal Astronomical Society*, 32 (1991): 389–407.
  22. For example, Tiberius' ninth year was A.D. 23. (*Tacitus, Annals*, 4, 1.)
  23. It was Friday, 3 April A.D. 33 on the Julian calendar in use at that time.
  24. Phlegon, *Olympiades he Chronika*, 1:101, trans. by Paul L. Maier, in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos*, p. 125.
  25. From the reports of Pilate in R. H. Platt, *The Lost Books of the Bible* (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing), 1963, pp. 275–76.
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## Notes

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The Passover and Feast of Unleavened bread are among the observances that were commanded throughout the book of Exodus and other books in the Torah (Law) of Yahweh. Unlike the so-called 'holy-days' of the mainstream, these are true holy days, are found in the pages of scripture, and powerfully glorify the Messiah Yahushua ("Jesus"). For this reason I SO love this feast! It is so symbolic of what Yahushua ("Jesus") the Messiah has done for us and it applies very much to Yahweh's plan of Salvation. Observing it will bless and enrich your walk with Messiah and a...Â One of the greatest testimonies to the greatness of Yahweh is how His plan for salvation is in the literal history of Israel.