

The Role of Pentecost on the Christian Phasekh

What has gone almost unnoticed in the discussion of the observance of the Christian Phasekh is the vital role that the 50-day celebration of Pentecost has played in its transformation. The interpretation that the seven weeks of Pentecost were a time of rejoicing, the Aristocratic calculation for that period, and the connection between the day of the resurrection and the day of the *omer* wave offering were all combined together and served as the mechanism for altering the original Quartodeciman Phasekh practice. The West merely shifted their emphasis from the Phasekh of the suffering to the Phasekh of the resurrection and in doing so moved the observance of the mystery of the Eucharist celebration from the 14th of Abib to the following first day of the week.

At the same time, the breaking of unleavened bread and the giving of thanks on the Sovereign's day were already a well-established practice by the Quartodecimans when the Christians at Rome and other western cities abandoned that system and began to form System D. Accordingly, it was the original Quartodeciman practice to offer Eucharist with unleavened bread on the day of the resurrection (*omer* wave offering) and their taking special notice of the Sovereign's day that served as the justification for the subsequent diversification of the Phasekh celebration. Within a century after Yahushua's resurrection, the Sovereign's day had been transformed in importance far beyond that which had originally been contemplated by the earlier Quartodeciman members. It had become so popular in parts of Egypt, Rome, and other districts of the West that it became the day of the Phasekh Eucharist rather than the 14th of Abib.

A Shift in Emphasis

By the end of the first century C.E., as Raniero Cantalamessa points out, the "paschalization" of the story of Yahushua remained incomplete in the eyes of many Christians, for "none of the evangelists applies it to the event of his resurrection."¹ In the eyes of many westerners, the day of the resurrection and its importance simply required more attention. To them it was not only a momentous event during the week of Phasekh but a turning point in history as well. As a result, some of the western assemblies began to shift their emphasis to the Sovereign's day, making it the primary focus point for the Phasekh week and the Eucharist mystery.

¹ EEC, p. 7.

This shift was aided by the common usage of the name Phasekh to encompass the entire seven days of unleavened bread. It was surmised that the Eucharist mystery of Phasekh, therefore, could fall on any one of those days. The Phasekh of the resurrection (observed only on the Sovereign's day), meanwhile, could also fall on any one of these seven days of unleavened bread. By making all seven days equally the Phasekh, the Sovereign's day was raised to an importance above the singular day of the Phasekh celebration on the 14th (the day of the messiah's suffering). The *Chronicon Paschale* (mid-seventh century C.E.) expresses this view when it states:

Necessarily, therefore, the Assembly of the deity gives the name Phasekh not only to the suffering of the sovereign but also to his resurrection.²

The Sovereign's day was to the resurrection of the messiah what the day of Phasekh was to the suffering of the messiah. In time, under System E, the two events (the suffering and the resurrection) both came to be celebrated on Phasekh Sunday. Theodoret of Cyrrihus (c.425 C.E.), for instance, explains that in his time, "on the very day of the saving suffering," i.e., Phasekh Sunday, Christians "solemnize the memory both of the suffering and of the resurrection of the sovereign."³ By making both the suffering and the resurrection part of the same event, Christians in the West felt justified in moving the joyous celebration of the Eucharist mystery to the day of the resurrection.

To demonstrate this change with System E, Epiphanius (c.377 C.E.) refers to "the day of resurrection and great festive day of the Phasekh."⁴ Augustine (fl. 396–430 C.E.) remarks that "our yearly festival (of Phasekh) renews the memory of his resurrection."⁵ Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria similarly writes about "the Phasekh of the sovereign, which is the Festival of the Resurrection."⁶ The *Chronicon Paschale* concludes that the sacred Assembly of the deity "designates the august festival of the resurrection from the dead of the messiah, our deity, as the Phasekh."⁷

The day representing the "true Phasekh" also shifted. At first, as the mid-second century C.E. Quartodeciman writer Apollinarius of Hierapolis shows, the 14th was considered the true Phasekh. He writes:

THE 14TH IS THE TRUE PHASEKH of the sovereign, the great sacrifice: the son (the messiah) of the deity in the place of the lamb . . . who was buried on the day of the Phasekh with the stone placed over the tomb.⁸

Though by no means left unopposed even in the West, by the fifth century C.E. we find that the Phasekh of the resurrection, generally speaking, became

² Chron. Paschale, 1, pp. 424f.

³ Theodoret, *Cure*, 9:24.

