

THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS

Wednesday or Thursday or Friday: When did Christ die?

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Scripture from the NKJV unless otherwise noted

Matthew 12:38-40 “Then some of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.’ But he answered and said to them, ‘An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. No sign will be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah: 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’” (Luke 11:29-30, Jonah 1:17).

Most Christians believe that Christ died on Friday afternoon and rose from the dead just at/or just after dawn on Sunday, the first day of the week. This period of time does not encompass three days and three nights, according to Western time reckoning. It covers just over 36 hours. How can this be consistent with Christ’s “sign of the prophet Jonah?”

A number of Christians hold the view that Christ died on Wednesday afternoon and was resurrected late on the afternoon of the Sabbath (Saturday). *Matthew 12:38-40* is quoted as primary support for a Wednesday crucifixion. I do not believe this scenario is supported by the sum of textual evidence.

Still other Christians believe that Christ died on Thursday. This is a strong possibility, but is not certain.

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In this study I will explain:

1. According to prophecy, the body of Messiah would NOT decay between death and resurrection.
2. “Three days and three nights” vs “on the third day” - Can both be true?
3. “The heart of the earth” - what does the phrase mean?
4. Inclusive reckoning - Hebrew time keeping.
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NOR DID HIS FLESH SEE CORRUPTION”

The Psalm predicted and Luke agrees, that the flesh of Christ did NOT decay.

Acts 2:25-27, 30-31 “For David says concerning Him: ‘I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption’ (Psalm 16:10). “Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades [Sheol - the grave], nor did His flesh see corruption [decay].”

Peter’s argument is that the body of Christ did not “see corruption,” *because* He was raised from the dead *before* signs of “decay” could have been observed. The argument is not for a miraculous preservation of flesh. His flesh did not see corruption, *because* God has raised Him from the dead, in fulfillment of the Scriptures.

Any coroner will tell you that after 24 hours (much less 72 hours) a body will be in a state of decay, unless it is kept in cold storage. A cave in Jerusalem, in mid-April *would* be cool, but rather than debate temperatures and rates of decay, I would turn to Scripture.

The meat of an animal offered as a peace offering, or a freewill offering could be eaten on the day that it was killed and on the day following. To eat of the meat “on the third day” was *forbidden*, and was called “an abomination” by the LORD (*Lev. 7:16-18*).

*If Jesus Christ’s body had remained in the grave over “the third day,”
it would have become “unclean” - decaying.
Both prophecy and direct testimony said this did not happen.*

Every sacrifice was a symbol of Christ “the Lamb of God.” According to the Law, any part of a sacrifice which remained on the third day was to be “burned with fire” so that nothing remained - just as nothing of the mortal flesh of Christ remained in the tomb, on the third day. To partake of a sacrifice after the second day, was to spoil the symbolism of Christ’s death and resurrection. This to me, is a strong argument against Christ’s body spending more than 48 hours in the tomb.

The manna also was a symbol of Christ (*John 6:30-35*). The manna fell on the six working days, and did NOT fall on the Sabbath. The manna would spoil and stink if kept overnight, on any of the six working days, but did not spoil if kept overnight Friday. On the Sabbath there was a miracle. The manna did “not see corruption,” just as the body of Christ did not see corruption over the Sabbath. The manna which did not spoil over the Sabbath was to be eaten up completely, just like the Passover lamb was to be eaten up completely (*Exodus 16:14-36*). If any of the manna was kept until Sunday (the third day), it would be spoiled. The Friday-Sabbath-Sunday sequence of the manna, *matches* the Friday-Sabbath-Sunday of our Lord’s death and resurrection. On Friday, a “double portion” of divine love was given to mankind. All of heaven was poured out in one amazing gift. On Sabbath there was no manna because Christ was dead. On Sunday - the manna fell from Heaven once again, because Christ was risen.

I have omitted statements by Christ’s enemies.

	Matthew 12:40 “three days and three nights”
Matthew 16:21 “be raised again the third day”	
Matthew 17:23 “the third day he shall be raised”	
Matthew 20:19 “the third day he shall rise again”	
Mark 9:31 “shall rise the third day”	Mark 8:31 “after three days”
Mark 10:34 “the third day he shall rise again”	
Luke 9:22 “be raised the third day”	
Luke 13:32 “the third day I shall be perfected”	
Luke 18:33 “the third day he shall rise again”	
Luke 24:7 “the third day rise again”	
John 2:19 “in three days”	
Acts 10:40 “Him God raised up the third day”	
1 Corinthians 15:4 “rose again the third day”	

“the first day of the week” . . . “today is the third day”

Luke 24:1,13,21 “Now upon the first day of the week [Sunday]. . . And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. . . . Jesus himself drew near ... But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, ... ‘our chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done.”

Christ is alive on Sunday, which is called “the third day.” I cannot get a Wednesday crucifixion from this text.

NOTE: Luke Chapter Twenty-four is the only account of this appearance.

“THE THIRD DAY” - OTHER PASSAGES

Understanding Hebrew time expressions

Exodus 19:10-11 “And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

Note: In the Scriptures, the day after tomorrow IS the third day. As He came down in the sight of the people on the third day, so the risen Christ appeared to men on the third day.

2 Chronicles 10:5 & 12 “So he said to them, ‘Come back to me after three days.’ And the people departed.” (v.12) “So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had directed, saying, ‘Come back to me the third day.”

The people understood “after three days” to mean “on the third day.”

