

"Three Days and Three Nights"

(An Exegesis of Passion Week Chronology)

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FOREWORD

Perhaps it would be edifying at the very beginning to explain my purpose in such an auspicious undertaking as a clarification of the difficult biblical texts relating to the time period involved in Jesus' death. It all began when a woman in the Bible study that I lead asked me why there was so much confusion about how long the Lord was actually dead, since He had clearly stated that much like Jonah, He would be dead for three days and three nights. Given the church's time table beginning with the crucifixion on "Good Friday" and ending quite correctly with His resurrection on the following Sunday, this didn't compute. She went on to inquire that if Scripture was indeed contradictory regarding this most important of all biblical events, how could we be absolutely sure about the accuracy of the other things that are recorded that the Lord said? I told her that with the very best of my ability I would strive to give her a proper answer but that it would take me some time. When I posed the question about the apparent discrepancies to various men with formal theological educations from different denominations in my community, I got vague replies but never a satisfactory answer. Some said, "You can't take the Scripture all that literally. Jesus just meant *approximately* 3 days and 3 nights." Or others simply replied, "We can't know for sure. We just have to take it on faith; it's not so important anyway." Still another stated, "Jews count parts of days as whole days and so it all has to be figured up that way." And somebody else said, "Perhaps Christ held the actual Passover; perhaps He didn't; or perhaps He just moved it forward or back. It is unclear. There is actually one day that can't be accounted for at all in that week. Nobody knows how it really went down." In good conscience I could not accept these various rationalizations. Neither could I reiterate them to my Bible Study group, since I understood very well what my friend was asking and all of its grave ramifications. Alas! There really are no easy answers for difficult questions--at least not for mine. So I ended my inquiry and began with my own study of the texts.

My biblical position has always been that in the original autographs the Bible was 100% accurate and that God intended exactly what the author meant in what he wrote down, which was always to be comprehended within the particular context and connotation of the audience to whom it was being addressed. Principle truths are certainly transferable and deductions of applicability can be ascertained making it relevant to us in a later age, but both the Old and New Testaments must be understood within their Jewish framework. Through the centuries various gentile church traditions and numerous translations and paraphrases have sometimes served to obscure the intent of the original text resulting in an apparent lack of cohesion and clarity. Therefore I decided that research was indeed called for regarding the most important event in human history and, while I am sure there are certainly a host of learned theologians much more qualified than I who could address this difficult topic, I felt called to present my case, however imperfect it might be, to afford my Christian sister with an answer. My "most blessed hope" rests on the Lord meaning exactly what He said and when He said "three days and three nights," I believe Him. Since His resurrection on the fourth day is the climax of the most stupendous occurrence in universal history, it makes the details of the length of His interment vital. The following paper is the reply I offered to my friend in our Bible study.

Three Days and Three Nights (An Exegesis of Passion Week Chronology)

...Jesus answered and said unto them: "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the Prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Mt. 12:39-40)

With this allusion to Jonah, Christ set the chronological time-table for His own death and resurrection. The church, however, has traditionally commemorated the crucifixion of Christ on Good Friday and His resurrection the following Sunday, completely ignoring the 72-hour time frame which He had previously indicated. The Friday date most probably resulted from misunderstanding and confusion regarding the definition of the word "Sabbath" used in the Gospel accounts. It was erroneously assumed that "Sabbath" always meant the 7th day of the week, corresponding with the gentile Saturday. Therefore in the Gospel account translations, when it is related that the women rested according to the "Sabbath"¹ and only afterward, on the first day of the week, proceeded to Jesus' tomb, it is mistakenly assumed that they had rested only on Saturday before making their way to the grave on Sunday. However, the Hebrew word "Sabbath" actually is defined as a holy day of rest and, although one does indeed occur every week on Friday at sundown through Saturday at sundown, at which time no work is to be done, this designation is also used for the other holy days which may fall on various week days, depending when they occur within the religious calendar each year. These also are called "Sabbath" days, or even "High Sabbaths," if they claim particularly exalted importance in worship (Lev. 23; Jn. 19:30-31). Otherwise Jews designate the days of the week according to their numbered relation to the weekly Sabbath, which is the only day of the week given an actual name. The new day begins at sunset because in the creation account in Genesis, it is written that there was *"evening and morning, one day"* (Gen. 1:5b). Their usage of the word "day" is either indicative of one 24-hour period of time or the daylight portion of that time allotment, depending on the context. In the case of Jonah (Jonah 1:17; Mt. 12:39-40), "three days and three nights" clearly indicate three 24 hour periods of time.

In addition to the confusion regarding the use of the word "Sabbath", the proper time frame of occurrences within the Gospels is also obscured because it was not the intention of the writers to give an exact chronological report of every one of the events. There were too many of these within the short three year ministry of Christ to make this even feasible (Jn. 21:25). Instead each Gospel writer selected the various pertinent incidents necessary to underscore the purpose for which he was writing, and, with the exception of Luke's consecutive arrangement, the accounts do not necessarily follow any exact chronological order. Many details of the happenings, such as their time frame, were already assumed current knowledge, and therefore obviously had little need of being reiterated (Acts 26:26). Also the chiastic form of composition² is another factor to be considered in the arrangement of the events being related.

If traditional church chronology were to be correct in the assessment of the crucifixion having taken place on Friday and given the accurate placement of the resurrection on the first day, then according to this hypothesis, Jesus' body would have been in the tomb for approximately 36 hours or 1 ½ days. This faulty time allotment implies that the Lord was mistaken in His prophetic pronouncement comparing the length of time of His interment to that of Jonah's time in the belly of the fish. If that were to be the case, not only could Jesus' credibility be called into question but it could even be disputed that He had truly died. It was a requirement at that time, just as in Europe up until recently, that a corpse be held for three days and three nights to make definite confirmation of death.

¹ In the Greek text this word is plural, i.e. "Sabbaths", indicating more than one of these. Mt. 28:1 could be more exactly translated: "but late of the Sabbaths, at the drawing on toward one of the Sabbaths...etc."

² See the Appendix for a brief explanation of chiastic construction (pg.23-24).

This was a procedure established to prevent the inadvertent burial of a comatose person, who might still be alive.³ Upon the conclusion of this time period, burial procedures could then be finalized on the fourth day.

The real question is if God would have left the proper time-frame regarding the certification of the death of His Son open for doubt and debate in the generations to come, due to some indiscretion in confirming it with the necessary three days and three nights time period? The argument offered in defence of the faulty chronology is that Jews counted parts of days as whole days, which indicates according to this version of "Jewish time", only approximately three hours on Friday (the 6th day in Jewish time), all of Saturday (the 7th day) and less than nine hours of Sunday (the 1st day of the week), since He rose early while it was still dark (Jn. 20:1). According to this exegesis, the fourth day is not even taken into account. This premise, however, cannot be supported scripturally when - only a few days before His crucifixion - Jesus Himself expresses His understanding of the word "day": "*Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him*" (John 11:9). His comprehension of the day containing 24 hours of light and darkness is thus made very clear.

