

Chapter XXIV

A Time for Mourning

An important influence on the transformation of the Christian Phasekh was the western interpretation of the meaning of the days just preceding Phasekh Sunday. For Systems D and E these days represented a time of mourning. They were the days in which the messiah was sought out by his enemies, delivered up to execution, tortured, suffered death, and was buried. Therefore, it was considered a time of sorrow, a period meant for fasting, one which Anatolius describes as “replete with sadness and grief.”¹ As a result, the western assemblies came to believe that it was inappropriate to joyously celebrate the Eucharist and the salvation it represents at the time of the messiah’s suffering. Instead, they held “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,” being the cause of “everlasting joy.”²

As part of the process to eliminate the celebration of the Phasekh Eucharist from the 14th of Abib, the advocates of System E and those following System F expanded the number of days for Phasekh to 15. In doing so, they defined the first week as the Phasekh of the suffering and constructed a new Christian period of unleavened bread (though they never abandoned the scriptural seven days of unleavened bread to determine the Sunday Phasekh). Meanwhile, they had already developed the days of the *Triduum*, the three days representing the suffering, burial time in the grave, and resurrection of the messiah, extending from Good Friday to Phasekh Sunday. In time the Triduum replaced the 15 days of Phasekh, producing what is today celebrated as Good Friday and Easter.

The Pre-Phasekh Fast

In the eyes of many early Christians, one demonstrates his mourning and sorrow with fasting and solemn reflection. Yet there is no commandment in Scriptures, except for the Day of Atonement, to fast.³ The association of fasting with the Phasekh was created for four reasons:

- The general requirement that one must be purified prior to partaking the Phasekh supper.⁴

¹ Anatolius, 10.

² Ibid.

³ Lev., 23:26–32. Cf., Philo, *Spec.*, 2:32; Jos., *Antiq.*, 3:10:3.

⁴ THP, pp. 139f.

- The connection of fasting with prayer and reaching out to Yahweh.⁵
- The need for one to humble himself.⁶
- The statements from the messiah notifying his disciples that after he had left mankind they would be fasting,⁷ as well as his explanations of how one should fast.⁸

Yet these above references are only with regard to personal fasting. There simply was no direct command in the Torah of Moses or any New Testament passage requiring a Christian to fast prior to the Phasekh, let alone how many days. To the contrary, the messiah actually ate fish and bread just prior to the day of the Phasekh supper.⁹ In reality, the pre-Phasekh fast developed by Christians finds its roots in Jewish tradition and was merely borrowed by the early Christian assemblies.¹⁰ No doubt fasting was brought to Christianity by many of its Jewish converts who carried on the tradition. Because there was no scriptural support for a pre-Phasekh fast, Socrates Scholasticus concludes:

Since however no one can produce a written command as an authority, it is evident that the apostles left each one to his own free will in the matter (of fasting), to the end that each might perform what is good not by constraint or necessity.¹¹

Regardless of this lack of authority, the issue of fasting became the source of much controversy among early Christians. Irenaeus reports:

For the controversy is not only about the day, but also about the actual character of the fast; for some think that they ought to fast one day, others two, others even more, some count their day as forty hours, day and night. And such variation of observance did not begin in our own time, but much earlier, in the days of our predecessors who, it would appear, disregarding strictness maintained a practice which is simple and yet allows for personal preference, establishing it for the future.¹²

Socrates Scholasticus gives us a similar description:

The fast before Phasekh (Sunday) will be found to be differently observed among different people. Those at Rome fast three successive weeks before Phasekh,

⁵ Matt., 17:21; Mark, 9:29; Acts, 13:2f, 14:3; 2 Cor., 7:5.

⁶ Ps., 35:13, 69:10.

⁷ Matt., 9:14ff; Mark, 2:18–20; Luke, 5:33–35.

⁸ Matt., 6:16–18. Also see 1 Cor., 7:5; 2 Cor., 6:5, 11:27.

⁹ John, 6:4–15.

¹⁰ EWJ, pp. 216f.

¹¹ Socrates Schol., 5:22.

