

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Why “Easter” is in the King James Version

(Jerry Fite)

**I**n the 1611 King James Version of the Bible we read, “*And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people*” (Acts 12:4). Were the first century Christians celebrating the festival commemorating the resurrection of Jesus? Why is the Greek word “*pascha*” translated “*passover*” everywhere else in the King James Version, except here in Acts 12:4?

The 47 actual translators of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures into English were divided into 6 committees. Besides referring to the texts, the scholars were instructed to follow the Bishop’s Bible (1568) as long as it was accurate with the Hebrew and Greek texts. They were also to consult other translations such as Tyndale’s New Testament (1534), and the Geneva Bible (1560).

Starting with Tyndale, the translations of the Bible reveal something interesting. “*easter*” was the word used referring to the Jewish Passover. In the early

“English” translations such as Wycliffe’s Bible (1380-1382) the Greek word “*pascha*”, was not translated, but transliterated into “*pask*”. For example, we read, “*the pask of the Jews*” in John 11:55. William Tyndale was the first to use “*easter*” as a translation of “*pascha*”.

In Tyndale’s 1534 addition of the New Testament, “*easter*” or “*ester*” occurs fourteen times and “*esterlambe*” eleven times. But in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, such translations as the Geneva Bible (1560) and the Bishop’s Bible (1568) completely eliminated “*easter*” from the New Testament translation (Geneva), or reduced it to two references: Jn. 11:55, Acts 12:4 (Bishop’s Bible). In 1611, the translators of the King James did not follow the Bishop’s Bible in John 11:55, translating “*the Jews’ Passover*” instead of “*the Iewes ester*”. But they kept “*Easter*” in Acts 12:4.

Those who defend the King James Bible argue that the Passover only referred to the events of the 14<sup>th</sup>. day when the Passover lamb was offered, not

the week following. Peter had been captured after the “Passover lamb” was offered (cf. Acts 12:3). So, the word “*easter*” was used to denote the season following the offering of the “Passover lamb”. If this is the reason, it is not consistent with Scripture. Ezekiel writes, “*In the first month in the fourteenth day of the month, he shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten*” (Ezekiel 45:21, cf. Lk. 22:1). The Passover refers to the entire feast of unleavened bread, from start to finish.

“Easter” was not left in Acts 12:4 inadvertently. The five other committees and editors overseeing the work would surely have caught it.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the English speaking world celebrated “Easter” as the resurrection of Christ and a fulfillment of the Jewish Passover, observed in the same season. Tyndale, The Bishop’s Bible, and the King James translators may have simply wanted this fact emphasized where they thought they could legitimately retain it.