

“THE TIMING OF THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST”

Wednesday Evening • March 20, 2013 • Pastor David Kramer

1. INTRODUCTION

A. THE TERMS PASSOVER AND FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD ARE INTERCHANGEABLE

- By the time of the New Testament, the Jewish people had so closely celebrated the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that the terms became interchangeable: *"Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover"* (Luke 22:1). By this time, the whole eight days of Passover and Unleavened Bread had come to be known as the Passover feast. This fact alone accounts for some of the confusion of the New Testament account of the Last Passover. It is apparent, however, that Jesus did eat the Passover supper before His death on the cross. *"Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat"* (Luke 22:7); *"And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?"* (Mark 14:12).

B. THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF A “DAY”

- In order to comprehend the events of the New Testament it is necessary to be familiar with the events and their timing in the old economy. It is important to remember that according to the Bible the day **begins at sunset**, not at midnight, so that the evening of the day is followed by the morning (Genesis 1:5). The Hebrew day began with the going down of the sun or at approximately 6:00 PM.
- Genesis 1:5, *"God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. **So the evening and the morning were the first day.**"*

C. THE DAY OF PREPARATION—THE PASSOVER

- The actual day of Passover, Abib 14, came to be known as **the day of preparation** for the coming Sabbath or holy convocation (the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread): *"Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is the day before the Sabbath"* (Mark 15:42). This passage of Scripture has been the basis for the "Good Friday" crucifixion; however, in the context of the whole Passover-Unleavened Bread time-frame, it is clear that the preparation was the day of Passover (Abib 14) before the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (Abib 15).
- John 19:31, *"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath **(for that Sabbath was a high day)**, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."*

D. THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS = 72 HOURS

- The basic criterion for establishing the date of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus must be His own prophetic sign to His generation: *"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the **Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**"* (Matthew 12:40). If the Lord had said that He would remain in the heart of the earth for three days, it could be assumed that He intended a period of less than seventy-two hours. The fact that He said three days and three nights and then repeated the phrase precisely can only indicate that He meant three days in addition to three nights, or seventy-two hours. The use of the Hebrew idiom *three days and three nights* precludes the possibility that the Lord may have remained in the tomb less than seventy-two hours.

E. JESUS DID NOT RESURRECT ON SUNDAY MORNING

- The secondary criterion on which the calculation of the events of the week of the crucifixion and resurrection may be established is the fact that the Scriptures say repeatedly that the visitations of various people to the tomb of Jesus in the pre- and post-dawn hours of the first day of the week found the tomb vacant. This establishes the fact that **Jesus resurrected well before dawn on the first day of the week**. Since He remained entombed for 72 hours, and since we are informed that He was interred at shortly before 6:00 PM on the day of the crucifixion, counting backward from around 6 PM at the end of the Sabbath and the beginning of the first day of the week, the time of interment must have been at 6:00 PM on Wednesday. From this point an accurate chronology of the events which surrounded the death and resurrection of the Lord can be established.

FRIDAY, Abib 9

The chronology of John begins in John 12:1 with this statement: *"Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany."* According to Luke 19:1-10, Jesus had approached Jerusalem from Jericho on the previous day and had spent the night. During that sixth day before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany according to Luke 19:29 where the events of John 12 transpired (Jesus was anointed for His burial). Since the Passover to which the New Testament writers referred was in fact the first day of Unleavened Bread (or Abib 15 which in that year was on Thursday), 6 days before that day was Friday, Abib 9.

SATURDAY, Abib 10

John 12:12,13 states that *"on the next day much people that were come to the feast...took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."* It was earlier in this day while at Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives that Jesus had sent His disciples to procure the ass and colt that He subsequently rode into Jerusalem at His triumphal entry (Luke 19:29-38). **The event that most Christians celebrate on Palm Sunday actually took place on the Sabbath.** Finally Jesus went out of the city with the Twelve at evening to Bethany (Mark 11:11). These were the events of the Sabbath, the tenth day of Abib.