¹² Quoted in Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:24:12f.

excepting the Sabbath day (Saturday) and the Sovereign's day (Sunday).¹³ Those in Illyrica and all over Greece and Alexandria observe a fast of six weeks, which they term "the 40 days' fast." Others commencing their fast from the seventh week before Phasekh (Sunday), and fasting three (periods of) five days only, and that at intervals, yet call that time "the 40 days' fast." It is indeed surprising to me that thus differing in the number of days, they should both give it one common appellation; but some assign one reason for it, and others another, according to their several fancies. One can see also a disagreement about the manner of abstinence from food, as well as about the number of days.¹⁴

Among the conservative Quartodecimans, who ate the Phasekh supper and Eucharist on Abib 14, "it was necessary to finish the fast on that day (Abib 14), whatever day of the week it might be."¹⁵ Their guide was Saul's command, "Let us keep the festival," and his instruction to eat "the sovereign's supper."¹⁶ For them, Saul did not say, "Let us keep the fast."¹⁷

At the same time, most of the assemblies of this period fasted prior to their celebration of Phasekh. Those holding to the Roman assembly view argued that "the mystery of the sovereign's resurrection from the dead could be celebrated on no other day save the κυριακής (*kuriakes*; Sovereign's) day, and that on that day alone we should celebrate the end of the Phasekh fast."¹⁸ Using as their reason the fact that the messiah was raised on the first day of the week, the Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* and *Constitutiones Apostolicae* both condemned fasting on the Sovereign's day.¹⁹

The Fifteen Days of Phasekh

The modern term Easter is generally used only to signify Phasekh Sunday, i.e., the resurrection day of the messiah. In the ancient Roman Catholic assembly, as Joseph Bingham points out, the term Phasekh was taken "in a larger sense, to denote as well the *Pasch* of the crucifixion, as the *Pasch* of the resurrection."²⁰ To divide the scriptural seven days of unleavened bread to reflect the newer western arrangement, those in the west and their supporters in the east together developed what the Justinian Code calls "the fifteen days of Phasekh."²¹ These 15 days of Phasekh were divided into three parts: πάσχα

¹³ Except the Sabbath day in the Triduum. See our discussion below, pp. 374–378.

¹⁴ Socrates, 5:22. The "40 days' fast" is now called Lent. The present limits of Lent appear to have been fixed in the seventh century (ADCA, 1, pp. 972–977). Augustine notes that, "The observance of forty days before Phasekh rests on the decree of the (Roman) assembly" (*Epist.*, 55:17 §32).

¹⁵ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:23:1.

¹⁶ 1 Cor., 5:6–8, 11:20–27.

¹⁷ JTS, NS, 24, p. 80.

¹⁸ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 5:23:2.

¹⁹ Didas. Apost., 21, 5:20:11; Apost. Constit., 5:20.

²⁰ ACC, 2, p. 1148.

²¹ Justinian, *Code*, 3: Tit. 12, *de Feriis*, Leg. 8.

σταυρώσιμον (*paskha staurosimon*; Phasekh of the torture-stake), Phasekh Sunday (the Sovereign's day), and πάσχα ἀναστάσιμον (*paskha anastasimon*; Phasekh of the resurrection).²² The *Constitutiones Apostolicae*, for example, refers to these days as, "The sacred week of suffering, the day of the resurrection, the Phasekh-octave."²³

The seven days before Phasekh Sunday were described as "the Phasekh of the torture-stake (English, 'Phasekh of the Cross')." The *Peregrinatio Aetheriae* calls this week *septimana paschalis* (the week of Phasekh).²⁴ This became the official time to recognize the suffering of the messiah as the Phasekh lamb. It was a time for fasting.

Phasekh Sunday (the Sovereign's resurrection day) immediately followed the fast (commemorating the time of the messiah's suffering). On this day the Eucharist was celebrated for the Phasekh of both the suffering and resurrection. It began the joyous 50 days of Pentecost. Phasekh Sunday was itself followed by the seven days called "the Phasekh of the resurrection" or "the Phasekh-octave." According to the *Constitutiones Apostolicae*, the last day was counted as a festival day for the following reason:

After eight days you are again to have a sumptuous feast, the eighth day itself—on which he (the messiah) convinced me, the unbelieving Thomas, of his resurrection, having shown me the marks of the nails and the lance-wound in his side.²⁵

This authority is based upon a misinterpretation of a story about the apostle Thomas found in John, 20:19–29. It is assumed that since the disciples were gathered together on the day that Thomas felt the holes in the messiah's hands that it gave authority to have a festival on that day. It also incorrectly assumes that this day was a Sunday.²⁶ The special solemnity of this Sunday was the laying aside of the white baptismal robes used during the week's celebration by the newly baptized.²⁷

The Christian Days of Unleavened Bread

No matter upon which of the scriptural seven days of unleavened bread Phasekh Sunday would fall, by construct those seven days would always

²² Examples are furnished by TE, 1, p. 304, 2, p. 1014.