Leviticus 7:16-18 “But if the sacrifice of his offering be a vow, or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offereth his sacrifice: and on the morrow also the remainder of it shall be eaten: But the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire. And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.” KJV (See also, Lev. 19:5-7.)

In Scripture, the day after tomorrow IS “the third day.”

Hosea 6:1-3 “Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

The disciples were “torn,” and “smitten” with grief. On the third day their grief was turned to joy.

First Day	Second Day	Third Day
00 to 24 hours	25 to 48 hours	49 to 72 hours
Today	Tomorrow	The Day After Tomorrow

*If Jesus was going to “rise the third day,”
then He could not remain in the tomb until the third day was ended.*

“ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES”

Luke 24:45-46 [On the road to Emmaus] Then He opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

1 Corinthians 15:4 “He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”

1. The commands concerning the sacrifices (especially concerning the Passover lamb and the “Firstfruits”)
2. The commands concerning what might be eaten of any sacrifice on the third day
3. The double portion of manna gathered on Friday, which would “keep” until Sunday
4. The prophecy of Hosea 6:1-3

All these pointed forward to Christ’s resurrection ON THE THIRD DAY.

“THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS - IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH”

How do we reconcile this prophecy with resurrection “on the third day?”

He could not spend 72 hours in the tomb, AND be “raised the third day.” **The two expressions are mutually exclusive.** Either Christ contradicted Himself, or this prophetic statement must be reconciled with all of His other predictions which specified “the third day.” It must be reconciled with the written prophecies of the Old Testament, and with the prophetic imagery of the festivals appointed by God.

Jesus taught the people with parables and with obscure sayings (*Matthew 13:34-35; Psalm 78:2*). The phrase “in the heart of the earth” is not defined in the text. There are no parallel passages - only Matthew quotes Christ in this instance. The phrase has been understood by some to mean “in the tomb” but **the expression was NOT a Hebrew idiom for the grave.** Jesus did NOT SAY that He would be “in the grave” for 3 days and 3 nights. He would be “in the heart of the earth.”

“in the heart of the earth”

What do the words mean?

*Jesus had lived from the moment of His birth, “**in the Father**” (*John 14:11, John 8:28*). He lived in the presence of His Father. Now He would experience something vastly different. Now He would be “**in the heart of the earth.**”*

Genesis 6:5 “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Jerusalem was regarded as **the center, or “heart of” the earth**. Jews were to travel from every part of the earth to Jerusalem, for worship on the Festival Days (*John 4:20; Acts 2:5-11, 8:27; Deut. 16:16*).

Psalm 74:12 “For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth” (*Ezek 38:12*).

Ezekiel 5:5 “This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.”

*The heart of Jerusalem - was evil. The heart of this earth, under Satan’s domination - is evil.
“And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, ‘Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?’” (Matthew 9:4)*

As Jonah was thrown overboard into the sea, so Christ was “betrayed” and “delivered into the hands of sinful men” (*Luke 24:7*). He was “delivered unto the Gentiles” (*Lk 18:32*), rejected, abandoned, and forsaken of God (*Lk 17:20; Matt. 27:46; Mrk 15:34; Matt. 26:56; Mrk 14:50*). **As Jonah was swallowed by the great fish, so Christ was swallowed by the evil which surrounded Him.** He was left alone to battle with Satan, and with men under the control of demons.

Psalm 18:4-5 “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me.”

Psalm 88:4,6 “I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.”

Compare the above passages written by David (speaking prophetically as the suffering Messiah) with the following words of Jonah. Both speak of waters, deep, corruption, rejection, darkness from which there is no escape.

Jonah 2:6 “I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.”

IMPORTANT! The time period prophesied, must include the period of suffering not simply the time period during which Jesus remained dead.

The whole process of humiliation was included in this “belly of the whale” experience (Matt. 16:21, Mk. 8:31, Mk. 9:12, Lk. 9:22, Lk. 17:25). To the mob near the garden, Jesus said, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Lk 22:53). “Behold **the hour is at hand**, and the Son of Man is **betrayed into the hands of sinners**” (Matt. 26:46). “The hour” begins with the kiss of Judas.

The angels at the tomb said to the women: “He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, ‘The Son of man must be **delivered into the hands of sinful men**, **and** be crucified, **and** the third day rise again” (Luke 24:6-7).

From the kiss of Judas in the garden, to the glorious resurrection, “three days and three nights **in the heart of the earth**” - **in the hands of evil**. Remember, Roman soldiers were guarding His tomb.

NIGHT: Thursday late night: Adar 14 (Passover) Taken and tried. (Cast into “the heart of the earth.”)	DAY: Friday: Adar 14 (Passover) Scourged and crucified. Death about 3PM
NIGHT: Friday night: Adar 15 began @ sunset. (Feast of Unleavened Bread) Sleeping in death	DAY: Sabbath: 15 Adar (Feast of Unleavened Bread continues) Sleeping in death.
NIGHT: Sabbath night: Adar 16 began @sunset. Sleeping in death.	DAY: Sunday just <u>at</u> sunrise: 16 Adar Resurrected from death.

BOTH ARE TRUE.

DEFINITIONS OF A “DAY:

1. the part of 24 hours when it is not dark outside, (aprox. 12 hrs)
2. the time period from sundown to sundown (24 hrs).

Remember - any part of a day counts as a day in Hebrew reckoning.