⁴ Epiphanius, *Expos. Faith*, 22:14.

⁵ Augustine, *Serm. Wil.*, 4:3.

⁶ Ps.-Cyril, *Prologus Pascha*, 5 (SCMC, p. 338; FTC, 77, Let. 87, p. 123).

⁷ Chron. Paschale, 1, pp. 424.

⁸ Chron. Paschale, 1, p. 13.

the only true Phasekh for those in the West.⁹ For example, in 401 C.E. Theophilus of Alexandria comments that “the next day” after that Sabbath day—the Sabbath day representing the anniversary of the messiah lying in the grave—“is the symbol of the sovereign’s resurrection, let us celebrate THE TRUE PHASEKH.”¹⁰

The Eucharist Phasekh

The effort by western Christian assemblies to move the celebration of the Phasekh from the 14th of Abib to the day of the *omer* wave offering was further facilitated by three changes in the use of the term Eucharist: (1) the expansion of the meaning of the term Eucharist (thanksgiving) to include the mystery of the bread and wine (though some would argue it was unfermented grape juice) of the Last Supper, (2) the extension of the Christian Eucharist mystery to days other than just the Phasekh supper, and (3) the identification of the Eucharist bread and wine with the Phasekh victim.

First, the term εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteo*), εὐχαριστία (*eucharistia*), etc., i.e., Eucharist, properly means “to offer thanks.”¹¹ The Greek word was derived from the Jewish term *berakah*, the act of giving thanks and a blessing at the beginning of every meal.¹² The expression to “break bread,” meanwhile, was a common Jewish idiom meaning to “partake of an ordinary meal,” including its meat and drink.¹³ Since the first Christians were Judaeans, there is little doubt that, when this expression is used in the New Testament, it only refers to eating a meal and not to the special act of breaking bread and sharing it at the Phasekh supper.¹⁴ It only took on this newer meaning much later among the non-Jewish Christians, who gave to the expression an intent beyond its original use.

⁹ EEC, p. 180, #84, n. a, pp. 203f, #116a, n. s, p. 216, #140, n. a.

¹⁰ Theophilus Alex., 20:4.

¹¹ GEL, 1968, p. 738; SEC, Gk. #2168–2170; YAC, pp. 969, 970.

¹² SNT, 6, pp. 275f; LD, pp. 377, 399.

¹³ SNT, 6, pp. 274f. Among the Jews of this period, the breaking of bread and the giving of thanks was part of the normal routine for their partaking of an ordinary meal (ELS, p. 10). The Jews were in the custom of beginning a meal by breaking the bread and then asking grace (e.g., B. Ber., 46:a–b). Even the Roman Catholics admit, “The Jews were accustomed to begin their common meals with a prayer of grateful praise to God (the Semitic idea behind εὐχαριστία, εὐλογία) spoken over a loaf of bread, which was then divided among the participants” (NCE, 2, pp. 779f). Also see below n. 14.

¹⁴ For example, in Acts, 2:42 and 46, the disciples were “each day steadfastly continuing with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread in their houses.” This statement simply means that they were going to the Temple by day and eating their meals at home at night. In another instance, Saul broke bread with pagans after a 14-day fast for their health (Acts, 27:33–36). Breaking bread with pagans can hardly be defined as keeping the Eucharist.

Yet, because the bread eaten the night of the messiah’s Last Supper was described as “broken” (1 Cor., 10:16f, 11:23–28), the western assemblies, especially non-Jewish Christians unfamiliar with Jewish customs, latched on to two statements indicating that bread was broken on the first day of the week (Luke, 24:35, Acts, 20:5–11). Connecting the first day of the week with the breaking of bread, these western Christians interpreted them as a reenactment of the Eucharist. In both instances, this interpretation is strained, being no more than an interpretation overlaid atop a misinterpretation.

In Luke, 24:35, for example, on the day of his resurrection the messiah broke bread with two disciples who at the time did not know he was the messiah. These two men were Judaeans who had stopped at a village late in the afternoon to eat dinner. There is no suggestion whatsoever that

At the same time, the Christian Eucharist mystery celebrated in the sharing of the bread and cup of wine has its roots in the original act of the apostles sharing in the wine and broken unleavened bread in the night of the messiah's Last Supper on the 14th of Abib. For the earliest Quartodeciman Christians the Eucharist, the breaking of bread, and the mystery of sharing the cup of wine and the unleavened bread were three different things, though by the second century C.E. all three came together in the Eucharist of the Phasekh celebration.