²³ Apost. Constit., 7:16.

²⁴ Egeria, 30.

²⁵ Apost. Constit., 5:20:1.

²⁶ Unfortunately for this late view, the story as recorded in the book of John is very exact in its count and does not agree with the interpretation. The story begins with the fact the apostles were gathered together, due to their fear of the Jews, late on "the first day of the week," being the day of the messiah's resurrection (John, 20:19; cf., Luke, 24:33–35). At that time the messiah appeared to them (John, 20:19–23). The apostle Thomas was not among the others on that occasion and refused to believe in the resurrection until he saw for himself the marks in Yahushua's hands and side (John, 20:24f). The story continues, "καὶ μεθ' ἡμέρας ὅκτω (kai meth hemeras okto; and AFTER eight days)" the apostles were once more gathered together. This time Thomas was with them (John, 20:26). The messiah once more appeared and Thomas was able to feel the wounds in Yahushua's hands and side (John, 20:26–27). Two facts are evident. First, "after eight days" from the previous "first day of the week" brings us to Monday, not Sunday. Second, nowhere does it state that on the occasion of this appearance to Thomas that the apostles were gathered for a festival.

²⁷ ADCA, 1, p. 597.

occur within the 15 days of the western Christian Phasekh. Yet there was a problem. Mourning was connected with unleavened bread. At the same time, the period from Phasekh Sunday forward was determined to be a time of rejoicing. This conflicted with the fact that part of the seven days of unleavened bread would usually fall on Phasekh Sunday and after. This circumstance demanded a new approach. The solution was to make the week commemorating the messiah's suffering (the Phasekh of the torture-stake) the first seven days of the 15-day celebration. These seven days became the week of the Christian days of unleavened bread. The unleavened bread in this instance was the messiah as represented by the Phasekh sacrificial lamb.

To demonstrate, unleavened bread is called the "bread of עֲנֵי" (*anay*; affliction).²⁸ The Hebrew term עֲנֵי (*anay*), a form of עֲנָה (*anah*), means to be "depressed," "afflicted," or "humbled."²⁹ The verb of this same term is used in the prescriptions for the Day of Atonement,³⁰ where it means "you shall afflict yourself by fasting."³¹ Epiphanius, while using the Syriac *Didascalia* as authority, notes that the Jews are in mourning when they are "eating unleavened bread with bitter herbs."³² How then, if it is a time of mourning, can those Christians following the Roman approach observe with joy those scriptural days of unleavened bread which come with Phasekh Sunday and after?

The answer was to separate the seven days of unleavened bread as found commanded in the written Torah and used by Christians to determine Phasekh Sunday from a new order of Christian days of unleavened bread meant only for mourning. They began with the premise, as stated by Socrates Scholasticus, that the saviour suffered in the days of unleavened bread.³³ On this issue all agreed. The day of the messiah's death, accordingly, was a day of mourning. What then of the other days that followed?

To rearrange the Torah system, the Christians of System E and their eastern allies of System F turned to following a late Pharisaic custom.³⁴ In this custom the eating of unleavened bread was only obligatory on the first of the seven days (i.e., the 15th of Abib), while during the remaining six days it was voluntary.³⁵ These Christians then understood that the day of the resurrection was the day after the end of the required Christian days of unleavened bread. Under the western system, that would mean the 16th of Abib (Phasekh Sunday) was no longer a time of mourning. Conforming with this view, the Syriac Lectionary (fifth century C.E.) calls the week before Phasekh Sunday "the Great Week of Unleavened Bread."³⁶ This Great Week of Unleavened Bread, of course, was the first week of the Christian 15 days of Phasekh. Epiphanius, in fact, calls these seven days before Phasekh Sunday "the seven days of Phasekh."³⁷

²⁸ Deut., 16:3.

²⁹ SEC, Heb. #6031, 6040, 6041; HEL, p. 197.

³⁰ Lev., 23:17, 32.

³¹ BCal, p. 11.

³² Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 70:11; PG, 42, p. 359b.

³³ Socrates Schol., 5:22; based upon Matt., 26:2; Mark, 14:1; Luke, 22:1.

³⁴ BCal, p. 176f.

³⁵ Mekilta, *Piskha*, 17:34–36.