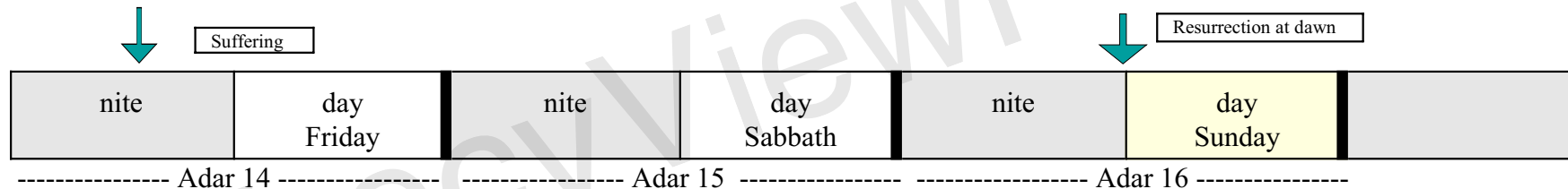
If the sun was shining at the moment of the resurrection - then it was counted as a “day.”

He is resurrected **ON the “third day”** because the sun is now shining.

He is resurrected **ON “the third day”** because it is Adar 16, and He died on Adar 14.

He spends “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” because we begin the time when He is bound and taken into custody, during the night of Adar 14.

From the first day, to the third day just after sunrise encompasses “three days and three nights!!”



MARK 8:31 vs MARK 9:31

Mark 8:31 “And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

Mark 9:31 “... the Son of Man is being delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.”

Both verses are from the book of Mark, believed by most Bible scholars to have been authored by Peter, with Mark writing down the words. One verse says very clearly, “after He is killed, He will rise the third day.” The other can legitimately be understood to mean that He will rise three days AFTER He suffers many things. **The three days of Mark 8:31 would then INCLUDE everything that He suffered, not just the period during which He lay in the tomb.**

INCLUSIVE RECKONING

This method of keeping time is called “**inclusive reckoning**.” Any part of a day was included in the count as a day. The day (or any part of a day) on which an event begins is called “the first day.” We still do this today: “Today is the first day of the sale” - even if the sale doesn’t begin until the store opens at 10 o’clock. (There is no zero day therefore the first day is day #1.)

EXAMPLE: An newborn Hebrew male was circumcised when he was “eight days old” (*Gen. 17:12*), OR “the eighth day” (*Lev. 12:3; Lk. 1:59*) OR “when eight days were accomplished” (*Lk. 2:21*). All three expressions mean the same thing. The day of birth was called “the first day,” whether the child was born at the beginning or at the close of the day. **There was no zero day.** The day of birth was day #1. The next day - day #2, the child would be one day old. **On day #8, the child would be seven days old.**

CONSIDER:

Jesus died near the close of day #1. (There was no day #zero.)

At the close of day #2, Jesus would have been dead for one day, 24 hours.

At the close of day #3 Jesus would have been dead for two days, 48 hours.

Near the close of day #4 Jesus would have been dead for three whole days, 72 hours.

But then it would be said that He was raised on the 4th day, not on “the 3rd day.”

THIS is the reason why Jesus could not spend 72 hours in the grave.

For then He would have been raised the 4th day.

The story of Peter and Cornelius
Another example of “inclusive reckoning”

1st Day: An angel appeared to Cornelius “about the ninth hour of the day” telling him to send messengers to get Peter who was at Joppa (*Acts 10:3-8*).

2nd Day: As the messengers sent by Cornelius neared the house “**on the morrow** ... about the sixth hour” (noon) Peter saw a vision. In response to the vision Peter received the messengers and they spent the night (*verse 9*).

NOTE: It is an overnight journey from Cornelius to Joppa where Peter is staying with Simon.

3rd Day: And **on the morrow** Peter went away with them” (*verse 23*).

4th Day: “**And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea.**” Peter met Cornelius, who then told him of the angel’s visit.” “**Four days ago,**” said Cornelius, “I was fasting unto this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing...” (*Verses 24,30*). When he recounted the story to Peter, Cornelius said, “**Four days ago** I was fasting until this hour.” But count it for yourself! **Seventy-two hours (three full days) had passed** from the time that Cornelius saw the vision, until he told the story to Peter - NOT 96 hours! Yet he says, “Four days ago.”

*This would mean that one could say “three days ago” and mean 48 hours!
Before dawn of Friday - when Christ was taken into custody at the darkest hour of night -
until day-break on Sunday, is just over 48 hours.*

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THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR

2 Peter 1:19 “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

Revelation 22:16 “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”

Malachi 4:2 “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.”

The imagery given, links Christ with the sun, with dawn, with light, with life. Not sunset. With sunset comes darkness, cold, night. Without light there can be no life. I have a hard time connecting the resurrection of Messiah with the sunset and the approach of darkness.

PUNCTUATION PROBLEMS

An argument for Wednesday crucifixion explored.

Matthew 27:66 - 28:1-2 “So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and **setting a watch**. In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it” (KJV).

The Greek word “epiphosko” (Strong’s #2020), translated “dawn” can mean “drawing towards.” The Hebrew Sabbath **begins** at sunset, therefore the argument is made that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary set out for the sepulcher late on Sabbath afternoon as it began “to approach towards the first day of the week.”

Carrying jars of spices - on the Sabbath?

In the Wednesday crucifixion scenario, the women set out for the tomb late ON the afternoon of the Sabbath carrying jars of spices for anointing the body. Is this logical?

