

On Which Day Did Christ Die?

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth...and the third day he shall be raised again. (Matt 12:40, 17:23 KJV)

* Like Mark 8:31's "after three days", Matt 12:40's "three days and three nights" cannot refer to a 72 hour period (i.e. three full days and three full nights) because in Matt 17:23 Christ was also prophesied to rise on the 3rd day.^{2,7,10}

* If one allows for the accepted Hebrew idiom of regarding any part of a 24 hour day as a whole day,⁷ then Friday would satisfy Matt 17:23's "the third day" but still fall Mark 8:31's "after three days" & Matt 12:40's "three days and three nights."

* Likewise, even if one explains Matt 28:1's plural Sabbath as referring to overlapping Sabbath days, John 12:1's Ephraim to Bethany 20-mile trip occurring six days earlier (i.e. on a Sabbath) clearly violates the expectations for a Sabbath day's journey.⁸

*** A Thursday crucifixion is the only option which satisfies Mark 8:31's "after three days", Matt 12:40's "three days and three nights", Matt 17:23's "the third day", Matt 28:1's plural Sabbath and John 12:1's trip to Bethany occurring 6 days earlier.**

<p>Mark 15:25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him...⁸ [Civil or Sacred] Hence Christ was on the cross for a total of six hours. Three hours earlier, John 19:14 says that Christ was standing before Pilate.</p>	<p>John 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation⁸, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (See also Matt 27:62, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54)</p>	<p>The Six Trails of Christ (1) Before Annas [John 18:12-14], (2) Before Caiaphas [John 18: 19-24], (3) Before Sanhedrin [Matt 27:1-2], (4) Before Pilate [John 18:28-38], (5) Before Herod [Luke 23:6-11], (6) Before Pilate again [John 18:39-19:15]</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.⁷ Sunday was the "third [24-hour] day" after the day (i.e. Passover) when Christ was crucified.</p>	<p>Mark 16:1-2,9 And when the sabbath was past, 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 sepulchre at the rising of the sun...Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene...</p>	<p>John 20:1 The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. (See also Matt 28:1-10, John 20:1-18) Here, the language "first day of the week...early, when it was yet dark" denotes a civil computation of 24 hours (i.e. sun-rising to sun-rising) and not a sacred computation (i.e. sun-set to sun-set).</p>	<p>The dashed-line days denote a civil computation of 24 hours (i.e. sun-rising to sun-rising) and not a sacred computation (i.e. sun-set to sun-set). Some of these passages are best understood using the civil computation while others require the Roman or sacred computation.¹</p>
<p>John 19:14 And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he [i.e. Pilate] saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!⁸ [Roman]</p>	<p>Matthew 27:46-50 And about the third hour Jesus cried with a loud voice...Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. (See also Mark 15:34-37, Luke 23:46, John 19:30) [Civil or Sacred]</p>					

13th of Nisan [Civil]				14th of Nisan [Civil]				15th of Nisan [Civil]				16th of Nisan [Civil]				17th of Nisan [Civil]																															
PM				AM				AM				PM				PM																															
Wednesday				Thursday [Roman]				Friday [Roman]				Saturday [Roman]				Sunday [Roman]																															
PM				AM				AM				PM				PM																															
7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Evening (Night)				Morning (Day)				Evening (Night)				Morning (Day)				Evening (Night)				Morning (Day)																											
14th of Nisan [Sacred] The Feast of Passover was a day of preparation (Lev 23:5-7) The day of Christ's crucifixion				15th of Nisan [Sacred] The Feast of Unleavened Bread's 1st day was a High Sabbath (Lev 23:6-7) (1st) First day since the crucifixion				16th of Nisan [Sacred] Weekly Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3) (2nd) Second Day since the crucifixion				17th of Nisan [Sacred] The Feast of First Fruits (Leviticus 23:9-14) (3rd) Third Day since the crucifixion (Luke 24:21)				18th																															
Two Consecutive Sabbaths																																															

<p>Matthew 27:45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. (See also Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44) [Civil or Sacred]</p>	<p>John 12:1 Then Jesus six days before the Passover came [from Ephraim in John 11:54] to Bethany...⁸</p>	<p>John 19:31 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 an high day),...</p>	<p>Mark 15:42 And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath...</p>	<p>Matthew 28:1 In the end of the sabbaths³, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.</p>	<p>Luke 24:1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.</p>	<p>Matthew 28:1 In the end of the sabbaths³, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. Here, the language "began to dawn toward the...day" denotes a civil computation of 24 hours (i.e. sun-rising to sun-rising) and not a sacred computation (i.e. sun-set to sun-set).</p>
<p>Exodus 12:6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it between the evenings.¹</p>	<p>John 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment...they themselves went not in...lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.¹¹</p>	<p>It was not a simple weekly Sabbath of the current year, but an annual (or High) Sabbath, (thus its sanctity was increased by its falling in the Paschal season. (Lange)</p>	<p>The Sabbaths: Consecutive vs. Overlapping Since the start of the Jewish month (i.e. New Moon) can fall on any day of the week, it is not unheard of for a High Sabbath to overlap a regular weekly sabbath. Nevertheless, it does not appear that Mark 15:42 can simultaneously refer to both the High & weekly Sabbath due to the clear and prohibitive implications of John 12:1⁸ and Matthew 28:1⁹</p>	<p>Only if there were two consecutive Sabbaths could the word sabbaths (i.e. Sabbaton) be employed to denote the time that was spent resting between the Passover (i.e. the day of preparation) and the first day of the week. Yet several English Bible translations have neglected to reveal the plurality of the term Sabbath in Matthew 28:1.</p>		
<p>1 Corinthians 5:7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: (See also John 1:29, 36)</p>	<p>Leviticus 23:6-7 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. (See also Exo 12:16)</p>					
				<p>Luke 23:54-56 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on...And the women...prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.</p>		