³⁶ PBA, 10, p. 307.

³⁷ Epiphanius, *Expos. Faith*, 22; PG, 42, p. 828A.

Yet there was still another issue. It was not allowed under the western interpretation to fast on the first day of the week.³⁸ To address this problem the *Didascalia* turned to Exodus, 12:3–6, paraphrasing it as an interpretation of the week of the messiah's death:

But they (the Jews) made payment to Judas on the 10th of the month, on the second day of the week; wherefore they were accounted by the deity as though they had seized him (as the lamb) on the second day of the week, because on the second day of the week they had taken counsel to seize him and put him to death; and they accomplished their malice on Friday, as Moses had said concerning the Phasekh, thus: "It shall be kept by you from the 10th until the 14th, and then all Israel shall sacrifice the Phasekh."³⁹

Clement of Alexandria likewise claimed that Phasekh begins on the 10th day of the first moon.⁴⁰ Since the 14th of Abib in the year of the messiah's death was determined under the western systems to be a Friday, the 10th of Abib that year was Monday. Then, by transferring the name Phasekh to this period by means of the allusion to the Phasekh lamb, these became the days of Phasekh. These Christians then added the interpretation that the same sequence of days of the week must be repeated every year for Phasekh. The *Didascalia* adds:

Therefore you shall fast in the days of Phasekh from the 10th, which is the second day of the week, and you shall sustain yourselves with bread and salt and water only, at the ninth hour, to the fifth day of the week (Thursday). But on the Friday and on the Sabbath fast wholly, eating nothing.⁴¹

Altogether, these make six days of fasting—four limited fast days consuming only bread, salt, and water, and two days of complete fasting, beginning at the ninth hour on Thursday. Epiphanius states:

The Assembly takes care to keep the Festival of Phasekh, that is to say, the week appointed by the Apostles themselves in the Constitution (*Didascalia*), even from the second day of the week, when the purchase of the lamb takes place.⁴²

Yet another problem arose. What if the 14th fell on Sunday? Aphraates (System F), the Persian writer, addresses this issue when he states:

³⁸ See above n. 19.

³⁹ Didas. Apost., 21, 5:17:1.

⁴⁰ Clement, *Strom.*, 2:51:1.

⁴¹ Didas. Apost., 21.

⁴² Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 70:12:12; PG, 42, p. 364.

When Phasekh (the 14th) falls on a Sunday, we must keep it on a Monday, so that the whole week can be celebrated with his suffering and with his unleavened. Because after Phasekh (the 14th) there follow seven days of unleavened bread, to the 21st day. When the Phasekh falls on another day of the week (than Sunday), we will not be troubled by it.⁴³

The Use of Unleavened Bread

The late Christian reinterpretation of “unleavened” soon played a role on the use of unleavened bread at the Eucharist. The transition away from using unleavened bread is clearly portrayed in Syria during the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. During this period, with the creation of System F and the adoption of the Roman model for the seven days of unleavened bread, the use of unleavened bread was replaced with leavened bread for the Eucharist. As Raniero Cantalamessa notes, “The Syrian Church used leavened bread in the Eucharist.”⁴⁴ For example, Pseudo-Ephraem (sixth century C.E.) attempts to paraphrase the narrative of Yahushua’s suffering (passion) found in the synoptic texts. In pressing his doctrinal view, he has the messiah telling his disciples:

This is for me the last Phasekh that I will celebrate among the Jews. Let it not sadden you that I say: I shall not eat the Phasekh again. For you it is profitable and useful that I give you a new Phasekh to eat. I give you leavened bread to eat. Renounce this unleavened bread.⁴⁵

Pseudo-Ephraem adds, “This leavened Phasekh abolished the unleavened Phasekh.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Ephraem the Syrian (mid-fourth century C.E.) “polemized vigorously against those who wished to use unleavened (bread).”⁴⁷ Of course, the most ancient tradition of using unleavened bread continued with vigor and there was still a great deal of resistance against using leavened bread for the Phasekh. Nevertheless, there was also a strong anti-Jewish sentiment among many Christians that came to believe that even eating unleavened bread at Phasekh was an act of Judaizing.

The debate over the use of leavened bread continues to this day. Some Christian sects who continue the Eucharist use leavened bread while others use unleavened bread. Generally, either leavened bread or unleavened bread has been allowed by the Roman Catholic Church. W. F. Dewan reports their present view:

Again, although either unleavened or leavened bread is valid, the Church prescribes for liceity that a priest follow his own rite . . . thus unleavened bread must

⁴³ Aphraates, *Dem.*, 12:8.