1. The disciples spent the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Thursday in this scenario) in Jerusalem - “according to the commandment.” Would the women walk to the tombs (a dangerous place, with robbers) knowing they will have to walk home in the dark? (They assume it will take some time to anoint the body, especially if they have to get someone to roll away the stone from the entrance.)
2. Would they carry large jars of spices ON THE SABBATH? That would violate “the Law”, which forbade the carrying of a “burden” on the Sabbath day.
3. Why would the women have waited until Sabbath afternoon before seeking to anoint the body? In the Wednesday scenario, Friday would have been a common work day. Why not anoint the body on Friday?

Let's examine the text.

The ancient Greek writings contained no punctuation marks, no spaces between the words, and no lower case letters. These were added later, to make reading easier. The ancient manuscripts contained no numbered verses, and no chapter divisions. Consider how the ancient text might have looked.

(We will do this in English, but you'll get the idea.)

SOTHEYWENTANDMADETHESEPULCHRESURESEALINGTHESTONEANDSETTINGAWATCHINTHEENDOFTHE
SABBATHASITBEGANTODAWNTOWARDTHEFIRSTDAYOFTHEWEEKCAMEMARYMAGDALENEANDTHEOTHERMARY
TOSEETHESEPULCHRE

Let's try that again, adding word division and punctuation.

SO THEY WENT AND MADE THE SEPULCHRE SURE, SEALING THE STONE AND SETTING A WATCH IN THE END OF THE SABBATH. AS IT BEGAN TO DAWN TOWARD THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, CAME MARY MAGDALENE AND THE OTHER MARY TO SEE THE SEPULCHRE.

Did you see the change? I simply moved the period from after the word “watch,” to after the word “sabbath.” I also eliminated the verse division. “In the end of the Sabbath” becomes the END of 27:66.

The guard is posted as the sun is setting at “the end of the Sabbath.” The women come to the tomb the next morning. This change completely changes the meaning. The passage can then very legitimately be read:

“So they went and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch in the end of the sabbath.

As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher”
(*Matthew 27:66 - 28:1*).

The story is changed, just by a change of punctuation. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come to the sepulcher very early - before dawn - the next morning, **just as they do in the other three accounts of this story.** They feel the ground shake as the angel rolls away the stone. THIS is the resurrection!

Mark 16:1-2 “very early in the morning on the first day of the week”

Luke 24:1,10 “upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning”

John 20:1 “the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark”

Mary ran to tell the disciples. John and Peter both ran to the tomb - all on Sunday morning.

MATTHEW 27:66 -28:1 : OTHER TRANSLATIONS

New American Standard: “And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone. Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.”

Today’s English Version: “So they left, and made the grave secure by putting a seal on the stone and leaving the guard on watch. After the Sabbath, as Sunday morning was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the grave.”

The New International Version: “So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard. After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.”

Phillips Modern English: “And they went and made the grave secure, putting a seal on the stone and leaving it under guard. When the Sabbath was over, just as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary from Magdala and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.”

TOO LATE FOR SPICES?

John 11:39 In the story of Lazarus, “Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to him, ‘Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days.’”

Note: Remember Hebrew inclusive reckoning. “Been dead four days” would mean 72 hours.

I can see the women wanting to anoint the body of Jesus with aromatic spices approximately 38 hours after death (Fri. 3pm to Sun. at dawn), but I have a hard time believing they would want to roll away that stone, to put their spices on a stinking corpse after 72+ hours (Wed. 3pm to Sabbath near sundown).

WHY RETURN WITH SPICES?

Luke 24:1 “on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they . . . came to the tomb, bringing the spices ...”

Verse 10 confirms that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James were among this party. Mark 16:1-2 also states that Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James came to the tomb “very early on the first day of the week” to “anoint him.”

If the two Marys worship the risen Christ, late on Sabbath afternoon, and they RUN to tell the disciples, then WHY would they return on Sunday morning at dawn with spices to anoint the body? (*Mark 16:1-2, Luke 24:1, 10*)

If the women report the tomb empty late on Sabbath afternoon, WHY would Peter and John wait until the next morning to RUN to the tomb? (*John 20:4*)

WHO WILL ROLL AWAY THE STONE?

Why did they not know - about the seal and the guard of soldiers?

And when did they buy the spices?

Mark 16:1-4 “. . . Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, ‘Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?’”

You might want to reference the time-lines provided (pages 21 and 22).

The stone was a normal part of Hebrew death internment practice. “Very early on the first day of the week,” they didn’t know that the tomb had been sealed, and was now guarded by Roman soldiers. Why didn’t they know?

In a Wednesday crucifixion scenario, the Feast of Unleavened Bread would begin at sundown of Wednesday. Only the first and last days of that Feast were no-work sabbaths. **Friday would have been a common work day**. Jerusalem would be buzzing with talk of the crucifixion and the sealed tomb, and the Roman guard, and the prophet’s prediction that He would “rise the third day.”

Assuming a Wednesday crucifixion, the tomb would have been sealed and the guard set by sundown of Thursday (*Matthew 27:62-66*). If the tomb was sealed and the guard posted on Thursday afternoon, **why would the women expect to anoint the body of Jesus on Sunday morning** (or near sundown of the Sabbath for that matter)? To break a Roman seal was a crime punishable with death.

Pilate had commanded that the tomb be **“made secure until the third day”** - meaning until the end of the third day. The wording suggests the tomb was guarded continuously - not just during the night. No one would be allowed to break the seal, or move the stone **until the fourth day began** - which would have been the Sabbath in the Wednesday scenario. Sunday would be the 5th day, and by that time the body would really stink. I suppose it’s possible that the women felt so dedicated to Jesus that they would brave the stench on day five. Possible - but unlikely.