- It may be observed that the Jews, speaking of their Passover, sometimes speak according to their civil computation, wherein they measured their days from sun-rising to sun-rising. Sometimes according to their sacred computation, which was from sun-set to sun-set. (TSK Mt 28:1)
- The Jewish idiom "three days and three nights" allowed for any portion of a day or night to be reckoned as the whole (See 1 Samuel 30:12-13; Ester 4:16; Ester 5:1; Judges 14:17-18, Matthew 27:63-64 etc.). If "three days and three nights" is taken literally to mean seventy-two hours, there would be an apparent contradiction with the many prophecies and records that He would rise on "the third day" (Mat 16:21, 17:23, 20:19; Mark 9:31, 10:34; John 2:19; Luke 13:32, 18:33, 21:7,21,46; Acts 10:40; 1Co 15:4; etc.) Henry Morris DSB.
- In Matt 28:1, the Greek word for Sabbath (i.e. Sabbaton) is plural (e.g. YLT, ISV). This is not the first time translators have neglected to rightly render the Sabbath as a plural noun. For instance, Mark 1:21 & Luke 4:31 are both parallel verses with a plural Sabbath but for some reason the plurality only appears in Luke.
- At the evening, between the evenings or both? Verses like Numbers 9:5, Deut 16:6 & Joshua 5:10 would suggest that the command to kill and eat the Passover was understood to convey an evening sacrifice, however the Hebrew text (of Exodus 12:6) actually states: *beyn haarbayim*, "between the two evenings." (Clarke)
- Six days from a Friday turns out to be the preceding Sabbath day. As the trek from Ephraim to Bethany (i.e. 20 miles) was longer than what a "Sabbath day's journey" (i.e. about a mile or two in Acts 1:12) permitted, it seems clear that Nisan 14th could not be (Good) Friday (Missler)
- John 19:14's "the third hour" means the third hour after sunrise or 9:00 a.m. using the Jewish civil computation of a 24 hour day. John, writing mainly for Gentile readers, used the Roman computation of a day, commenting that Jesus was before Pilate at "about the sixth hour" (John 19:14). Since the Roman day started at midnight, this would have been about 6:00 a.m. (Morris). Moreover, "the preparation of the Passover" must refer to the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread since in John 13:1-2, the "feast of the Passover [i.e. the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread]" was approaching with "supper [i.e. Passover supper] being ended."
- Only **Thursday** allows for **three Days and three Nights**: **1.** (Day 1 was Nisan 14th's Morning, Night 1 was Nisan 15th's Evening) **2.** (Day 2 was Nisan 15th's Morning, Night 2 was Nisan 16th's Evening) **3.** (Day 3 was Nisan 16th's Morning, Night 3 was Nisan 17th's Evening **when Christ arose!**)
- Nisan 14th would have been the Day of Preparation for both the High Sabbath (i.e. 1st day) of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Friday, Nisan 15th) and the weekly Sabbath (Saturday, Nisan 16th). As such was the case, John 19:14 could refer to that day as the "preparation of the Passover."
- The Feast of Firstfruits was always on Sunday or the "morrow after the sabbath." The term "sabbath" in Lev 23:14 refers to the weekly Sabbath which fell within the 7 days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and not to the High Sabbath of Nisan 15th (See Lev 23:10-16). This interpretation is confirmed by the implications of the Feast of Weeks' (Shavuot or Pentecost) instructions to reach the 50th day by counting 7 (weekly) sabbaths from the starting point of Firstfruits. Any other interpretation of Firstfruits' computation must equivocate on the term "sabbath" in Lev 23:11, 15 & 18 because the 49 days succeeding Firstfruits do not contain 7 High Sabbaths.
- The word "days" in Matt 17:23's "three days and three nights" refers to the daylight portion of a day (i.e. 12 hours). A similar usage occurs in John 11:9 where Jesus asks: "Are there not 12 hours in the day?" However, regarding Acts 10:40's "Him God raised up the third day" (like Matt 17:23 & 1 Cor 15:4) the word "day" there refers to a 24 period of time. Hence, Matt 27:63-64's usage of both the 12 hour day (v.63) and the 24 hour day (v.64) proves that both interpretations of "day" were employed in the gospels. Adopting the correct understanding of the term "day" will protect the reader from forming invalid expectations.
- John 19:14's the "preparation of the Passover" must refer to the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread since in John 13:1-2, the "feast of the Passover [i.e. the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread]" was approaching with "supper [i.e. Nisan 14th's Passover supper] being ended."
Hence, "eat the Passover" in John 18:28 need only refer to whatever was to be eaten on the 15th of Nisan as a result of the Feast (See Num 28:17).