⁴⁴ EEC, p. 189, #90, n. b.

⁴⁵ Ps.-Ephraem, 2, ℓ. 609–616.

⁴⁶ Ps.-Ephraem, 2, ℓ. 567f.

⁴⁷ EEC, p. 190, #90, n. b.

be used in the Latin Church. The Passover meal was supposed to employ unleavened bread. However, there is no surety that Our Lord used it at the Last Supper, and in fact the early Church was accustomed to use leavened bread.⁴⁸

W. F. Dewan's words must be clarified to this point. The early Church of which he speaks was not the primitive Assembly, which was Quartodeciman and always used unleavened bread. Rather, his reference is to the early western assemblies that took root in the second century C.E. It is no small point that there remains a hesitancy among the more conservative elements in the Latin Church to abandon unleavened bread for use in the Eucharist.

The Triduum

The 15 days of Phasekh proved to be but one more transitory phase for the western Christian Phasekh system. The Roman assembly had already developed a form of celebration that would survive centuries of use. This form of Phasekh was based upon what theologians like Origen and Pseudo-Chrysostom call the Triduum,⁴⁹ the three days of Phasekh extending from Good Friday to Phasekh Sunday.

These three days represent the transformation of the messiah from death to resurrection. Tertullian calls them *dies paschae* (the days of Phasekh).⁵⁰ The Roman assembly considered that the only fast which Christians ought to observe was that on the days "in which the bridegroom was taken away from them,"⁵¹ i.e., the days of the death and burial of Yahushua. Though, for the sake of unity, the Triduum was originally subjoined as part of the 15 days of the Christian Phasekh, it eventually became the only period of the Christian Phasekh, the 15 days having been allowed over the centuries to degenerate in practice into just Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

The Triduum system was built upon the statements in the New Testament that the messiah would be resurrected after three days,⁵² a matter of many varying opinions.⁵³ A further interpretation was then made that the messiah

⁴⁸ NCE, 5, p. 601.

⁴⁹ Origen, *Hom. Exod.*, 5:2; Ps.-Chrysostom, 7:4.

⁵⁰ Tertullian, *de Cor.*, 3, and *de Orat.*, 18.

⁵¹ Tertullian, *de Jejun.*, 2, cf. 13.

⁵² Matt., 12:38–40, 16:21, 17:22f, 20:17–19, 27:62–64; Mark, 8:31, 9:31f, 10:32f; Luke, 9:21f, 18:32f, 24:6f; Acts, 10:39–41; 1 Cor., 15:3f.

⁵³ It is manifest by the statements that the messiah would spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (see above n. 52) that the time from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning does not meet the requirement. Yet western Christians and those in the East following the same doctrines still tried to make this arrangement work. Three approaches dominated the discussion. (1) In the East those following System F tried to include the period of darkness that covered the land the day the messiah died from the sixth until the ninth hour (noon until three o'clock) and the daylight that followed until sunset as another full day (e.g., Aphraates, *Dem.*, 12:6–8, 12). (2) Some began to count the three days and nights from the hour that the messiah sat down with his disciples to eat the Last Supper (e.g., Gregory Nys., *Three-Day*). (3) Others ignored the definition of three days and three nights and simply counted three days: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The Quartodeciman-based groups, meanwhile, argued that the messiah died on the 14th and was raised on the 17th of Abib, being the first day of the week (e.g., Anatolius, 8, 11). They thereby place the messiah's death on a Thursday. For an in-depth discussion see FSDY, 2.

suffered death on a Friday and was raised on the following Sunday. It was also the western belief that this sequence of death, burial, and resurrection should be repeated every year on the same days of the week, disregarding the actual day of the moon.

The determination of Friday as the day of the messiah's death was based upon the scriptural statements that the messiah died on "the preparation day of the Jews" (i.e., a Jewish day to prepare for a Sabbath) and was buried as a great Sabbath day was coming on.⁵⁴ For these Christians, this Sabbath day was the weekly Sabbath. The statements in John, 19:14, that this preparation day was the "preparation for the Phasekh" and John, 19:31, that the following day was not just a Sabbath but "a high day," or high Sabbath, was then superimposed on top of the weekly Sabbath day. In effect they made the 15th of Abib, being the day of the Jewish state Phasekh supper, fall on the weekly Sabbath day.