On the other hand, **if Friday was the day of crucifixion**, then the Sabbath (Saturday) would also have been the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The guard would have been posted just at the end of the Sabbath - or Saturday at sundown. (This we have shown, is a legitimate translation of Matt. 27:66 + 28:1.) In keeping with Pharisaic law, the women most likely did not go out during the Sabbath (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown). The disciples were in hiding because they feared the authorities (*John 20:19*). **From sunset of Friday to dawn of Sunday, the disciples would not likely have received news of the guard.**

People did not go out to the tombs at night, for fear of robbers, and for fear of accidental defilement. (Tombs were whitewashed to identify areas considered unclean.) The women set out for the tomb as soon as there was enough light to see their path, on Sunday morning - and were not aware the tomb had been sealed (else they would not have gone). Between the time they set out, and their arrival at the tomb, there was an earthquake and Christ was raised.

Note: The tombs were notorious, as hiding places for social rejects, mentally disturbed persons, and criminals.

*Note: Touching a grave (or tomb) meant the person would become “unclean” and would remain so for 7 days. He (or she) would need to be anointed with the ashes of the “red heifer” on the 3rd day and on the 7th day, to remove the “uncleanness” (*Numbers 19:18*).*

THE PROPHETIC FESTIVAL DAYS: SCRIPTURE COMMANDS

THE PASSOVER:

Exodus 12:3: On the 10th day of the first month (Adar/Nissan) a lamb was to be chosen. It was to be inspected by every member of the household, until the 14th day when it was to be killed at twilight (3PM). At the very first Passover, blood from that lamb was painted on the sides and across the top of the door frame.

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (also called the Passover Seder):

Exodus 12:8 The Passover sacrificial lamb was to be roasted in fire. No bone was to be broken. It was to be eaten that night (of the 15th which began at sunset of the 14th). No part of the lamb was to remain until the next morning. Any part which remained was to be burned in fire. The 15th was the first day of seven during which they were to eat no leaven. All leaven was to have been cleaned from their houses. "For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day that person shall be cut off from Israel" (v.16). *(See also Leviticus 23:5-8.)* No work was to be done on this day.

THE OFFERING OF THE FIRSTFRUITS:

Leviticus 23:10 "When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest (v.11). He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD; . . . on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it (v.14). You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."

THE FEAST OF WEEKS (also called Pentecost, or Shavuot):

Leviticus 23:15-22 From the day when the firstfruits were offered, fifty days were counted "to the day after the seventh Sabbath." No customary work was to be done on the 50th day. Tradition says that Pentecost was the anniversary of the giving of the 10 Commandments from Mt. Sinai.

THE PROPHETIC FESTIVAL DAYS with the required ceremonies.
PASSOVER - FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD - FIRSTFRUITS CEREMONY

The Hebrew “day” begins at sundown.

10 ADAR	11 ADAR	12 ADAR	13 ADAR	14 ADAR	15 ADAR	16 ADAR	17 ADAR	18 ADAR
Passover lamb chosen, tethered to the house for inspection	lamb inspected by all of household	lamb inspected	lamb inspected	Passover prep. for the FOUB lamb sacrificed about 3PM roasted in fire	Feast of Unleavened Bread (no work) lamb eaten at night with bitter herbs and unleavened bread	Firstfruits (Kept by BOTH Pharisees & Sadducees - if FRI death)	Firstfruits (Kept by Sadducee if THURS death)	Firstfruits (Kept by Sadducee if WED death)

NOTE: The Sadducees always celebrated Firstfruits on the first Sunday that followed the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
The Pharisees always kept the 16th - the day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

NOTE: If Christ died on Wed. Or Th. - the Pharisees and Sadducees would have been in the Temple for the following Pentecost on different days, because the 50 day count to Pentecost starts on Firstfruits.

continued next page

EVENTS RECORDED IN THE GOSPELS

6 days before Passover - He walks 13 miles uphill from Jericho to Bethany <i>(John 12:1).</i> <u>sunset</u> Feast at Simon's that evening	Triumphal entry , from Bethany to Jerusalem. Christ enters Temple for The people inspect the Lamb returns to Bethany at evening	Cleanses Temple, teaching in temple, inspected rulers/people/Greeks, returns to Bethany at evening	Inspected by rulers/people <u>sunset</u> spends night on Mt of Olives	Last teachings leaves temple <u>sunset</u> last supper Gethsemane Taken. trial begins before dawn	Trial death about 3PM in the tomb before <u>sunset</u>	In the tomb Rose the 3 rd day	
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Line up the events above, with the days of the week below. Crucifixion day is purple.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	SABBATH	Sunday	
SABBATH	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	SABBATH	Sunday
Friday	SABBATH	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	SABBATH
					1 st day	2 nd day	3 rd day	4 th day

WHY NO OBJECTIONS REGARDING SABBATH KEEPING?

In the Wednesday death scenario, Jesus would have entered Jerusalem, receiving loud praise, with coats and palm branches laid down over His path ON THE SABBATH DAY. It was forbidden to ride an animal on the Sabbath (*Jub. 50:6-13*). It is even more difficult to imagine the Pharisees making no complaint specifically about violations of the Sabbath day. Yet there is no mention of any such complaint in the Gospel accounts.

In the Wednesday death scenario, Simon and his guests would have eaten a feast at his house ON THE SABBATH. Remember: the Sabbath began at sunset of Friday. Very unlikely. *Feasting* was NOT something done on the Sabbath.