Following scriptural practice, unleavened bread was originally eaten by the earliest Christians during all seven days of the Phasekh festival. The giving of the Eucharist for every meal during the seven-day festival of Phasekh, therefore, was in due time joined with the celebration of the mystery of the unleavened bread and cup. The system was evolving. In the Quartodeciman *Didache* (early second century C.E.), to demonstrate, on the "Sovereign's (day) of the sovereign," Christians were instructed to "come together" and "break bread and give Eucharist."¹⁵ The command to break bread and give Eucharist clearly separates the concept of breaking bread from the Eucharist itself. Here breaking bread clearly means only to have a meal. Perhaps in this instance the giving of Eucharist may also only mean to merely give a blessing.

Nevertheless, with the scriptural seven days of unleavened bread, only the first and last days of the Phasekh festival were required convocations. The remaining days, except for the weekly Sabbath day, could be celebrated at home. What had developed by the beginning of the second century C.E. among the Quartodeciman assemblies was the added practice of gathering on the Sovereign's day to commemorate the resurrection. This gathering for a meal on the Sovereign's day became the vehicle by which the entire celebration of Phasekh was altered.

As a result, at the beginning of the second century C.E., when all the orthodox Christian assemblies were still Quartodeciman, the Eucharist of the Phasekh was kept on the 14th of Abib. At the same time, these Christians also assembled on the Sovereign's day—being the first day of the 50-day Pentecost

they believed that they were participating in the mystery of the Eucharist. It was late in the day and they had been traveling (Luke, 24:28f). Their breaking of bread was merely the act of men partaking in an afternoon meal. In the passage found in Acts, 20:5–11, it is true that Saul broke bread on the first day of the week, but saying this without any context is misleading. His breaking of bread cannot be the Eucharist because this particular first day of the week occurred 12 days after the Festival of Unleavened Bread had already passed (Acts, 20:5–7). Also, Saul was setting out in the morning on a journey (Acts, 20:7, 11–13), it being the day after the Sabbath day. Further, Saul unceremoniously broke bread twice that same night, i.e., he ate two different meals (Acts, 20:7, 11). These meals were never defined as the Eucharist and there is no suggestion that his discourse to those assembled on that night was anything more than parting words to those who had continued with him after the Sabbath day's meeting, which day had ended with the previous sunset. That Saul was merely held over to continue his discourse on the messiah and Scriptures is demonstrated by the fact that he walked cross-country to Assos to meet up with those journeying with him, who, at Saul's instructions, had set sail earlier than Saul's leaving (Acts, 20:13f).

¹⁵ *Didache*, 14:1. It has been popular to force the words of the *Didache* to refer to a weekly observance of the Sovereign's day, but to do so it requires the substitution καθ' ἡμέραν δὲ κυρίου for the MS reading of Hierosolymitanus 54, which gives κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου (SP, 4, p. 419; LD, p. 240). The form found in the original text proves that *Didache*, 14:1, refers to the annual celebration of the Sovereign's day of the resurrection. This point has been more than amply demonstrated by C. W. Dugmore (SNT, 6, pp. 272–281). Also see comments in AUSS, 3, pp. 87–91.

count—to break bread (i.e., take a meal) and to offer thanks (or Eucharist) in order to commemorate the resurrection of the messiah. The belief that a Eucharist could be partaken on any of the seven days of unleavened bread, especially when they gathered on the Sovereign's day, opened the door to the Sunday-only celebration of Phasekh. Since one could give thanks with any meal and break unleavened bread and share wine during all seven days of the festival, the logic followed that the ceremony and mystery of the Eucharist could be re-enacted by zealous Christians on these other days as well. It merely became a matter of which day of convocation one should emphasize, and the West chose to elevate the day of the messiah's resurrection.

Subsequently, there developed a vital distinction between the early conservative Quartodeciman observance of an annual Sovereign's day and the later practice of the western Christians. Though the early conservative Quartodecimans observed the first day of the week after the 14th as the Sovereign's day, they nowhere ascribe to it the significance of a high festival or make it a day on which one should celebrate the Eucharist mystery of the Phasekh. However, they did observe that day by gathering for a meal and Eucharist. It was the first day in the 50-day count to the Festival of Pentecost and marked the anniversary of the messiah's resurrection. For these reasons, the apostles, guided by Scriptures, had instructed the assemblies to continue its observance.

