



Daily Verse and Comment

Mark 14:12

(12) On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

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The word translated as "first," *protos*, typically signifies a thing that is first in a sequence or first in prominence. However, it can also indicate an order of events, as well as whether an event occurs before or concurrently with another.

For example, in [John 1:15](#) John the Baptist acknowledges Christ's pre-existence, saying, "He who comes after me is preferred before [above] me, for He was *before* [*protos*] me" (see also verse 30). Also, in [II Peter 2:20](#), Peter says of those who become entangled in [the world](#) again, "the latter end is worse for them than the *beginning* [*protos*]," again showing an order of events.

The word translated as "day," *heeméra*, can refer to a literal 24-hour period of time, but it can also indicate a general period of time or a season (see [Luke 9:51](#); [17:24](#); [19:42](#); [23:7](#); [John 8:56](#); [Acts 2:20](#); [8:1](#); [17:31](#); [Romans 2:5](#); [I Corinthians 3:13](#); [II Corinthians 6:2](#); [Ephesians 6:13](#); [Hebrews 3:8](#)). So the first part of [Mark 14:12](#) could also be translated, "Now *at the beginning of the season* of Unleavened Bread . . ." or "Now *at the beginning of the time* of Unleavened Bread . . ." Nothing dictates that in this case *heeméra* designates a specific 24-hour period, and much argues against it.

[Matthew 26:17](#), when correctly translated, shows that the disciples asked this question before the [Feast of Unleavened Bread](#) and before they had kept the [Passover](#). But how are we to understand the explanation, "when they killed

the Passover lamb"? In the Greek, the word translated as "killed" is *éthuon*. It can indeed refer to the singular act of slaying an animal ([Acts 11:7](#)), but also to a religious sacrifice ([Acts 14:13](#)) or to the entire occasion of which a slaughtered animal was paramount, such as the fatted calf being killed for the prodigal son ([Luke 15:23](#), 27, 30). In addition, in the sentence in question, the verb tense indicates *an action in progress but not yet completed*.

In other words, the sacrificing of the Passover lamb—or preparations for doing so—was taking place at the time the disciples asked their question! Most of the people did not observe a Temple-kept Passover; in [Mark 14:12](#), the common people were sacrificing lambs throughout the city, not the priests. The priests would not slay the Temple Passover lambs until the following afternoon. But as Abib 14 was drawing near, the disciples observed people around them on the outskirts of Jerusalem in the process of sacrificing—at least engaging in the necessary preparations, even if they did not perform the sacrifice itself until after sunset—prompting them to ask [Jesus](#) where He wanted them to likewise prepare for Passover.

— David C. Grabbe

To learn more, see:

[Is Passover on the First Day of Unleavened Bread? \(Part Two\)](#)

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