These three days of the Triduum were then described as (1) the day of the messiah's suffering, (2) the day of his burial in the heart of the earth and descent into hades (sheol),⁵⁵ and (3) the day of the resurrection.⁵⁶ Origen, for example, while mentioning these three days under the labels of the Phasekh, the Preparation day, and the Sovereign's day,⁵⁷ writes:

For us, the first day is the suffering of the saviour; the second, on which he descended into hades; and the third, the day of the resurrection.⁵⁸

Pseudo-Chrysostom similarly states:

Therefore, in the same fashion, the sovereign, having once worked the recapitulation by suffering on Friday, and having finished the works by which fallen man is reformed, rests on the seventh day and remains in the heart of the earth having, moreover, bestowed on those in hades (sheol) the freedom deriving from his suffering . . . on the first day of the week he reveals the light of the resurrection.⁵⁹

Augustine gives the Latin view:

Pay attention, therefore, to the sacred three days of the crucified, buried, and resurrected one. Of these three the cross is the one whose meaning we realize in the present life, while the burial and the resurrection signify something we believe and hope for.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Matt., 27:57–62; Mark, 15:42; Luke, 23:54; John, 19:31–42.

⁵⁵ The Greek word ᾅδης (hades) is a translation of the Hebrew word שָׁׁלָׁשֶׁל (sheol) (CS, 1, p. 24), the state of being dead (CHAL, p. 356; HEL, p. 257f; SEC, Heb. # 7585).

⁵⁶ EEC, p. 209, #125, n. a, while comparing the Greek and Latin interpretations, states, "The Greeks have exactly the same interpretation of the Triduum, except that in the case of Saturday, the accent is on the descent into hell rather than on the burial."

⁵⁷ Origen, *Celsus*, 8:22.

⁵⁸ Origen, *Hom. Exod.*, 5:2.

⁵⁹ Ps.-Chrysostom, 7:35, 36.

⁶⁰ Augustine, *Epist.*, 55:14 §24.

Two Parts of the Triduum

Following the tradition of the western assemblies, the three days of the Triduum were divided into two parts. Due to the death and burial of the messiah, the first two days were set aside for mourning and fasting. The last day, Phasekh Sunday, because of the resurrection, was a day of rejoicing, thereby continuing the Pentecost scenario.

That the Roman assembly emphasis and obligation was placed upon the Friday and Saturday fast is expressed in several ways. Eusebius, for example, observes that, "Friday should be a fast for us, a sign of grief, on account of our former sins and to commemorate the saving suffering."⁶¹ Augustine states that it was "the day that our sovereign Yahushua the messiah made sorrowful by dying."⁶² Tertullian writes:

Thus, too, on Good Friday, when fasting is a general and, as it were, a public religious obligation, we rightly omit the kiss of peace, having no anxiety about concealing that which we are doing along with everyone else.⁶³

The Sabbath day of the burial was the only Sabbath in the entire year during the first few centuries C.E. on which fasting was permitted.⁶⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, meanwhile, discusses the Sabbath day of the Triduum by stating:

Behold the blessed Sabbath of the first creation of the world, and in that Sabbath recognize this Sabbath, the day of the repose, which the deity has blessed above the other days. For on this day the only-begotten deity truly rested from all his works, keeping Sabbath in the flesh by means of his death; and, returning to what he was before through his resurrection, he raised up with himself all that lay prostrate, having become life and resurrection and the East and the dawn and the day "for those in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke, 1:79).⁶⁵

Amphilochius of Iconium similarly emphasizes this Sabbath day of the burial when he writes:

Today we celebrate the festival of our saviour's burial. He, with the dead below, is loosing the bonds of death and filling hades with light and awakening the

⁶¹ Eusebius, *Pas.*, 11.

⁶² Augustine, *Serm. Morin*, 5:1.

⁶³ Tertullian, *de Orat.*, 18:7.

⁶⁴ Apost. Constit., 7:23. This view changed by the fourth council held at Orleans (541 C.E.), which enjoins the observance of Lent by adding a rule that Saturdays are to be included in the fast (Syn. Aurel., 4, *Can.*, 2). The special significance once given to the weekly Sabbath by the early assemblies was later suppressed by the Roman Catholic Church (see FSDY, 3). Yet the solemnity once granted to both the Sabbath day (Saturday) and the Sovereign's day (Sunday) still finds an expression in countries where both Saturday and Sunday are seen as non-working days.