The New Symbolism

The change in Phasekh for those in the West was assisted by the fact that the Eucharist bread and wine had become the new Christian symbol of the Phasekh victim, which in turn represented the messiah. As already demonstrated, for early Christians, while under Judaism, the messiah was represented by the Phasekh lamb; under the New Testament, he was also represented by the unleavened bread and wine of the Last Supper.¹⁶ Gregory of Elvira, accordingly, states, "Thus the mystery of the Phasekh . . . which is now celebrated in the bread of the sovereign's body."¹⁷ Augustine similarly writes of the "Phasekh, . . . which we receive in the body and blood of the sovereign."¹⁸ Hilary of Poitiers remarks, "Without him (that is, Judas) the Phasekh is accomplished, when the chalice has been taken and the bread broken."¹⁹

The Phasekh, as a result, was realized in the western Christian Eucharist.²⁰ Following this line of reasoning, the Eucharist quickly became the new Phasekh meal rather than the dinner with the lamb. It therefore followed that the sacrifice and suffering of the messiah (now seen by those in the West as both his death and resurrection) could be associated with the Eucharist given on the Sovereign's day. Athanasius of Alexandria, for example, who along

¹⁶ Matt., 26:17–20, 26–29; Mark, 14:12–18, 22–25; Luke, 22:7–23; 1 Cor., 11:23–28.

¹⁷ Gregory Elv., 9:1.

¹⁸ Augustine, *Let. Pet.*, 2:37.

¹⁹ Hilary, 30.

²⁰ EEC, p. 205, #117, n. d, in reference to Gregory of Elvira's statement about receiving "the Phasekh of his (the messiah's) sacred body," Raniero Cantalamessa comments, "If Christ's *Pascha* was his passion on the historical plane, then on the liturgical plane the Church's *Pascha* is realized in the Eucharist."

with his brothers in the West observed the day of the resurrection for the celebration of the Phasekh Eucharist, identifies the heavenly supper with the Phasekh and the sacrifice of the messiah.²¹ As Raniero Cantalamessa notes, for these Christians, "the Christian Pascha is essentially the commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ that is celebrated in the Eucharist."²²

What then of the Phasekh of the 14th of Abib? As Origen comments, for those holding to the western views, the original Eucharist celebrated by the messiah and his disciples served merely as "a symbol (foreshadowing) of which we keep the Phasekh."²³ It only established a type for a new Phasekh celebration and pointed to the triumph of the resurrection. Because of the connection made between the Eucharist, the seven days of unleavened bread, and the Phasekh, Paulinus of Nola (following System E) associates the mystery of the Eucharist with the Sovereign's day resurrection. He writes:

Yet the whole world with equal devotion everywhere venerates this lofty mystery of great love toward humankind in a particular month each year, when it celebrates the eternal king risen with a restored body.²⁴

The Dividing Line

As Raniero Cantalamessa so poignantly observed, Phasekh and Pentecost "designate the same mystery, but as seen from opposite sides: that of the passion and that of the glorification."²⁵ For the early Christians, the Phasekh of the 14th defined the time of the suffering and burial of the messiah. For those in the West it was only a time of great sadness and reflection. On the other hand, the day of the *omer* wave offering, being the first day of the 50-day Pentecost celebration, was also the day of the messiah's resurrection. A dividing line was thus formed between the Phasekh of the suffering and the Phasekh of the joyous resurrection.

There can be no doubt that Paul's statement that the "messiah has been raised from out of the dead, firstfruit of those fallen asleep,"²⁶ was connected by western Christians with the *omer* wave offering of firstfruits.²⁷ In Scriptures, Pentecost is a time of rejoicing.²⁸ In turn, the anniversary of the resurrection brought with it a message of joy and triumph. Augustine divides the Phasekh week, stating:

²¹ Athanasius, *Fest. Let.*, 42, excerpt from Cosmas, 10:8.

²² EEC, p. 169, #62.

²³ Origen, *Hom. Jer.*, 19:13. EEC, p. 154, #42, n. a. "In saying that the Church's Pascha is a symbol of Christ's Pascha, or of the Jewish Pascha which Christ observed, Origen certainly does not mean that it is a type of figure. Rather Origen would say that the Church's Eucharistic Pascha is Christ's Pascha, foreshadowed by the Jewish Pascha and in turn a foreshadowing of the heavenly Pascha."

²⁴ Paulinus, *Poem*, 27. In Paulinus, *Epist.*, 31, the Phasekh is presented as the day in which the mystery of the torture-stake of the messiah is celebrated.

²⁵ EEC, p. 21.