In the Thursday crucifixion scenario, Jesus would have **hiked 13 miles uphill from Jericho to Bethany on the Sabbath!** (The allowed “Sabbath days journey” was about half a mile.) Didn’t happen! We would certainly have heard something about Sabbath breaking from the Pharisees considering the crowds and the “spies” that followed Him. He was the guest of honor at a feast given by Simon, the evening *before* He continued on the last 2 miles from Bethany to Jerusalem.

THE FINAL WEEK : FRIDAY CRUCIFIXION

Friday (Adar 7) : Jesus enters Jericho - goes to Zaccheus’ house late in afternoon (*Luke 19:1*).

Sabbath (Adar 8) : Rested over the Sabbath at the home of Zaccheus (*Luke 19:5*).

Sunday (Adar 9) : [Six days before the Passover] Jesus walks the 13 miles uphill, from Jericho to Bethany. The climb normally took about five hours, but on this day it probably took all day. There were large crowds of pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. They would have thronged the healing prophet. That evening, Simon the healed leper gave a feast at his house. Mary anointed the feet of Jesus’ (*Luke 19:28, John 12:1*).

Monday (Adar 10) Pilgrims coming up for the Passover Feast hear that Jesus is at Bethany. They accompany Him towards Jerusalem. The triumphal entry begins at Bethany, topping the Mt of Olives and flowing into Jerusalem (approx. 2 miles). Christ presents Himself at the Temple - as the Passover lamb for inspection. He is examined by “the multitudes,” by “chief priests and scribes” (*John 12:12, Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19*). He returns to Bethany at the end of the day (*Matt 21:17, Mark 11:11*).

NOTE: The Passover lamb was chosen for death on the 10th. The lamb was to be inspected from the 10th to the 14th by all members of the household, and then sacrificed on the afternoon of the 14th (Exodus Chapter 12). Christ was marked for death on the day of His triumphal entry!

Tuesday (Adar 11) : Jesus returns to Jerusalem from Bethany. He curses the fig tree (*Matt 21:18-19, Mark 11:12-14*) and **cleans the “leaven” out of His House (Temple)** (*Matt 21:12-13, Mark 11:15, Luke 19:45-48*). Again - Christ (the intended Passover Lamb) is inspected by the rulers of the people, by “the chief priests and scribes,” and now by Greeks (Gentiles). He will be “sacrificed” as the one Lamb for all mankind. The Father speaks from heaven (*Jn 12:28*). At the end of the day, He returns to Bethany (*Mk 11:19*).

NOTE: The master of the house was to search for and remove all leaven from his house in preparation for the Passover (Exodus 12:15).

Wednesday (Adar 12) : Jesus returns to Jerusalem, & passes the now withered fig tree (*Mk 11:19-20, 27*). He returns to the Temple. Again inspected by the “chief priests, scribes, and elders,” all bent on killing Him (*Mk 12:12, Luke 20:19, Matt 12:46*). Inspected by Sadducees (*Matt 22:23, Mk 12:18, Lk 20:27*). Seven woes pronounced upon the scribes and Pharisees (*Matt 23*). At the end of a long discourse on the last days, towards the end of the day, Jesus says, “You know that after two days the Passover is coming” (*Matt 26:2, Mark 14:1*). Jesus leaves the Temple, and spends the night on the Mt. Of Olives with the disciples (*Lk 21:37*). Wed. night begins Adar 13. Judas went to the chief priests late that evening, and arranged to deliver Jesus into their hands (*Matt 26:14-16, Mark 14: 10-11, Lk 22:3-6*).

Thursday (Adar 13) : “Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed” (*Luke 22:7-13*). The disciples meet that evening (which began the 14th) in the upper room for the Passover Seder.

NOTE: Jesus commanded that the unleavened bread be eaten henceforth as the symbol of His body, not the roast lamb, strongly suggesting an end to the sacrificial system.

NOTE: Conservative estimates are that by the time of Christ, close to a million pilgrims crowded Jerusalem for the Passover. Dividing that number by 10 persons per household, gives us 100,000 lambs to be sacrificed on the afternoon of the 14th day of Adar (Nissan). The sacrifice of the Passover lamb was not a simple killing. Psalms were sung over each lamb. Allowing 12 hours from 6 AM to 6PM this would be 8,333 lambs per hour. Allowing 20 teams of priests within the Temple courtyard, to kill, bleed, gut and skin the lambs before they were taken home to be roasted in fire, each team would need to perform 416.6 sacrifices per hour, or 6.9 sacrifices per minute. This was just not feasible. This is why many historians say that by Jesus time, two days were allowed for the sacrifice of Passover lambs. Luke’s use of the word “first day” supports this view.

Later that night (the 14th of Adar began at sunset) on the Mt of Olives in the garden, Jesus is taken into custody. He is taken first to Annas, then to Caiaphas, then to Herod, and finally to Pilate the next morning (still Adar 14).

Friday (Adar 14 continued) : Very early in the morning Jesus is led before Pilate. The priests and elders “did not themselves enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover” (John 28:28). In the narrative, Pilate is still adjudicating (John 18:13) when John notes that “it was the day of preparation for the Passover” (John 18:14).

Friday cont: Jesus is crucified, dies about 3PM, and is placed in Joseph’s new tomb just as the sun is setting. John and Mark record that “it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath” (John 19:31, Mark 15:42, Lk 23:54, John 19:42-56).

NOTE: It is worth noting that in the Hebrew language, “the preparation day” was the name for “the day before the Sabbath” - the 7th Day Sabbath. It was their name for Friday.

John and Mark say it was “preparation day.” It was also “the preparation day” FOR the Passover meal. Put those two together. It is highly likely - linguistically speaking - that the Passover meal was eaten on a Friday night, in that year.