⁶⁵ Gregory Nys., *Three-day*.

sleepers, while we, upon earth, have the resurrection in mind and rejoice.⁶⁶

Augustine would add to this celebration of the Saturday fast the vigil on Saturday night (being the first hours of the first day of the week):

Dearest brethren, we keep vigil on this night, on which we recall that our sovereign was buried. We ought to keep vigil during that time in which, for our sakes, he slept. . . . On this night he also rose; our hope keeps watch for his resurrection.⁶⁷

Likewise, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* reports:

You shall come together and watch and keep vigil all the night with prayers and intercessions, and with reading of the Prophets, and with the good news (New Testament) and with psalms, with fear and trembling and with earnest supplication, until the third hour in the night after the Sabbath; and then break your fasts. For thus did we also fast, when our sovereign suffered, for a testimony of the three days.⁶⁸

Theologians of the Roman Catholic Church enjoined fasting until after midnight under the theory that the messiah would return and accomplish the redemption of his Assembly and triumph over his enemies at that hour.⁶⁹ The joy accomplished by the messiah's death, therefore, was postponed until Phasekh Sunday. Rupert remarks:

As we have already said, this joy was postponed from Good Friday until this (Sovereign's) day. On Good Friday our saviour effected that redemption through his cross and the shedding of his blood.⁷⁰

The two parts of the Triduum format was demonstrated even in the observance of the 15 days of Phasekh. In the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, as we have already quoted above, this arrangement is expressed by its emphasis on complete fasting during Friday and Saturday:

But on the Friday and on the Sabbath fast wholly, eating nothing. . . . Especially incumbent on you therefore is the fast of the Friday and of the Sabbath (day); and likewise the vigil and watching of the Sabbath,

⁶⁶ Amphilius, *Orat.*, 5:1.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *Serm. Morin*, 4:2.

⁶⁸ Didas. Apost., 21, 5:19:1f.

⁶⁹ E.g., Jerome, *Com. Matt.*, 4, on 25:6; Lactantius, *Div. Inst.*, 7:19. The Apost. Constit., 5:18, enjoins fasting until the cockcrow. The Syn. Auxerre in 578 C.E. (*Can.*, 11) forbids the breaking of the fast until the second hour of the night. The 89th Trullan canon (Conc. Quinisext.) limits fasting up until midnight (ADCA, 1, p. 595).

⁷⁰ Rupert, 6:26.

and the reading of Scriptures, and psalms, and prayer and intercession for them that have sinned, and the expectation and hope of the resurrection of our sovereign Yahushua, until the third hour in the night after the Sabbath.⁷¹

Therefore, it was especially incumbent on those following the lead of the western Roman Catholic system to wholly fast on Friday and Saturday and to keep vigil during the hours after the Sabbath for the morning of the resurrection. Yet it was forbidden to fast on Phasekh Sunday after the time of the resurrection.⁷²

Narrowing Phasekh

Just as those of the Roman Catholic Church had permitted an expansion of the days of the Phasekh to 15 days, early on they also had set in motion the process that would once again narrow Phasekh to just the Triduum. Ultimately, as with many present-day Christian assemblies, it has been for all intents and purposes reduced to one day—Phasekh (Easter) Sunday.

Up until the fifth century C.E., the western idea of Phasekh was unified. There was one festival of Phasekh, though it encompassed different phases. For example, as late as Theodoret of Cyrrhus (431 C.E.), the suffering and resurrection were still united as the single content of Phasekh.⁷³

On the very day of the saving suffering, on which we
solemnized the memory BOTH of the suffering and
of the resurrection of the sovereign.⁷⁴

Augustine similarly writes, “the suffering and resurrection of the sovereign is the true Phasekh.”⁷⁵ Yet the tendency to separate the components of the Christian Phasekh into two parts and then emphasize Phasekh Sunday was also gaining momentum. As Raniero Cantalamessa points out, “At about this time in other places the two mysteries are found distributed between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.”⁷⁶ In another place he adds:

The distinction between the Day of the Passion and
the Day of the Resurrection first becomes clear in 364
with Gregory of Nazianzus’ oration 1.⁷⁷

Later, at the Council of Ephesus (449 C.E.), this separation is reflected in the words:

The day of the saving suffering has come, and the sacred night, and the Festival of the Resurrection.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Didas. Apost., 21, 5:18, 5:19:6.