²⁶ 1 Cor., 15:20.

²⁷ AUSS, 3, p. 86; FEPC, p. 238; BCal, pp. 225f.

²⁸ Deut., 16:11.

The day that our sovereign Yahushua the messiah made sorrowful by dying he also made glorious by rising.²⁹

For this reason the first day of the Pentecost celebration became the dividing line in the Phasekh celebration of the western assemblies. In this regard, we should take note that Origen (c.245 C.E.) is the first Christian writer known to call the first day of the 50-day Pentecost count the "Phasekh."³⁰ This new usage indicates the emphasis placed upon the first day of the Pentecost count for the celebration of Phasekh following the development of the System E construct under Victor, bishop of Rome, in 196 C.E.

The Latin assemblies became even more precise with regard to the time that the joyous celebration of Pentecost and the Phasekh of the resurrection would begin. For them the "vigil on Saturday night is the end of the Pascha and the beginning of Pentecost."³¹ Zeno of Verona (fl. 362–371 C.E.), for instance, makes the Phasekh of the resurrection "the great day,"³² "the day of salvation" which "bears the image of the mystery of the sovereign."³³ It is the turning point of the year when one celebrates both the suffering and the resurrection.³⁴ He writes, "for at sunset it celebrates the suffering and at sunrise the resurrection."³⁵

Lactantius comments that during the nighttime portion of the Sovereign's day they "celebrate by watching until morning on account of the coming of our king and deity."³⁶ It is clear by such evidence that the dividing line between the sadness of the suffering and the joy of the resurrection was at sunrise, the time when the announcement was made that the messiah had risen.³⁷ This concept eventually led to the observance of Easter sunrise services.³⁸

According to the Synoptic texts, the messiah was raised on the first day of the week during the days of unleavened bread.³⁹ Therefore, from this day of resurrection, the advocates of the western views argued, the new Phasekh celebration must take its beginning. Gregory of Nazianzus (362 C.E.), for example, writes, "The day of resurrection, an auspicious beginning. Radiantly let us celebrate this festival, giving one another the kiss of peace."⁴⁰

The connection between the 50 days of Pentecost and the western calculation of Phasekh is undeniable. The noted historian J. Van Goudoever several times emphasizes this point in his study on biblical calendars. Identifying the Phasekh of the 14th as the Christian Passover and the Sunday Phasekh of the resurrection as Easter, he makes the following comments:

²⁹ Augustine, *Serm. Morin*, 5:1.

³⁰ Origen, *Celsus*, 8:22.

³¹ EEC, p. 17.

³² Zeno, 1:58.

³³ Zeno, 1:57.

³⁴ See comment in EEC, p. 196, #105.

³⁵ Zeno, 1:57.

³⁶ Lactantius, *Div. Instit.*, 7:19:3.

³⁷ Matt., 28:1–7; Mark, 16:1–9; Luke, 24:1–7.

³⁸ The paganization of Phasekh was in part accomplished by identifying the messiah with the sun and then making his day the day of the sun, i.e., Sunday. See FSDY, 3.

³⁹ Matt., 26:17, 27:57–28:7; Mark, 14:12, 15:42–16:9; Luke, 22:7, 23:50–24:7; John, 19:14f, 31, 38–42, 20:1, 19–22.

⁴⁰ Gregory Naz., *Orat.*, 1:1; PG, 35, p. 396.

The festival of the Western Church is Sunday being the first day of the fifty days.⁴¹

For Rome, Easter seems to be a continuation of this first day of the fifty days of harvest.⁴²

The Christian Easter is a continuation of the celebration of the first day of the fifty days, and the Christian Passover is a continuation of the Israelite Passover.⁴³

The Sunday of the Resurrection is the Christian continuation of the first day of the fifty days.⁴⁴

C. W. Dugmore supports J. Van Goudoever's conclusion, writing:

The connection between the Lord's resurrection and the first day of the fifty days is clear in Clement of Alexandria, and in Epiphanius. Thus, the Christian Easter was a continuation of the celebration of the first day of the fifty days, just as the Quartodeciman Christian Passover was a continuation of the Israelite Passover.⁴⁵

Death Versus Resurrection

Merely having a technique for establishing a new Phasekh celebration does not explain the philosophy of those in the West who desired to keep the Sovereign's day to the exclusion of the 14th of Abib. The philosophical reasoning for moving Phasekh to the first day of the 50 days of Pentecost was the sadness associated with the death of the messiah versus the joy associated with the time of Pentecost and the resurrection of the messiah.