SUNDAY, Abib 11

Mark 11:12 continues the chronology thus: *"And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry."* The Lord found no fruit on the fig tree and cursed it. When He came into Jerusalem and the Temple, the zeal of the Lord's house consumed Him, and He drove the moneychangers from the Temple. Then He taught at length as Luke 19:47 and John 12:20-50 declare. These were the events of Sunday, the eleventh day of Abib.

MONDAY, Abib 12

Mark continues the chronology in Mark 11:20: *"And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots."* Then Jesus continued to Jerusalem and spent time teaching and giving parables in the temple (Mark 11:20; 14:1). In Mark 14:1 this statement further identifies that day: *"After two days was the feast of passover, and of unleavened bread."* Since the Feast of Passover and of Unleavened Bread to which the writer alluded had come to be recognized as Abib 15 and since the statement of *"after two days is the passover"* would have to have been made on the third day before the Passover, it may be concluded that this day was Abib 12.

TUESDAY, Abib 13

Luke 22:8-14, *"Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat. So they said to Him, 'Where do You want us to prepare?' And He said to them, 'Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" "Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. **When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.**"*

TUESDAY/BEGINNING OF WEDNESDAY, Abib 14 – THE PASSOVER

- Sometime after sunset (we would call Tuesday Evening) Jesus and His disciples eat the Old Testament Passover meal later called the "Last Supper".
 - Jesus institutes the New Testament observance of the Passover with bread and wine (Communion).
 - After Jesus and His disciples had concluded the observance of the Passover supper, Jesus instituted the New Testament Passover, instructing His disciples, *"This do in remembrance of me."* After the disciples had partaken of the Last Supper, Jesus washed their feet, instituting the ordinance of feet washing. Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives where Jesus predicted Peter's denial.
 - Finally they came to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed. Later, the chief priests and a multitude of armed men came with Judas and seized Jesus and took Him to the High Priest (Luke 22:47-65).
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WEDNESDAY, Abib 14 – THE PASSOVER

The subsequent events of the night of Wednesday, Abib 14, are well-documented both in history and in the Gospels. During the night, Jesus was tried in the court of Caiaphas.

6:00 AM At dawn Jesus was taken to Pilate.

- It was then that the Jews would not enter before Pilate so that they would be clean to eat the Passover (John 18:28). The Passover of which they wished to eat was that first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which was called the Passover, the annual, not weekly, high Sabbath.
- After trial by Roman standards, Jesus was found not guilty by Pilate, who, fearing an uprising of the people and wishing to placate their furor, assented to the wishes of the people and their leaders and issued the order for the execution of Jesus.

9:00 AM Jesus was taken to Golgotha and crucified at 9:00 AM.

- Mark 15:25, *"Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him."*
- Remember that the "day" portion of Wednesday, Abib 14, started at 6:00 AM. Three hours later would be 9:00 AM.

12-3:00 PM Darkness fell on the land.

- Luke 23:44-46, *"Now it was about the sixth hour [12 Noon], and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour [3:00 PM]. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last."*

3:00 PM After hanging on the cross for 6 hours, Jesus died at 3:00 PM.

- John 19:31-42 further identifies this time: *"The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away...and after this Joseph of Arimathea...besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus...there laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."*
- It should also be noted that prophecy dictated that Jesus (the Messiah) would die in the middle of the week (Daniel 9:26,27 *"...Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself...[27] ...But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering..."*)

WEDNESDAY/BEGINNING OF THURSDAY, Abib 15 – THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD Begins

6:00 PM Jesus was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50-56).

- John 19:31 makes it clear that Jesus was off the cross before the beginning of the high Sabbath (Abib 15–The Feast of Unleavened Bread) which began at sunset.
- Jesus was placed in the grave just before sunset on Wednesday Evening.

THURSDAY, Abib 15 – THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Around 6:00 PM at the end of the day of Passover, Jesus was interred in the tomb. On the very next day, Thursday, the chief priest and scribes came to Pilate fearful of the prediction which Jesus had made that on the third day He would rise again. They requested that a 3-day watch be set upon the tomb and that it be sealed. Permission was granted, and the opposition of the Messiah set the trap which would stand for all eternity as a testimony of the resurrection of Jesus (Read Matthew 27:62-66).