Let us digress for a moment and consider two other "three day/three night precedents" recorded in Scripture relating earlier events in Jesus' life. After He had turned twelve (i.e. in His 13th year), Joseph and Mary took Him along to Jerusalem for His first Passover there, as was the Jewish custom at that time.⁴ On their homeward journey they noticed He was missing and, after a hurried search among relatives and friends, they made the one day journey back to Jerusalem to look for Him. This implies that He had already been missing for one day before they discovered it, because they were already one day's journey away. Upon their return to the city, they searched for Him for yet another day before discovering Him on the fourth day among the scribes and teachers at the Temple. When Mary and Joseph questioned Him as to why He had treated them in this manner, *He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be about the affairs of my Father?"*⁵ (Luke 2:41-49) Thus, on what one may assume was the Lord's very first Passover in Jerusalem, as was to be the case on His very last, He was also missing three days and three nights, only to be found once again on the fourth day busy doing the work of "His Father".

Shortly before Christ's Passion Week began with His procession into Jerusalem, on what is often called "Palm Sunday," there is another event involving the three day/three night time span. Along with His disciples, after deliberately delaying His journey to Bethany for over two days in response to word of Lazarus' illness, Jesus meets Martha on the road going there where she informs Him of Lazarus' death three days earlier. They all proceed directly to his tomb. *Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said, "He stinks, for it is the **fourth day**."* (John 11:39) Notice that burial procedures have already been concluded - its being the fourth day - and the tomb has been sealed with a stone. *"Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, (i.e. the believers dead in Christ) and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. (i.e. all those alive and raptured before the time of His Second Coming) Do you believe this?"* (John 11:25-26) This incident should not be misunderstood as just another miracle sign to prove that Jesus had the power over life and death. He had demonstrated that to His disciples and others already but, in contrast to the other accounts of His restoring life to someone who had died only shortly before His arrival, He intentionally waited so that Lazarus had been dead three days and three

³ See *Semoch* 8.1, an appendix to the Talmud regarding burial procedures. Notice that God's two witnesses in Rev. 11:3-13 are exposed 3 ½ days making official confirmation of their deaths before their resurrection on the 4th day. Thus no one can dispute their having died.

⁴ See Alfred Edersheim: *Jesus, the Messiah*, pg. 167+ describing the Bar Mitzvah regulation.

⁵ Perhaps a more accurate translation of the Greek text

nights and even in advanced decomposition after his burial on the fourth day. Therefore there was no possibility for Lazarus' death to ever be disputed. Nowhere in Scripture is it recorded that the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead was ever denied or even questioned by Jesus' enemies. Instead it is stated that Jesus' opposition in Jerusalem were seeking afterwards not only to kill Him, but Lazarus as well (Jn. 11:53; 12: 9-11).

Previously Jesus had told His disciples: *"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father"* (John 10:17-18). During the dark days that were predestined to follow, His disciples and friends were to remember Lazarus and maintain their faith and hope in light of what they had previously witnessed in Bethany just shortly beforehand. The time table had thus been reiterated: **three days and three nights with resurrection on the fourth day**. It is the premise of this essay that the events therefore took place approximately in the following chronological order:

1st day of Passion Week / Sunday for Gentiles

On the first day of the week, which Christians call "Palm Sunday", Jesus, who had been proclaimed at the beginning of His ministry by John the Baptist as "the Lamb of God," prepared for His final Passover in Jerusalem. This "time of visitation" recorded so many centuries before by the prophets Daniel and Zechariah was about to be fulfilled. The 69 weeks of prophetic years containing 360 days each spoken of in Daniel, constituting some 173,880 days in total had arrived and it was then on April 6, 32 A.D.⁶ that our Lord, the Messiah of Israel, intentionally rode into Jerusalem on the colt that He sent His disciples to obtain (Mk. 11:1-14). The accompanying crowd were bringing along with them their sacrificial Passover lambs, most of which had been previously obtained in Bethlehem⁷. They were waving palm branches and reciting the appropriate holiday Psalms. (These are pilgrims coming into Jerusalem for the holidays, not citizens of Jerusalem, who were less informed as to who Jesus was.) The travellers had seen Him heal the lame and the blind; He had just raised Lazarus from the dead; and they were fully convinced that this was the King their people had been waiting for throughout the centuries. Messiah would drive out the Romans by the strength of His mighty arm and establish His Kingdom of peace centred in Jerusalem and all of the surrounding land promised to Abraham so long ago. Presently, as the customary inspection of the multitude of Passover lambs at the Temple was about to begin, Jesus, the ultimate Lamb of God, entered the Temple precincts to be examined as well by the High Priest and officials. In only a short time however, a fickle mob, agitated by the Jewish authorities and disillusioned by Jesus' arrest, would scream for the crucifixion of the beaten and bleeding Christ and demand for Barabbas' release instead of His. But for the moment the pilgrims joyously paraded in front of Him waving their palm branches and laying their coats and shawls on the road before Him, in an act that acknowledged royalty, thus announcing the "King's" arrival in His capitol city (II Kings 9:13). Certainly this exalted event was the most spectacular one thus far in the history of the world, about which Jesus so succinctly remarked: *"...I tell you, if these (the pilgrims) become silent, the stones themselves will immediately cry out"* (Luke 19:40).

When the Son entered the Temple Gates, the Glory of God had indeed returned to it in the person of Israel's "Messiah ben Joseph"⁸ and as God's Son He had authority to

⁶ See the Appendix for McClain's exegesis of this calculation, setting the date from the Book of Daniel (pg. 20-22).

⁷ See Alfred Edersheim, "The Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah", Book 2/Ch. 6, pg. 131. which estimates that approximately 10,000+ lambs were slaughtered at Passover time. (Josephus even relates a Passover in which more than 250,000 lambs were slaughtered.) It is full of poignant meaning that the pilgrims' lambs were obtained in Bethlehem, the only place where the appropriate sacrificial lambs for the Temple in Jerusalem were produced.

⁸ Jewish rabbis acknowledged two future Messiahs found in the OT Scriptures: "Messiah ben Joseph" and "Messiah ben David". The first is described as the "Suffering Servant of Jahweh" and the other as the "glorious King of David's lineage". These two are thought to "save" the people at two different periods of history. That

cleanse it once again, driving the sellers and money changers away.⁹ When the Pharisees and Sadducees observed these things and heard the adulate cries of the people, they indignantly confronted Him that such wonderful words of praise such as the children calling Him the "Son of David", were unfitting. *Jesus said to them, "Yes, have you never read, "Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babes Thou hast prepared praise for Thyself?" And He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and lodged there.* (Matt. 21:16-17) Obviously He understood that both these Messianic titles applied to Him.