To begin with, an important difference between the conservative Quartodeciman understanding of the Phasekh week and that which developed among the western assemblies had to do with the form of the annual celebration. The Quartodecimans continued to follow the Torah's instruction to observe the 14th of Abib as the anniversary of the messiah's death. They also celebrated the Sovereign's day (the day of the *omer* wave offering) on the following Sunday.

The western assemblies, on the other hand, decided on a different approach. As a remembrance of the messiah's death, they chose to observe the day of the week upon which that suffering originally occurred, which they deemed to be Friday, regardless of which day of the month Friday fell. The reason for this western choice was a desire to retain their interpretation of the flow of the three days' events between the death of the messiah and the day

⁴¹ BCal, p. 165.

⁴² BCal, p. 170.

⁴³ BCal, p. 174.

⁴⁴ BCal, p. 182.

⁴⁵ SP, 4, p. 419.

of his resurrection, which was always celebrated on Sunday. Charles Joseph Hefele points out:

When the 14th Nisan fell upon a Friday, the two parties were agreed about the time of the festival, because the day of the week and of the month coincided. But if, for example, the 14th fell upon a Tuesday, the Asiatics celebrated the death of Christ upon the Tuesday, and the Westerns on the following Friday; and if the 14th fell upon a Saturday, the Asiatics celebrated the death festival upon that Saturday, whilst the Westerns kept it still on the Friday following.⁴⁶

Yet even if the 14th fell upon a Friday, the doctrinal differences of how one was to treat the celebration of that day continued to separate the two groups.

The conservative Quartodecimans followed the commands of the messiah and the Apostle Paul to keep the celebration of the unleavened bread and wine (the Eucharist) of the Last Supper in order to remember the messiah's broken body and spilled blood, therefore, to remember his "death." At the heart of their understanding was 1 Corinthians, 11:26, which reads, "For as often as you may eat this bread, and may drink this cup, the DEATH of the sovereign you announce until he has come." For the Quartodecimans, as with the Jews, the sacrifice of the lamb was not a cause for mourning, but a time for rejoicing, "because by the blood of the sacrifice their lives were saved."⁴⁷ In the same sense, the Quartodecimans did not mourn over Yahushua's death, because, "his death was for them the cause of their salvation."⁴⁸ Charles Joseph Hefele, in reference to their observance of the 14th of Abib, notes:

The Orientals, on the contrary, rather considered this day, from its dogmatic or doctrinal side, as the day of redemption; and for this reason it was to them, not a day of mourning, but of joy, dating from the moment when Christ died, and had thus accomplished the work of redemption.⁴⁹

The Occidentals, on the contrary, "considering the whole day as consecrated to mourning, continued the fast, a sign of mourning, and did not end it until the joyful morning of the resurrection."⁵⁰

Since the date that the messiah and his disciples kept the Eucharist was on the 14th of Abib, the same date that the messiah died, it was on that day that the Quartodecimans celebrated their Eucharist. As an example, in the *Epistula Apostolorum* (later half of second century C.E.), one of the few documents remaining that expresses a Quartodeciman view, one finds some statements attributed to the messiah and supposedly given to his apostles. These

⁴⁶ HCC, p. 301.

⁴⁷ BCal, p. 158.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ HCC, p. 302.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

instructions included the command to “celebrate the Phasekh” as a “remembrance of my death.”⁵¹

On the other hand, in the eyes of those following the western systems, despite the fact that there was no scriptural commandment or instruction for their view, the most important event of the story of Yahushua’s suffering was not the death but the resurrection of the messiah. Those following this newer concept, accordingly, believed in a celebration of the “resurrection” of the messiah and rejected the 14th as a joyous celebration of his “death.” They premised their view on the idea that the messiah’s death was too sad an occasion to be celebrated with the joy of the Eucharist. Anatolius, contrasting the Quartodecimans with the western view, explains:

And the other party (the western), passing the day of the sovereign’s suffering as one replete with sadness and grief, hold that it should not be lawful to celebrate the sovereign’s mystery of the Phasekh at any other time but on the Sovereign’s day, on which the resurrection of the sovereign from death took place, and on which rose also for us the cause of everlasting joy.⁵²

The importance of Pentecost and its connection with the day of the resurrection demanded, for the western views, that Christians annually “celebrate the mysteries,” i.e., the Eucharist, on the day of “the messiah’s resurrection.” It was always to be celebrated on the same day of the week (Sunday) and never on the 14th, the occasion of his death, and represented the cumulation of the events from his death until his resurrection.⁵³