⁷² Didas. Apost., 21, 5:20:11.

⁷³ EEC, p. 179, #82, n. a. See also Theodoret, *Epist.*, 63 and 64 (SC, 98, pp. 142f).

⁷⁴ Theodoret, *Cure*, 9:24.

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Cat. Rud.*, 23:41:3; CChr.SL, 46, p. 166.

⁷⁶ EEC, p. 179, #82, n. a.

⁷⁷ EEC, p. 162, #52, n. c.

⁷⁸ ACO, 2, 1, 1; p. 187, ℓ. 15.

Once the day of the messiah's suffering (passion) was separated from the Phasekh of the resurrection, the importance of the day of his suffering and the Sabbath day that he rested in the grave were reduced. The 40-day period of Lent before Phasekh Sunday, as decreed by the Roman Catholic assembly, came to replace any formal period of fasting.⁷⁹ Today, Roman Catholics still continue Lent and some still observe Good Friday as a fast. Most other Christian assemblies, nevertheless, ignore Lent, let alone any fast period. Some still keep Good Friday.

When compared to the practice among the early Christian assemblies, Pentecost, though still significant, has faded. Among the laity, Christmas, which has no basis in Scriptures, now overshadows it in importance. Today, Phasekh Sunday (Easter) is the only attempt at an original scriptural festival observed by the earliest Christian assemblies that still has any real prominence. The faithful regard this day as one of great spiritual importance.

Nevertheless, what had begun as the most important festival in the Christian world, a day over which many debates and conflicts were fought, has itself been reduced to a celebration of less gravity. It once was a time for baptism, freeing slaves, relieving the poor from taxes, and freeing people from prison. Serious fasting was followed by a period of joyous celebration to mark its season. Then came the trend toward mediocrity. It began in the time of Pope Vigilius (537-555 C.E.). Vigilius ordained that the Catholic mass on Phasekh Sunday should be the same as that on any other day, "*ordine consueto* (the usual order)," with the exception of the addition of "*singula capitula diebus apta* (individual [scriptural] chapters suited for the day)".⁸⁰

This reduced importance for Phasekh is reflected by the attachment of pagan customs and rites, as well as the pagan name Easter, to what was once seen as a precious celebration of truth. In the earliest assemblies, Easter bunnies, colored eggs, basket hunts, and Easter sunrise services would have been treated as an anathema. Now they have become an accepted part of the Christian Phasekh celebration.

Conclusion

What had begun in the earliest Christian assemblies as the observance of the 14th of Abib as Phasekh had in time been transformed by the western assemblies into the observation of the Sovereign's day Phasekh. To accomplish this transition, the western view divided Phasekh into two parts: a period of mourning and fasting, which preceded Phasekh Sunday, and a period of joyous celebration that began the Pentecost season with Phasekh Sunday.

To accommodate several other assemblies, the Roman Catholic Church expanded the Phasekh season to 15 days, long enough to cover any arrangement using one of the seven days of unleavened bread for Phasekh Sunday. The first week of these 15 days became the Phasekh of his suffering, the time of

⁷⁹ Augustine notes, "The observance of 40 days before Phasekh rests on the decree of the (Roman Catholic) assembly, and by the same authority the eight days of the neophytes are distinguished from other days, so that the eighth harmonizes with the first" (Augustine, *Let.*, 55:17 §32).

⁸⁰ Vigilius, *Epist.*, 2:5; SCRE, 5, p. 313.

mourning and fasting. The next eight days, beginning with Phasekh Sunday, became the Phasekh of the resurrection, a time for rejoicing and an excellent time for baptism. This rejoicing continued throughout the Pentecost season to the day of the festival of Pentecost Sunday.

Built into this system was the Triduum, which consists of Good Friday (the day of suffering), the Sabbath day of the burial (when Yahushua was still lying in the grave), and the day of the resurrection. In time, the 15-day season of Phasekh was shed, leaving only the Triduum. Then the Triduum moved beyond a single unified definition of Phasekh and became two separate occasions: Good Friday (the day of his suffering) and the Phasekh. This movement has resulted in the present celebration of Easter with its varying forms of practice. For example, some keep Good Friday, others do not; some keep Lent, others do not. In either case, the connection between the present-day celebration of Phasekh and the original form celebrated by the early Quartodeciman assemblies has, for the most part, been lost in the pages of antiquity.