2nd Day of Passion Week / Monday for Gentiles

Jesus travelled from Bethany to Jerusalem early the next morning, cursing the fig tree¹⁰ which withered shortly thereafter to the astonishment of His disciples. Christ presented Himself once more at the Temple, healing the lame, sick and the blind, and taught in parables. He submitted Himself to questioning by the Priests, Pharisees and Sadducees, who were unable to trap Him or find fault with Him with their loaded questions. He had consummate answers for all that they asked, such as: "rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and the things that are God's to God"; or in His eloquent reply to the Sadducees, who tried to trap Him in a question about the actuality of resurrection. By quoting the Scripture passage about Moses and the burning bush, He proved resurrection by God's own words (Ex. 3:6; Mt. 22:31-32). He asked them, in turn, questions that were either too difficult or too dangerous for them to answer in front of the crowd and consequently they lacked the courage to spar with Him any further and withdrew to plot His demise instead.

Jesus observed the poor widow's gift and taught about its worthiness. He spoke of things to come and the destruction of the end times, telling of His glorious return. He made allusion to "the fig tree" once again in relation to these events: *"Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near; even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door. Truly I say to you that this age (or possibly "nation" see Gr. text) will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away."* (Mt. 24:32-35) He sent His disciples to secure the upper room where they were to spend the Passover. *And it came about that when Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, "You know that **after two days** the Passover is coming¹¹ and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for*

both of these are combined in the person of Jesus Christ is still "veiled from Jewish understanding". Here Jesus is completing His first mission for the salvation of the world. That the enthusiastic crowd wanted "Messiah ben David" is very clear. They had had enough of this "suffering" under Roman rule! (See footnotes: Edersheim: Book 1; Ch. 6; pg. 54.) Christ will execute his Davidic Title at His second coming.

⁹ The first cleansing of the Temple was at the beginning of His ministry in His role as the Great Prophet of OT prophecy, "the one like unto Moses." See Deut. 18:15; also John 2:13-25 and Mt. 21:

¹⁰ "The fig tree" is used by OT prophets as a metaphor for Israel, and much like Israel at the time of Christ, the fig tree was arrayed in leafy splendour, but was producing no fruit. (See Mt. 21:18-22; Jer. 8:13; 24; Mt. 24:32-33.) A fig tree in early bloom simultaneously produces little green fruit that can be eaten before they are ripe. This tree was barren of those, even though it was "arrayed in leafy splendour". Consider another saying of Christ: *He began by telling this parable: "A certain man had a fig tree which he had planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and did not find any. And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I come looking for fruit on this tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?' And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.'*" (Lk.13:6-9) Notice the historical correlation of this parable: Jesus' ministry to Israel lasted for 3 years, and He found "little fruit" therein. Continuing for about a year after Christ's ascension, the disciples offered His Kingdom once more to those "who sat in Moses' seat" in Jerusalem, confirming their authority to do so in His name with miracles similar to those He had done through the power of the Holy Spirit, as is related in Acts. Israel rejected it yet a second time, stoning and whipping and putting Jesus' followers to death because of their witness. Finally at the end of that generation, Jerusalem and its glorious Temple were totally destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Josephus tells us that in the intense heat from its burning the gold from the roof melted and ran down between the stones, so that the Romans were forced to take all the blocks apart to retrieve it for their coffers. Therefore as Jesus had predicted, "Not one stone was left upon another." (Mt. 24:2)

¹¹ That is, Monday sundown to Tuesday sundown--one day--Tuesday sundown to Wednesday sundown - second day - with Passover beginning at sundown on Wednesday, called the 5th day of the week by the Jews. (Gentile "Thursday" after midnight)

crucifixion." Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill Him. But they were saying, " **Not during the Festival** lest a riot occur among the people" (Mt. 26:1-5). This "Festival" consisted in this particular year of four holy days in consecutive alignment--Passover, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, the weekly Sabbath, and First Fruits (Lev. 23:4-11). Due to the religious requirements of these festival days, no protest regarding Jesus' death - officially or otherwise - could be launched by His followers until after these four days had elapsed. By seizing and executing Him beforehand, it was the very clever plan of the Temple authorities to utilize this extended "Sabbath" time for things to cool down! They meant it for evil, but God had meant it for good (See Gen. 50:19-21). With the exception of the prescribed temple activities, no work was done in Israel during Jesus' interment. Jerusalem and all the Holy Land lay respectfully still.

Jesus departed from the Temple precincts after delivering His "Seven Woes." He had at an earlier time, called the Temple "His Father's House" but now in leaving, He pronounced its judgment instead: "*Your house will be left to you desolate...*" (Mt. 23:37-38) And so the "Glory of God" departed from the Temple yet a second time.¹² From the vantage point of the Mount of Olives with His disciples, He made lament over Jerusalem, predicting her fall and destruction. He warned of the perilous end times, speaking of His glorious return to give them hope and He enlightened them about the rewards in His Kingdom obtained through faithful service in parables like the *Parable of the Two Women in the Field*, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, and *The Parable of the Talents*. Thus Jesus continued His discussion of the end of the age with the apostles while they remained under the trees on the Mount of Olives for the night, where no doubt the Lord viewed the spectacular Temple, arrayed in all its majestic splendour, with a very heavy heart.

3rd Day of Passion Week / Tuesday for Gentiles

Jesus and His disciples settled into the Upper Room that had been reserved for them according to His instruction, and the disciples began procuring the necessary items and things needed for the High Sabbath.¹³ The room was to be cleaned and have a low table with 13 pillows placed on the floor for reclining. Wine and large jars of water for the ritual hand washing that was required before meals and during the feast, as well as jars of water for drinking and mixing with the wine, had to be requisitioned. A copious amount of unleavened bread, that was to be consumed during the next four days of the "*Sabbaton*," had to be stored as well, while the roasted lamb would be obtained the following day (i.e. Wednesday, "the day of preparation") after its slaughter at the designated time. No doubt they were aided in these endeavours by the women who travelled with them, such as the mother of James and John; Mary, Jesus' mother; Mary Magdalene; and other of their female relations. Tradition has it that John's family had a house in Jerusalem, and if this were the case, it could be where the women resided during the Festival.

Early the 4th Day--or after 6:00 p.m. Tuesday evening Gentile time

"Now **before the Feast of the Passover**, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end."¹⁴ "And during supper, the devil having already put it

¹² See Ezk. 9:3; 10:4, 19; 11:23 for the first departure of the Glory of God from the Temple in Jerusalem. The Glory returned in the reverse order of its departure so many years before in the Person of the Son. Jesus enters Jerusalem from the Mt. of Olives and the Temple through the "Beautiful Gate" into its courts.

¹³ NOTE: Passover is to begin at sundown on Wednesday Gentile time, called the 5th day by the Jews. This is transpiring on Tuesday.