By the late second century, the western assemblies, by means of meetings and conferences with bishops, had established the doctrine “that the mystery of the sovereign’s resurrection from the dead could be celebrated on no day except the Sovereign’s day (Sunday), and that on that day alone we should celebrate the end of the Phasekh fast.”⁵⁴ To do otherwise by celebrating the 14th day was to be accused of Judaizing and of keeping the Mosaic Law. This new interpretation soon gained momentum and at the Council of Arles in 314 C.E. the charge was given that the Phasekh of the sovereign’s resurrection should be observed “at one time and on one and the same day throughout all the world.”⁵⁵ Shortly thereafter, this principle was sanctioned as the official practice of the Roman Church at the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E.⁵⁶ At the Council of Antioch (341 C.E.) the added punishment of excommunication was sanctioned against anyone who held a contrary custom.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Epist. Apost., 15. Also cf., the Ethiopic and Coptic versions (GJJA).

⁵² Anatolius, 10.

⁵³ JTS, 25, pp. 268f. Cf., Leo, *Serm.*, 70:1; Theodore Petra (DHT, p. 24).

⁵⁴ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:23.

⁵⁵ Syn. Areles., 1, *Can.*, 1.

⁵⁶ Eusebius, *Const.*, 3:14, 18–19; Theodoret, *E.H.*, 1:9; Socrates Schol., 1:9; Sozomenus, 1:21; ACC, 2, p. 1150.

⁵⁷ Conc. Antioch, *Can.*, 1.

Accordingly, the Sovereign's day, being the day of the *omer* wave offering, was a dividing line in the Phasekh week. It marked the division between a time of sorrow and a time of rejoicing.

A Time of Rejoicing

In Scriptures, Pentecost was to be kept with rejoicing.⁵⁸ Therefore, the days of Pentecost, from the day of the resurrection to the 50th day, were seen as a time of great rejoicing for western Christians.⁵⁹ Resurrection day, as a result, became the first day of this joy and exultation, a day of celebration, the anniversary of Yahushua's triumph over death. Tertullian (c.200 C.E.), for example, tells us that the 50-day "season of Pentecost" is marked by a "joyous celebration."⁶⁰ In another place he writes that Christians spend these 50 days in "exultation."⁶¹ Eusebius makes it as a time of refreshment:

Wherefore we are not allowed to toil during this festival; rather we are instructed to bear the likeness of the refreshment we hope for in heaven.⁶²

Beginning with the Sovereign's day, it was forbidden to mourn, to fast, or to kneel in worship during the Pentecost season.⁶³ In the *Constitutiones Apostolicae*, one is "guilty of sin who fasts on the Sovereign's day, being the day of the resurrection, or during the time of Pentecost, or, in general, who is sad on a festival day to the sovereign. For on them we ought to rejoice, and not to mourn."⁶⁴ The *Didascalia* similarly states, "It is not lawful for you to fast on the first (day) of the week, because it is my resurrection."⁶⁵ We find the same concept in the *Apostolic Tradition* by Hippolytus (c.215 C.E.).⁶⁶ Eusebius similarly writes:

Consequently, we neither bend the knee at prayers nor afflict ourselves with fasting. For those deemed worthy of the resurrection according to the deity should never again fall to the ground, nor should those who have been freed from their passions suffer the same things as those still enslaved.⁶⁷

The Sovereign's day, being the first of the 50 days and the occasion of the resurrection, was a particularly special time of rejoicing. As such, it was deemed the appropriate time to celebrate Phasekh. Archaeus, for instance, states:

⁵⁸ Deut., 16:11.

⁵⁹ BCal, pp. 182–191.

⁶⁰ Tertullian, *de Orat.*, 23:1–2.

⁶¹ Tertullian, *de Jejun.*, 14:2.

⁶² Eusebius, *Pas.*, 6.

⁶³ E.g., Tertullian, *de Orat.*, 23:1–2; Epiphanius, *Expos. Faith*, 22 (PG 42, 828A); Basil, *Spir. Sanc.*, 27:66; Coptic Lectionary (see DCA, p. 960); Gregorian Kanonarion (see OC [NS], 6, p. 224; BCal, p. 183).

⁶⁴ Apost. Constit., 5:20.

⁶⁵ Didas. Apost., 21:5:13.

⁶⁶ Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.*, 29:3.