“PASSOVER” - HOW THE TERM WAS USED

Adar 14 is “the Passover” (Leviticus 23:5).

The Passover lamb is killed that afternoon (Leviticus 23:5).

The meal/feast which included the roasted lamb, was also called “the Passover.”

The meal was eaten AFTER sundown, which began the 15th of Adar.

Adar 14 was also called the “day of preparation for the Passover,”

because preparations for the meal were carried out on that day.

The week-long Feast from **Adar 15 through Adar 21** was called “**The Feast of Unleavened Bread.**”

The whole Feast from Adar 15 through Adar 21 was also called “the Passover” (much as our word “Christmas” can refer to the 25th of December, or to the week long “Christmas vacation”).

Adar 15 and Adar 21 were/are special no-work days (also called “sabbaths”).

NOTE: The death angel passed over the blood stained houses on the night which began the 15th of Adar (Exodus 12:11-12). The next morning (still the 15th), the Israelites left Egypt.

DID CHRIST EAT THE PASSOVER AT THE CORRECT TIME?

If Christ was to BE the Passover lamb, sacrificed on the 14th, He COULD NOT eat the Passover on the 15th. He could eat the Passover at the “correct” time, or He could BE the Passover at the “correct” time. I believe the later.

1Corinthians 5:7 “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

CHRIST - THE FIRSTFRUITS

The Passover Feast (The Feast of Unleavened Bread) was eaten on the night of the first full moon when the harvest was ripe. Following the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a unique celebration took place. The high priest entered the Temple with a sheaf of new grain - the first of the year. He waved the sheaf of grain before the veil in the Temple, in recognition of God’s blessing in the year’s harvest. Until that sheaf of grain was offered before God in the Temple, no grain could be harvested. Until this sheaf was offered, the Israelites were to eat of the grain from the previous year’s harvest. As soon as this sheaf was offered, the sickle was put to the fields of standing ripened grain. This day was appropriately called “Firstfruits.”

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those that have fallen asleep. . . . even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward those who are Christ's at his coming.”

The Feasts of the LORD were acted prophecy. These prophecies had been acted out each spring for centuries before “the lamb of God” was “sacrificed” as “our Passover” (1 Cor . 5:7). Because these events were indeed the fulfillment of prophecy, they must take place at the exact time prophesied.

*The Passover Lamb must be sacrificed on the 14th day of Nissan/Adar, before sunset. The Passover feast must be eaten that night (the 15th day of Adar began at sunset). And the Firstfruits must be offered in the Temple “**on the day following the Sabbath.**”*

A DISPUTED COMMANDMENT: Which was the correct day?

In the time of Christ, there was a dispute concerning the day for the presentation of the “Firstfruits.” The 1st day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is called “a holy convocation” upon which “no customary work” was to be done. In other words, it was a rest day (*Lev. 23:7*). The word “sabbath” means “rest.” **The Pharisees taught** that “the day after the sabbath” of the Leviticus 23:15 commandment, must be the 16th day of Adar - the day immediately following the Passover.

The Sadducees however believed that “the sabbath” meant literally the 7th day Sabbath. The “day after” would be Sunday - the “first day of the week.” The Sadducees celebrated the “firstfruits” on the “day after” the first 7th Day Sabbath which followed the Passover - always a Sunday.

NOTICE!! If the Passover fell on a Friday in the year Christ died, then the Pharisees and the Sadducees would have been in agreement regarding the celebration of the Firstfruits offering. For the Pharisees, it would have been the day following the Feast of Unleavened Bread and for the Sadducees it would have been the first Sunday which followed after the Passover.

The 50 day count to Pentecost begins with the presentation of the “Firstfruits.” If the Pharisees and the Sadducees BEGAN their count on the SAME DAY, then 50 days later they would all have been present at the Temple, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, and Peter preached with power.

NOTE: God does have a sense of humor!

Joshua 5:10-12 “Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover(killed the Passover lamb) on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. And they ate of the produce of the land [after the Firstfruits ceremony] on the day after the Passover [Feast] [the 16th of Adar], unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.”

NOTE: It seems the Passover Feast was eaten on a 7th day Sabbath in this year also, and the Firstfruits were eaten on the day following - a Sunday (first day of the next week).

The following is taken from First Fruits of Zion magazine archives. The full article is available on the web at ffoz.org. The section quoted concerns the counting of the *omer*, that is, the period from the offering of the firstfruits (which was called the *omer*) to the festival of Pentecost/*Shavuot*, 50 days later.

“Two important, first-century eye-witnesses and contemporaries of the Apostles bring important testimony. Flavius Josephus, who was himself a member of the Temple priesthood, reports in Antiquities 3:10.5-6, “On the second day of Unleavened Bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month [Nissan/Adar], they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them.”

Philo, another First Century, Jewish eyewitness reports, “There is also a festival on the day of the Passover Feast, which succeeds the first day, and this is named the sheaf [*omer*], from what takes place on it; for the sheaf is brought to the altar as a first fruit...” (Philo, Special Laws 2:29 150)

Philo and Josephus agree that the ritual was practiced in accordance with the reckoning of the Pharisees.

In addition, **the Greek Septuagint version of the Torah** (a version employed fairly extensively by the first-century believers) makes the matter explicit by translating Leviticus 23:11 as, “**And he shall lift up the sheaf of the Lord, to be accepted for you. On the morrow of the first day the priest shall lift it up.**” The term ‘morrow of the first day’ can only be understood in accordance with the traditional Pharisaic reckoning.