¹⁴ Gr. Text: "unto the end goal." i.e. his atoning death. See Rom. 10:4. Another incident, which is recorded in Luke 13:31-34, takes place on the way to Jerusalem when Jesus was accosted by some Pharisees, who came up telling Him that Herod wanted to kill Him. He replied: "*Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow and the third day I reach my **end goal**'.*" (i.e. The time procedures for His death to begin and end accomplishing His goal.) "*Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the*

into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about.And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again....." (John 13:1-4, 12) He thus explained by His metaphorical example, the kind of service He would maintain for believers in this "evil age".¹⁵ Then as they were once again reclining at the table for the evening meal, Jesus revealed that He was to be betrayed by one of them. The disciples were dismayed and questioned among themselves who it was. (John 13:21-30)

The seating arrangement at the Last Supper as suggested by Alfred Edersheim

...As Jewish Law directed, they reclined on pillows around a low table, each resting on his left hand, so as to leave the right free. The supper began with "a contention among the disciples, which of them should be accounted to be greatest." We can have no doubt that its occasion was the order in which they should occupy places at the table. We know that this was subject of contention among the Pharisees, and that they claimed to be seated according to their rank. A similar feeling now appeared (alas!) in the circle of the disciples and at the Last Supper of the Lord. Even if we had not further indications of it, we should associate such strife with the presence of Judas. St. John seems to refer to it, at least indirectly when he opens his narrative with this notice: *'And during supper, the devil having already cast it into his heart, that Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, shall betray him.'* (John 13:2) For although the words form a general introduction to what follows, and refer to the entrance of Satan into the heart of Judas on the previous afternoon, when he sold his Master to the Sanhedrim, they are not without special significance as placed in connection with the Supper. But we are not left to general conjecture in regard to the influence of Judas in this strife. There is ample evidence that he not only claimed, but actually obtained, the chief seat at the table next to the Lord. This was not, as previously believed, at the right, but at the left of Christ, not below, but above Him on the couches or pillows on which they reclined. From the Gospel narratives we infer, that St. John must have reclined next to Jesus, on His Right Hand, since otherwise he could not have leaned back on His bosom. This as we shall presently show, would be at one end--the head of the table, or, to be more precise, at one end of the couches. For, dismissing all conventional ideas, we must think of it as a low Eastern table. In the Talmud the table of the disciples of the sages is described as two parts covered with a cloth, the other third being left bare for the dishes to stand on. There is evidence that this part of the table was outside the circle of those who were ranged around it. Occasionally a ring was fixed in it, by which the table was suspended above the ground, so as to preserve it from any possible Levitical defilement. During the supper, it was custom for the dishes to be taken off and put on again. This would render it necessary that the end of the table should protrude beyond the line of guests who reclined around it. It was the custom to recline at the table, lying on the left side and leaning on the left arm, the feet stretching back towards the ground and walls, and each guest occupying a separate divan or pillow. It would, therefore, have been impossible to place or remove anything from the table from behind the guests. Hence, as a matter of necessity, the free end of the table, which was not covered with a cloth, would protrude beyond the line of those who reclined around it. We can now form a picture of the arrangement. Around a low Eastern table, oval or rather elongated, two parts covered with a cloth, and standing or else suspended, the single divans or pillows are ranged in the form of an elongated horseshoe, leaving free one end of the table. So each guest reclines on his left side, with his head nearest the table and his feet stretching backwards. Jewish documents are equally explicit as to the arrangement of the guests,

next day; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!"

¹⁵ In Scripture, this age is never called "the Church Age", but rather "the present evil age". See Gal. 1:4.

and it seems to have been quite an established rule that, in a company of more than two, say of three, the chief personage or Head--in this instance, of course, Christ--reclined on the middle diva. We know from the Gospel narrative that John sat to His right, at the end of the table. But the chief place next to the Master would be that to His left, or above Him. In the chief strife among the disciples, which should be accounted the greatest, this had been claimed, and we believe it to have been actually occupied by Judas. This explains how, when Christ whispered to John by what sign to recognise the traitor (John 13:26) none of the other disciples heard it. It also explains how Christ would first hand to Judas the dip, beginning with him as the chief guest at the table, without thereby exciting special notice. Lastly, it accounts for the circumstance that, when Judas, desirous of ascertaining whether his treachery was known, dared to ask whether it was he, and received the affirmative answer (Matt. 26:25), no one at table knew what had transpired. But this could not have been the case, unless Judas had occupied the place next to Christ; in this case, necessarily that at His left, or the post of chief honour. As regards Peter, we can quite understand how, when the Lord with such loving words rebuked their self-seeking and taught them of the greatness of Christian humility, he should, in his impetuosity of shame, have rushed to take the lowest place at the other end of the table. Finally, we can now understand how Peter could beckon to John, who sat at the opposite end across the table from him, and ask him to inquire who the traitor was (John 13:24-28). The rest of the disciples would occupy such places as were most convenient, or suited their fellowship with one another.

Example:

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          X_X_X_X_X
        X )           ( X
    Judas ) Table    ( X
    Jesus )           ( X
    John  )           ( Peter
          (_____)
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*There was one reclining on Jesus' breast, one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore gestured to him, and said to him "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking. He, (John) leaning back thus on the Lord's breast, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus therefore answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the sop and give it to him." So when He had dipped the sop, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. And after the sop, Satan then entered into him. Jesus therefore said, "What you do, do quickly." Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "**Buy the things we have need of for the feast.**"; or else, that **he should give something to the poor.** And so, after receiving the sop, he went out immediately; and it was night. (John 13:23-30)*

If it had truly been the actual Passover, everything in Jerusalem would have been shut down at sunset and it would have been impossible for Judas to purchase anything. This would not be the case if it was Tuesday evening (i.e. already the 4th Day, the Day of Preparation, Jewish time) and vendors were keeping their booths open for last minute sales on the Day of Preparation before the feast. Another reason it could not have been an actual Passover meal is due to the absence of children at the table, who were to receive the required instruction during the Feast about the great Exodus. This was God's initial purpose in instituting the holiday, because it provided the next generation with proper knowledge regarding His historic work in Israel's behalf during the dinner celebration (Ex. 12:23-27). If it were Tuesday evening however, Jesus could have easily obtained a secluded supper for Himself and His disciples, using some items that had already been procured in advance for the impending Sabbaths beginning the next evening.

The high priests and temple authorities needed to move swiftly if they were to accomplish their dirty work before the Passover Festival officially began at sundown on Wednesday, designated "the beginning of the 5th Day" in Jewish reckoning. They had previously established contact with Judas, whose greed was never quite satiated in stealing from the disciples' common purse (Jn. 12:6); his greedy nature made him easy prey for Satan to seduce, causing him to cooperate with Jesus' enemies for money. *"And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. And he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the multitude."* (Luke 22:4-6)

During this evening meal, Jesus instituted what we call "the Lord's Supper", making allusion to the unleavened bread¹⁶ as a picture of His sinless body and to the wine mixed with water as a symbol for the blood and water that was to pour forth from His sword-pierced side, for the cleansing and redemption of the sinful world. He instructed them that afterward, when they were gathered together, they were to eat and drink these things in remembrance of Him. If the assumed time-frame of this essay is correct, then the first "communion service" was held at the Passover Feast the next night by the distraught and disheartened disciples after His death (i.e. Wednesday evening for Gentiles, or the beginning of the 5th day, Jewish time). Being Jewish, the disciples would have been required to observe the Passover, irregardless of their emotional state (Num. 9:13). Needless to say, the recent horrendous event would have burned Jesus' last words about the unleavened bread and the wine into their very souls. In the agitation, fear and overwhelming sadness of the moment, they failed to realize that the death angel of the first Passover in Egypt was now ultimately defeated, because the redeeming blood of the one true Lamb of God had finally been painted permanently on the doorposts of the world.