FRIDAY, Abib 16

The body of Jesus was in the grave which was being watched/guarded by Roman guards. It was during Jesus' entombment in the earthly grave that He went and preached to the souls that were bound in hell.

- I Peter 18-20, *"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, **by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison**, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water."*
 - Acts 2:31, *"He, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, **that His soul was not left in Hades**, nor did His flesh see corruption."*
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SATURDAY, Abib 17

- On the 3rd night and day of His entombment, the saints rested on the Sabbath day according to the commandments (Luke 23:56). At sundown, the angels opened the tomb with an earthquake at the end of the Sabbath as the first day of the week was drawing on (Mark 16:1-8; Matthew 28:1-7).
- Since Jewish law required that a man be dead for 3 days and 3 nights before he could be pronounced legally dead, Jesus remained in the tomb for 72 hours.
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| Wednesday Evening through Thursday Day | = | 1 st Day | 24 Hours |
| Thursday Evening through Friday Day | = | 2 nd Day | 24 Hours |
| Friday Evening through Saturday Day | = | 3 rd Day | 24 Hours |
| TOTAL | | 3 Days | 72 Hours |
- **JESUS RESURRECTS AT 6:00 PM** (sunset) on Saturday Evening. Mark 16:9a says, “*Now when He rose early on the first day of the week...*” Since the 1st day begins on Saturday after sundown, the Scriptures make it clear that Jesus arose on what we would call Saturday Evening.

SUNDAY, Abib 18

- **MARY MAGDALENE VISITS EMPTY TOMB.**
Sometime later while it was still dark on the first day of the week (which would correspond with our Sunday Morning), Mary Magdalene went to the tomb while it was still early and found it empty and ran to inform the apostles who visited the tomb but then returned home (John 20:1-18). Mary, however, remained at the tomb and wept.
- **THE RESURRECTED JESUS APPEARS TO MARY.**
As Mary was weeping, the angels appeared to her first and subsequently she saw and spoke with Jesus who instructed her not to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17; Luke 24:39).
- **JESUS ASCENDS TO HEAVEN WITH THE FIRSTFRUITS OF THE RESURRECTION.**
Shortly thereafter, Jesus ascended, taking with Him the firstfruits of the resurrection (the saints which arose at the time of the earthquake), and, as the newly installed High Priest, waved them before the Lord as the wave sheaf of the firstfruits (Matthew 27:53; I Corinthians 15:23).
- Ephesians 4:8,NLT, “*That is why the Scriptures say, “When He ascended to the heights, He led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to His people.”*”
- Some time later in the day, Jesus appeared to the women in the garden and to His disciples instructing them to “*handle me*” (Mark 16:1.6; Luke 24:39; John 20:27). Later on Sunday, the first day of the week, Jesus appeared to the men who were walking very dejectedly toward Emmaus.

OTHER THINGS JESUS DID BEFORE HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN...

- He ate fish and honey with them (Luke 24:36-43).
- He appeared to His disciples and over 500 brethren at once (I Corinthians 15:6).
- He spent 40 days speaking with His followers concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).
- He instructed the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8).
- Finally, He led them to Bethany and blessed them before He ascended to heaven right before their eyes (Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:50-53).

CONCLUSION

This is a chronology of the events of the Passover. With this account, the Scriptures are harmonized, the dates are chronologically in order, and the times of the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the entombment, and the resurrection are placed on a sure foundation.

The Church of God celebrates the Passover on the eve of Abib 14 with Communion. It recognizes the crucifixion of Jesus to have occurred on Wednesday, the midst of the week (Daniel 9:27), rather than on Good Friday. It also celebrates the Resurrection three days and nights later at the end of the Sabbath rather than at sunrise on Easter Sunday morning. With this understanding the church's remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus is established on a solid scriptural foundation.