⁶⁷ Eusebius, *Pas.*, 6.

The Phasekh should be celebrated on the Sovereign's day; for it was then that the joy of the Catholic Assembly was accomplished and everyone was destined to eternal life. For on that day, the mystery of the resurrection, of unchangeable hope, and of inheriting the kingdom was established.⁶⁸

Augustine similarly states, "we embrace his resurrection, let us rejoice. This is our yearly festival, and our Phasekh."⁶⁹ Rupert describes the Phasekh of the resurrection as "obviously a great cause for a festival and for joy in our hearts."⁷⁰ Abbot Ceolfrid (c.710 C.E.) writes:

But at the dawn of the morning, being the Sovereign's day, they should celebrate the first day of the Phasekh festival. For that is the day wherein the sovereign opened the glory of his resurrection to the disciples to their manifold joy at the merciful revelation.⁷¹

As part of this rejoicing, the day of the resurrection became an important time for many Christians to baptize new members. Water baptism represented the death and resurrection of the messiah.⁷² Therefore, since the resurrection and the season of Pentecost, especially the day of the resurrection, were considered a time of joy, it was deemed an appropriate time to perform baptisms. Hippolytus and Gregory of Nazianzus both connect the time of baptism with Phasekh Sunday and the Pentecost season.⁷³ Augustine speaks of the time from Phasekh Sunday to the following Sunday inclusively as *octo dies neophytorum* (the eight days of the newly-baptized).⁷⁴ The Christians of Thessaly went so far as to only baptize during Phasekh. It became an unfortunate circumstance for some who died before they could receive their baptism.⁷⁵ Basil (fl. 370–379 C.E.) writes of the Sovereign's day:

The day is a memorial of the resurrection, and baptism is a power for resurrection. Therefore we shall receive the grace of the resurrection on the day of the resurrection.⁷⁶

Zeno (fl. 362–371 C.E.) states that many were baptized at the dawn of the day of the Phasekh of the resurrection:

Through it (the day of the resurrection) the gift of future bliss is promised us, and it will confer the

⁶⁸ Archaeus, *Frag.* (PG, 5, p. 1490).

⁶⁹ Augustine, *Serm. Morin.* 5:1. The yearly festival is named as opposed to the daily Eucharist.

⁷⁰ Rupert, 6:26.

⁷¹ Bede, *Hist.*, 3:21.

⁷² See for example Rom., 6:3–6; Col., 2:12; Matt., 20:20–23; Mark, 10:35–40.

⁷³ Hippolytus, *Apost. Trad.*, 21; Gregory Naz., *Orat.*, 40:24.

⁷⁴ Augustine, *Epist.*, 55:17 §32.

⁷⁵ Socrates Schol., 5:22.

⁷⁶ Basil, *Hom.*, 13:1.

same upon our candidates for baptism—those whom the happy evening now invites to plunge into the milky depth of the sacred ocean, and from it to arise rejuvenated with the new day, and with us to attain to the glory of immortality.⁷⁷

Tertullian notes that the Phasekh of the resurrection affords a more solemn day for baptism, “since the suffering of the sovereign, in which we are baptized, was accomplished (then).”⁷⁸ He adds:

After this, the Pentecost is AN EXTREMELY HAPPY PERIOD for conferring baptisms, because the sovereign’s resurrection was celebrated among the disciples and the grace of the sacred *ruach* was inaugurated and the hope in the sovereign’s coming indicated, because it was then, when he had been taken back into heaven, that the angels told the apostles that he would come exactly as he had gone up to heaven—meaning, of course, during the Pentecost.⁷⁹

Conclusion

As we have seen, what had begun in the early Quartodeciman assemblies as a celebration of the Phasekh and Eucharist in observance of the 14th day of the first moon had later developed in the West into an observation of the 14th as the Phasekh of death and sorrow. The West chose in its place to observe the following first day of the week as a Phasekh of joy and rejoicing. This transformation was accomplished by utilizing the expanded meaning of Phasekh and then stressing the Eucharist of the Sovereign’s day. For those in the West, the suffering of the messiah was interpreted as a sad occasion, while the Pentecost season was a time of rejoicing. It became merely a matter of dividing the seven days of unleavened bread at the first day of the joyful Pentecost season, being the day of the *omer* wave offering as well as the day of the resurrection.

⁷⁷ Zeno, 1:57.

⁷⁸ Tertullian, *de Bapt.*, 19:1.

⁷⁹ Tertullian, *de Bapt.*, 19:2.