The Lord comforted His disciples about His having to leave them, telling them of His oneness with the Father and the role that the Holy Spirit would play in replacing His physical presence: *"He may be with you forever...and He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. ...And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe."*¹⁷ Jesus made the metaphor of His being like a vine, with His followers as the branches, and His Father as the vinedresser. He discussed the disciples' relationships with one another and how they were to relate to the world, warning them that the religious authorities would make them outcasts from the synagogues, claiming this disciplinary action as a service to God. He instructed them that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all the truth, glorifying the Son. He reiterated His impending death once more and confirmed once again His resurrection, promising the apostles that afterwards, when the Spirit of Truth came upon them,

¹⁶ NOTE: It is inconceivable that Christ would have used unleavened bread to represent His body if a "Passover lamb" had been on the table. This is another factor supporting the Tuesday supper premise. It also pictures God's grace in allowing the **un-yeasted** bread as a substitution, facilitating this practice for believers in the future generations, when lamb would not always be obtainable. Since **yeast** in Scripture **is a metaphor for sin, its absence in this substitution makes it incredibly appropriate.** As for the wine, one is reminded of Jesus' first miracle at the Wedding in Canaan. Before the first Passover many centuries earlier, Moses' first miracle was changing water into blood as a pronouncement of God's impending judgment on Egypt; however, the first recorded miracle of the Christ was His changing water into wine, as a foretaste of the incredible joy His obedience would bring His Father in His providing the ultimate atonement for mankind. Notice Jesus' first miracle took place at a Wedding Feast. At the Last Supper He told His disciples He would not drink wine again until He drank it with them at the commencement of the Kingdom, which is described, interesting enough, as the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. (Rev. 19:7) Water, blood and fire were used for purification in the Temple ritual. God had washed the sinful world previously with the judgmental waters of Noah's flood. Presently the precious blood of His Son was to cover it and, finally, we are told that the heavens and earth are being reserved for fire at the final Day of Judgment and purification that will enable the creation to attain its ultimate created perfection, thus making it worthy of ever-lasting life united by the Spirit through the Son with the Father. (II Pet. 3:5-7)

¹⁷ See John 14:16, 26. This is an important statement establishing the infallibility of the Gospel accounts given to us by these men! God has always used His ability to predict future events and bring them to exact fulfillment in order to establish His "credentials," as it were, to be God and worthy of our adulation (see Is. 46: 9-10).

anything they asked the Father in His name would be given to them. Then Jesus prayed what may more accurately be called "The Lord's Prayer."¹⁸

A point of contention among them had been which positions they would hold in His coming Kingdom and who would occupy the highest office. He reminded them that the greatest must assume the role of servant, as He Himself had just demonstrated in serving them; but because they had been faithful to Him during His ministry, they would indeed eat at His table and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus told Peter that Satan had requested to be able to sift him like wheat, but that He had interceded for him and when his faith was restored, he should strengthen the others. Peter claimed that he would be willing to follow the Lord anywhere and to even die for Him; but Jesus told him, that before the cock crowed in the morning, he would have denied Him three times. He reminded the disciples how he had sent them out on an earlier occasion without purse or sandals or even an extra coat. Now He said that they were to take their purses; and, if they did not have a sword, they should sell their extra coat and purchase one. The times were going to be harrowing. They told Him that they had two swords with them and He replied that that was enough. After singing a hymn they left the upper room, crossed through the valley of Kidron, and entered the Garden of Gethsemane.¹⁹ Meanwhile Judas had made connection with the High Priest and Pharisees, who had paid him his 30 silver shekels²⁰ and who had swiftly gotten a makeshift quorum together for the hasty trial.²¹ Then with the Temple guard and others following him bearing clubs, torches and weapons, Judas set out to betray the King of Creation with the hideous kiss of fallen mankind. God's terrible wrath in His righteous response to sin would now fall, once and for all, on His obedient, beloved, first-born Son, thus demonstrating His divine self-sacrificing love and grace in the redemption of mankind. The physical suffering of the Son, which was so horrible, is ever before our eyes, as we try to imagine the agony He endured; but the anguish of the Father is indeed, for the comprehension of finite humanity, unfathomable.

The 4th Day of Passion Week / Dark Wednesday (Arranged according to the approximate hours of occurrence)

Before Midnight--the 4th Day Jewish time; or late Tuesday evening, Gentile time

Jesus entered the Garden of Gethsemane with His eleven disciples, instructing them to keep watch and pray, while He went on alone a short distance away. The agony He manifested was extreme and the disciples watched confusedly, in spite of His previous instruction as to what was about to transpire. They attempted to understand His meaning and His obvious distress; but, as they fell in and out of sleep, they were only able to recall for posterity a few intermittent events taking place in the garden. Three times He returned to them admonishing them to stay awake and to pray with Him. He requested that His Father remove "the cup"²² from Him with His anguish being so great that He sweat drops of blood.²³ However His final resolve was: *"Not My will, but Thine be done."* indicative of His perfect love, demonstrated by His complete obedience to the will of His

¹⁸ The prayer that He had given them upon an earlier occasion - "Our Father, who art in Heaven" - should possibly be designated "The Apostles' Prayer", for they were to pray it. The prayer given at the Last Supper was His personal prayer for them, petitioning, among other things, that the Father would keep them in His care while He was absent from them for 3 days and 3 nights in the grave, since His replacement by the Holy Spirit was still some 50 days off. This is the longest prayer recorded in the Bible. See John 17:1-26.

¹⁹ NOTE: In Jewish time, it was already early on the 4th Day--the Day of Preparation-- or late Tuesday, before midnight, Gentile time.

²⁰ Thus they inadvertently fulfilled the prophecy of Zech. 11:12.

²¹ NOTE: There were strict Jewish laws regarding the method and time-frame of such court proceedings and they manipulated them in order to quickly accomplish this most despicable act before the Festival began.

²² He was speaking metaphorically of His having to drink the dreadful cup containing the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and sin in the world spoken of by the OT prophets. See Ezk. 23:32-34; Jer. 25:15-28; Zech. 12:1-2,10; Lk. 22:42; Jn. 18:11.

²³ Note: This is a known medical condition, when small capillaries filled with blood near the sweat ducts burst because of unbearable agitation. Other cases of this happening have been medically recorded.

Father. With "His goal" ever before His eyes and His face "set like a flint" to accomplish it, He knew His betrayal was now imminent (Isa. 50:6-10; Lk. 9:51).