In the Greek Septuagint, Apostolic Bible, English translation, Leviticus 23:15 is translated, “And you shall count to yourselves from the next day of the Sabbaths, from the day which ever you should bring the sheaf of the increase *offering...*” **The word is “Sabbaths” - plural, signifying two Sabbaths - Feast of Unleavened Bread AND the 7th Day Sabbath.** The First Fruits would then ALWAYS be offered on a Sunday, and therefore Pentecost would ALWAYS fall on a Sunday, 50 days later.

NOTE: An absolute “fit” is only necessary, in the year of fulfillment. I think it significant that Pharisee and Sadducee were in agreement in the year that the prophecy was fulfilled!

WEDNESDAY - THURSDAY - FRIDAY SCENARIOS are compared on the following two pages.

WEDNESDAY CRUCIFIXION SCENARIO

Wednesday (14 th)	Thursday (15 th)	Friday (16 th)	Sabbath (17 th)	Sunday (18 th)
PASSOVER work day - preparation day for the Passover	FEAST of UNLEAVENED BREAD no work allowed	FIRSTFRUITS Pharisees work day - preparation for the weekly Sabbath	weekly SABBATH - no work allowed, no buying or selling	FIRSTFRUITS Sadducees work day
crucifixion , death about 3pm body prepared, placed in tomb before sunset	Disciples rested. Just before sunset the tomb was sealed and a <u>guard was stationed</u> .	Women bought and prepared spices, but did not take them to the tomb (Why?) Women don't know about the guard. (Why?)	(72+ hrs post mortem) Women go to tomb carrying spices? Christ is raised from the dead, late on Sabbath afternoon. Women find tomb empty	At first light, women go to the tomb again?
FIRST DAY	SECOND DAY	THIRD DAY	FOURTH DAY	FIFTH DAY

THURSDAY CRUCIFIXION SCENARIO

Thursday (14th)	Friday (15th)	Sabbath (16th)	Sunday (17th)
PASSOVER a work day	FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD no work	weekly SABBATH no work Firstfruits/Pharisees	Firstfruits/Sadducees work day
crucifixion , death about 3PM - Body prepared with 100 pounds of spices, wrapped, placed in tomb just before sunset. Women bought spices, but did not have time to return and anoint the body.	Disciples rested - no one visited the tomb - this would make them unclean Just before sunset the tomb was sealed and a <u>guard was posted</u> .	Disciples rested. Roman guard at tomb.	(Aprox. 63 hrs post death) women go to the tomb at first light with spices and find it empty, see an angel, Mary sees the risen Christ. Disciples run to see.
FIRST DAY	SECOND DAY	THIRD DAY	FOURTH DAY

NOTE: The Firstfruits would NOT have been celebrated ON the 7th Day Sabbath by Pharisees, because harvesting the firstfruits would be deemed “work.” This eliminates a Thursday crucifixion.

FRIDAY CRUCIFIXION SCENARIO

Friday (14th)	Sabbath (15 th)	Sunday (16 th)
PASSOVER “preparation day” for the Sabbath a work day	FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD & the weekly 7 th Day Sabbath no work allowed	FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS is celebrated by <u>both</u> <u>Pharisees and Sadducees</u> . work allowed
Crucifixion - body prepared with 100 pounds of spices, wrapped, placed in tomb just before sunset. Women bought and prepared spices, but did not have time to return and anoint the body.	Disciples rested - no one visited the tomb - this would make them unclean Just before sunset tomb was sealed and <u>a guard was stationed</u> .	(39 hrs post mortem) Women go to the tomb <u>at first light</u> with the spices, feel the earthquake, see angels, find tomb empty, run to tell disciples. Jesus appears to women, to Mary, later to two disciples on the road to Emmaus.
FIRST DAY	SECOND DAY	THIRD DAY

***NOTE: There are many Bible scholars who believe that Christ was crucified on the Mt of Olives and then buried in a garden tomb “nearby” on the same mount (John 19:38-42). From this spot one could look down across the brook Kidron to the Temple courtyard with the Alter of Sacrifice. It was considered a great honor to be buried (“under the alter” as it was called) on this mount, because Messiah would one day stand on this spot (Zech 14:4-5). Joseph of Arimathaea was a member of the Sanhedrin ruling council, who could have afforded/merited such a tomb. In prophetic type - King David ascended this mount weeping when he fled from his own son Absalom (2 Sam. 15:32). And more importantly, the “red heifer” was burned at this site, a prophetic symbol of the One who would be “sacrificed” “outside the camp”(Numbers 19:1-10, Talmud Para 3.6-7).*

The Olive trees grew on the West side of the mount, and fig trees grew on the East side. Bethphage (meaning “house of figs”) would have been located on the East side of the mount, with Bethany (House of Bread) located farther down on the lower slope. This is why Jesus passed a fig tree coming and going from Bethany. Sunrise would light up the East side first, and the women would set out for the tomb. Just as the dawn reached the West side Garden Tomb, Jesus was raised from the dead.

DIVERSITY WITHIN THE FAMILY OF BELIEVERS

I do not like to say that a doctrine is absolute truth, especially when it has precipitated much discussion concerning interpretation of the text. I would rather say that, in my opinion, “the weight of evidence” falls toward a certain interpretation.

I do NOT believe this is a salvation issue. No one will be saved for believing that Christ died on Friday, or lost for believing that He died on Wednesday.

Openness and acceptance of diversity, stimulates study, discussion, and growth.

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.
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