From Midnight to just before Daybreak
(the 4th Day / Wednesday "the Day of Preparation")

The noise created by the arrival of Judas and the soldiers awakened the disciples, who were frightened. Jesus stepped forward immediately to meet the mob, asking "Whom do you seek?" When they replied, "Jesus the Nazarene," He answered, "I am He." And they immediately all stumbled backwards, falling to the ground (Jn. 18:6). It was very clear to this small army of men, that although they outnumbered Him, He was totally in control of His destiny. He asked why they had come in this manner with weapons, since He had not hidden Himself, but had been readily available to them previously: *"Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me like a robber? Daily I sat in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. But all of this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled."* (Mt. 26:55-56) He conceded to go with them because He had chosen to do so, not because He was forced to. When Peter attempted to rush to Jesus' defence with his sword, cutting off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, the Lord told him to put the weapon away or consequently he would die by it. Jesus healed Malchus and submitted to being bound by the soldiers at the price of His disciples' freedom. The disciples subsequently scattered in terror and the soldiers led Christ away (See Jn.18).

First Jesus was taken for questioning to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the current high priest. Annas was the controlling power behind the high priestly office, which had been in the possession of his dynastic family for a number of years. He had, in fact, been the acting High Priest when Jesus had visited Jerusalem for Passover in His 13th year.²⁴ So, although Caiaphas was now the official High Priest, the father-in-law was still the more influential, since he had used his power to replace himself with his son-in-law in that office, thus continuing to control the most powerful position at the Temple past his appointed time. Therefore it is obvious why Christ was first taken to him.

Next Jesus was dragged through the dark streets to Caiaphas himself and examined again by him and those men of the Sanhedrin he had hurriedly assembled. Peter and John, who had fearfully and stealthily followed the entourage at a distance, sneaked in with the servants and sat down to see the outcome of the proceedings. The chief priest and Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus to justify putting Him to death but the testimonies of the various trumped up witnesses contradicted one another and were obviously spurious. Finally two men²⁵ came forward, who had both been previously coached to achieve agreement in their testimony, and both stated that they had heard "this man" claim: "I am able to destroy the Temple of God and to rebuild it **after** three days."

And the high priest stood up and said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER; and COMING ON CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; what do you think?" They said, "He is deserving of death!" Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit you?" Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a certain servant girl came to him

²⁴ See Edersheim, pg. 168.

²⁵ Jewish law requires at least two eye witnesses for confirmation of the death penalty. See Deut. 17:6.

and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." And when he had gone out to the gateway, another servant girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And he denied it with an oath. "I do not know the man." And a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; for the way you talk gives you away."(Galilean dialect) Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the words Jesus had said, "Before the cock crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went away and wept bitterly. (Mt. 26:59-75)

Satan had indeed "sifted Peter like wheat" and he had definitely "fallen to the ground," but the Father would never fail to answer the request of His Beloved Son in Peter's behalf. Peter would certainly rise up to strengthen his brothers; but not at this time, which was indeed his darkest hour.

With the cock crow came the first light of morning, probably around 4:30 a.m. on Wednesday. The chief priests and the elders took counsel against Jesus and they bound Him and took him to Pilate the governor, because they did not possess the legal right of execution. Meanwhile, Judas had guilty second thoughts about what he had done and tried in vain to negate his actions by giving back the blood money. The priests ironically rejected him in disgust, because he had accepted money for betraying a fellow Jew to the Romans. He threw the silver coins down in the Temple precinct and ran away to later hang himself in despair. This "blood money" was finally used by the Temple authorities to buy the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers who died in Jerusalem and in so doing they inadvertently fulfilled another Old Testament Scripture (Zech.11:12-13). In the dark grey of the earliest of morning light, Jesus was brought before Pilate. Notice the following account of this recorded in John 18:28. *"They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and **it was early**; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover."* Entering a Gentile building would make them ceremonially unclean and therefore exclude them from all the Passover Festivities. Instead Pilate went out to meet them. With this information it becomes evident that Passover is still yet to transpire.

And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding paying taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ a King." And Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "You said it." And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, "I find no guilt in this man." But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, even as far as this place." But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem. Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day, for before they had been at enmity with each other. (Luke 23:2-12)

When Jesus was once again returned to him, Pilate went out to the chief priests and rulers of the people and told them that although they had accused Jesus of inciting a riot and a rebellion, he had ascertained nothing of that sort. He found no guilt regarding Him and neither had Herod, or he wouldn't have sent Him back. There was certainly nothing about the Man that deserved the death penalty. Therefore Pilate decided to lash and scourge Him and then release Him. After Jesus was most cruelly beaten and whipped, the soldiers mocked Him with the ornate robe that Herod had used for that same purpose and, placing a crown of thorns on His head, they returned Him to Pilate once more. Since it was the custom in honour of the Passover for Pilate to release one Jewish prisoner, he

offered them Jesus; but the angry mob cried for Barabbas instead and demanded the crucifixion of Christ, screaming, "His blood be on us and on our children!" In making this horrendous pronouncement they inadvertently called for His redemptive blood to cover them.²⁶ Barabbas was an attested thief and a murderer and they were in open defiance of Jewish Law in demanding the release of a man whom they knew had committed such crimes. Pilate asked three times why they desired Jesus' death if He were their King, but their loud voices prevailed in the end shouting, "We have no king but Caesar!"²⁷

Washing his hands in mockery of their religious hand washing ritual (most particularly at Passover) and to demonstrate his lack of compliance with the death sentence, Pilate commanded that Jesus be led away to be crucified. This was probably around 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning. Jerusalem was stirring and people were coming out of their houses to witness the dreadful procession. Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus' cross for Him, when His strength at last failed under its weight. Some of the people in the streets recognized Him and women were weeping and lamenting His suffering. He turned to them and said: "*Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.*" (Luke 23:28) Because of their leaders disregard for God's Law and their rejection of His Son, God had hardened their hearts and sealed them in their spiritual blindness much as He had done at the time of the first Passover with Pharaoh, using even the hardest of hearts to accomplish His purpose (Rom. 9:17-33). Israel's blindness was now finally confirmed in the dreadful lawlessness of their leaders - those who had been delegated to "sit in Moses' Seat" (Mt. 23:1).

Wednesday: the 3rd hour (Jewish time - counting from sunrise)
or **9:00 a.m.** (Gentile time)

*And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of the Skull, they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink. And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified Him." (Mt. 27:33-37) "And Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross. And it was written, 'Jesus the Nazarene, The King of the Jews.' Therefore this inscription many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek."²⁸ (The inscription in Hebrew read: **Jeshua Hanozri Wumelech Hajehudim** forming the acronym: **JHWH!** See John 19:19-20.) And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on His right and one on His left. And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him saying, 'Are You not the Christ? Save yourself and us!' But the other answered, and rebuking him said, 'Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.' And he was saying, 'Jesus, remember me when You come into your kingdom!' And He said to him, 'Truly I say to you today, you shall be with Me in the paradise. (Gr. text --Luke 23: 39-43) And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who are going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking Him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" (Mt. 27:39-42) "But there were standing by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His*

²⁶ Later Jesus asks the Father to "forgive them for they know not what they do" and it is inconceivable that the Father would deny His Beloved Son's request. (Lk. 23:34)

²⁷ This has indeed come to pass. The Jews have had no "king of their own", but rather continued to serve Gentile kings in Jerusalem and in the centuries that followed in their consequent dispersal throughout the world. (Mt. 27:25; Jn. 19:15)

²⁸ Roman crucifixion took place near to the city gates so that those entering the city would be fearful of breaking Roman law.

mother, and the disciple who He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' And He said to the disciple, 'Son, behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household. (John 19:25-27)

Wednesday: the 6th hour, Jewish time / **12:00 Noon**, Gentile time

And when the **6th hour** had come, darkness fell over the whole land until the **9th hour**. (12:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. Gentile time). In the Exodus account of the first Passover, darkness was the plague of judgment that preceded the death angel striking the first born of all the un-marked households (Ex. 10:21). The death of the First Born Son of God was about to absolve the world from sin and the plague of darkness preceded it as well, just as it had before so long ago in Egypt. We see the culmination of the first Passover, as judgment falls at last on the one true, exalted Lamb of God, of whom all the other sacrificial lambs throughout the previous centuries were but a temporary substitution²⁹ (1 Cor. 5:7-8; Heb. 10:1-18).

Wednesday: the 9th hour (Jewish time) / **3:00 p.m.** Gentile time)
(called the "1st evening" in Jewish reckoning)³⁰

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. (John 19:28-29) And at the **9th hour** Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "ELI, ELI; LAMA SABACHTHANI?" which is translated, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" (Mark 15:24-34) This was the title the Jews gave to what is designated today as Psalm 22. It would have been obvious to the women and His mother, standing with the Apostle John nearby, that the first half of this very familiar Messianic Psalm of David was being fulfilled before their eyes. Verses 1 and verses 14-18 are: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?...I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaw; and You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs (Jewish term for Gentiles) have surrounded me; A band of evildoers (i.e. Jewish leaders) has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

Consequently if His followers were eyewitnesses to the first half of this Psalm receiving such an exact realization, they could therefore take hope in the fulfilment of the second half of it as well. Jesus was too weak and His mouth too dry to recite the Psalm in its entirety, but He only needed to name it to call it to the attention of their despairing minds. It was typical of Him that even at the height of His most horrendous suffering, He considered them in their anguish and gave them His fulfilment of Scripture as a reason to maintain hope in that most dreadful hour. Notice the words of immense comfort and hope contained in the last section of the Psalm - all of which would have been very familiar to His loved ones - so that He need only state its conclusion before He died. Verses 25-31 read: "From You comes my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your soul live forever! All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations will worship before

²⁹ All Passover lambs were a picture of this in that they were required to be examined to ascertain their perfection, qualifying them for sacrifice in behalf of the people's sins.

³⁰ In Jewish divisions of the day, there are two evenings - one from 3:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m., with the second following it at 6:00 p.m. beginning the new day. The Passover lambs were to be slain "between the evenings" i.e. between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. See Ex. 12:6 and 30:8, which is translated into English as "at twilight" but in the Hebrew text reads "between the two evenings", i.e. between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Passover officially begins with the coming of the "second evening" beginning the new day.

*You. For the kingdom is the LORD's. And He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship, All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep his soul alive. Posterity will serve Him; It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people not yet born, **that He has accomplished it.**" (Hebrew text) When those standing around, who were spiritually blind, heard Him call out the title of the Psalm, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?", they mistakenly assumed that He was calling for Elijah, whose long awaited reappearance plays such an important part in the conclusion of the Passover celebration which is obviously still pending at this time. *And when some of the bystanders heard it, they began saying, "Behold He is calling for Elijah." And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave Him a drink, saying, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down."* (Mk. 15:35-36) From OT prophecy the scribes believed that Elijah was to appear before the judgement initiating "Messiah ben David's" advent (Mal. 4:5; Mt. 17:10; Mk. 9:11).*

It goes without saying that Jesus could not have been in spiritual despair because God had left Him. God cannot forsake God. Christ was as much God on the cross as ever before. He was, however, going to allow the "last enemy" (i.e. death. See 1 Kor. 15:26) to overpower Him in our behalf. This was indeed horrible for Him, because God always describes Himself as being the "living God" (Dt. 5:26; Ps. 84:2; Jer. 10:10; Lk. 24:5). Although it is true that Jesus took our sins upon Himself, He did not become less divine in order to do this, but rather it was because He was the perfect Son of God without sin or blemish, that He could bear such a burden and thus be qualified to "**accomplish it.**" Christ had told His disciples that He and the Father were one; therefore it must be assumed that He was calling their attention to this particular Psalm by reciting the first line, which was its title, and by stating its conclusion when He died. *When Jesus had therefore received the sour wine, He said, "**It is accomplished!**"* (Gr. Text) *And He bowed His head and died.* (John 19:30) **No one has taken it** (His life) **away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.** (John 10:17-18) He alone decided the times of His death and resurrection in the fulfilment of Scripture.

*And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" And there were also some women **looking on from a distance**, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. And when He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem.* (Mk. 15:35-41)

It is informative to notice the distance of separation from the dying body of Christ now maintained by His followers. The women all observed His death from a distance as did the Apostle John, although it is recorded that earlier they were by the cross when Jesus committed His mother to John's care. Following His death His corpse could not have been taken to any of the disciples' homes because according to the law it would have made the place unclean for the Festival. This is another indication that the Passover was still pending. Why didn't the women aid the two men in their endeavours to care for Jesus' body? Quite probably it is because they could not defile themselves by being in close proximity to it and thus be prevented from serving and take part in the impending Feast (Dt. 5:2). Even Mary Magdalene followed from a distance to see where the two men stored His body. Only Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus touched His corpse and consequently abstained from the immediate Festival. (These two men had to wait 30 days before they could observe the Passover themselves according to the stipulation God had given to Moses regarding the occurrence of death at festival time. See Num. 9:6-11.) They hurriedly carried Christ's body to the unused tomb, which had been selected because it was owned by Joseph of Arimathea and was close to the place of the crucifixion. Just before the sun set, beginning the "high holy day", they quickly wrapped Jesus' body in linen strips filled with spices and herbs for its preservation, and thus placed "the Son of Man in the heart of the earth" for His three days' and three nights'

interment. (One must remove various well-known art works, such as Michelangelo's "Pieta" and Da Vinci's depiction of the "Last Supper" from our conception of all these events when trying to visualize what Scripture tells us actually happened.)

The stone covering the mouth of the tomb that the Roman guards sealed shortly thereafter was to insure that the body would not be stolen by any of His disciples in order to claim He had risen from the dead, during the three days and three nights time period required for confirmation of death (Mt. 27: 62-66). Jesus was not placed in the unused tomb because He was officially being buried (Mt. 27:60). Once the Sabbaths were over, His family and friends would be bestowing the last rites of burial, by anointing His body with various oils and perfumes on the fourth day. However, when Jesus had returned to Bethany, earlier on the second day of the week following His entry into Jerusalem, Lazarus's sister, Mary, perhaps with precocious intuition regarding the Lord's sadness in anticipation of the impending dreadful events, had anointed Him already with costly oil and perfume. Therefore His body did receive the completed preparation with costly nard and, at the time of Mary's lovely obeisance, He made inference relating it to His imminent death (Jn. 12:3-8).

*The Jews therefore, because **it was the day of preparation**, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the **Sabbath** (Passover Sabbath)--**for that day was a high day**--asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has borne witness and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. For these things came to pass that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN". And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED" (John 19:31-37; Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:7).*

Under normal circumstances, it took many hours for a person to die after being crucified. Therefore to remove the ugly sight of death and avoid any possible defilement for the public at Festival time, the thieves' lives had to be prematurely terminated by breaking their legs, making them incapable of pushing their bodies upward to draw breath. Because Jesus had already died, this was unnecessary in His case. The picture of Christ as the perfect "Lamb of God" is thus maintained, because not a bone of His body was broken, just as it is commanded in the ordinance regarding the slaughter and preparation of all the other sacrificial lambs throughout the previous centuries. (See Num. 9:11-12; Jn. 10:17-18.)

*And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. (Luke 23:50-52) And Pilate marvelled that He was already dead and called to the centurion and questioned him as to how long ago He had died and thus being informed by the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph. (Mk. 15:44-45) And after these things Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but a secret one, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate granted permission. He came therefore and took away His body. And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. (John 19:38-40) And he took Him down and wrapped Him in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain. And it was **the preparation day**³¹ and **the Sabbath was about to begin**. Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed after, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. And they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the*

³¹ It was still Wednesday, the 1st evening in Jewish time, before the second evening began at 6:00 p.m. becoming the 5th day, which was the Passover, or High Sabbath date in 32 A.D.

Sabbaths they rested according to the commandment (Lk. 23:53-56). But late of the **"Sabbaths"**³² **at the drawing on toward one of the Sabbaths**³³ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb (Mt. 28:1).

In summation, according to these various accounts superimposed upon one another, Jesus died between the evenings when the Passover lambs were being slaughtered and was put in the tomb shortly before the beginning of the 2nd evening at 6:00 p.m. late Wednesday afternoon, before the beginning of the new day (i.e. the 5th day in Jewish time) and the commencement of the Passover celebration. He remained in the tomb for three Sabbaths: (1) Passover, the high Sabbath (the 5th Day 6:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. beginning the 6th Day); (2) the First Day of the Week of Unleavened Bread (6:00 p.m. the 6th Day - 6:00 p.m. beginning the 7th Day); and (3) the weekly Sabbath (6:00 p.m. the 7th Day -6:00 p.m. beginning the 1st Day of the week). He arose on the 4th day after His death which was the 1st day of the week beginning at 6:00 p.m. Saturday (Gentile time) sometime after dark. This began a "Sabbath" during Passover time called "First Fruits", at which time the High Priest was commanded to wave the first tiny shoot of harvest grain toward the sun as it rose in the morning, rejoicing in the new barley crop that would provide flour for bread after the ensuing harvest that would take place some 50 days later. This final reaping is commemorated by yet another Sabbath called "Pentecost".³⁴

**"Sabbath of First Fruits"/ 1st day of the week (Jewish time)
after 6:00 P.M. Saturday evening (Gentile time)**

(This succeeded the Sabbaths of Passover, the 1st Day of Unleavened Bread, and the Weekly Sabbath. This "1st Day" is also referred to as the "4th Day" following Jesus' death.)

Now **on the first day of the week** Mary Magdalene (and the other women) came early to the tomb **while it was still dark** bringing spices and ointment to anoint the body, and saw the stone already taken from the tomb. And so she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved (i.e. John), and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb. And the two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first; and stooping and looking in he saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in. Simon Peter therefore also came, following him and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there, and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb entered then also, and he saw and believed (i.e. that someone had taken the body). For as yet they did not understand the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead. And it happened that while they were perplexed about this, behold two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel; and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, **and the third day rise again**. And they remembered His words, and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James, also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. And these words appeared to them as

³² The word rendered singularly as "Sabbath" in the English translation is plural in the Greek text.

³³ The 1st day of the week--Jewish reckoning after sundown on Saturday--which was also the beginning of the "Sabbath of First Fruits." See Lev. 23:10.

³⁴ Note: Of the Seven High Sabbaths given in the OT, Jesus fulfilled four of them in His first coming: Passover; The First Day of Unleavened Bread; First Fruits; and then, after 50 days, Pentecost, which is probably His favourite holiday, because it is the culmination of His work in initiating the New Covenant with the coming of the Holy Spirit upon believers. The fulfilment of the final three High Sabbaths--The Feast of Trumpets, The Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles--await His Second Advent and are mentioned in His Revelation given to the Apostle John when he was interred on the island of Patmos. Rev. 8, 9, 10--Trumpets; 5--Atonement; and especially 13:6--where the Greek text reads: "all those tabernacling with Him in Heaven".

nonsense, and they would not believe them (Luke 24:1-11). But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." When she had said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing there and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (This means, Teacher.) Jesus said to her, "Stop holding on to Me for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.' Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that He had said these things to her (John 20:1-18).

Notice at the beginning of the passage of Luke's Gospel, most probably written for a Gentile, the time is designated the "first day of the week" but later called the "third day" following His death. In Jewish reckoning following sundown, the seventh day becomes the first day of the week, which, according to Gentile time is still called Saturday until midnight, the third day after the entombment. Thus in the recorded accounts these two designations--"1st day" and/or the "3rd day", which could also be called simultaneously the "1st day" and/or the "4th day", when He arose--appear at first to be a confusing contradiction, when actually they are confirming one another indicating a more exact period of time. It was the custom to switch back and forth in these time allocations, much as we switch back and forth from the 12-hour clock to the 24-hour one today, making the adjustment according to the intended sense of the designation. (For example, if a person is told to meet someone at 1:00 for lunch, it is assumed, due to the context of the invitation, that a 13:00 hour is intended and not 1:00 a.m.) In applying the type of juxtaposition in designating time that was customary in NT times, many of the "apparent" contradictions in the time-frame of the accounts can thus be correlated.

It also serves our comprehension, if we consider that it really was dark and growing darker, rather than the darkness that is ever growing lighter just before daybreak. Therefore they would have had torches or oil lamps to light their way as the night time advanced and running with these lights in their hands must have slowed their progress. Looking into an unlit dark tomb would make it very hard to discern anything at first and it would have indeed been all the more frightening with the appearance of the "two men in dazzling apparel," who gave them news of Christ's resurrection, which actually caused the women to "fall on their faces to the ground in fear". Mary Magdalene's failure in recognizing Jesus makes more sense than too, particularly because she assumed His body had been carried off by temple officials or perhaps by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to confirm His death on the fourth day, or taken by the Romans for some other reason. This situation in the garden at night would have been quite ominous and confusing indeed, with all these extenuating factors in play and if it were dark, which Scripture actually says it was, as we have already ascertained.

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. These disciples had waited until the end of the weekly Sabbath (i.e. sundown on Saturday--already the 1st Day of the week in Jewish time) before making their homeward journey, because it was a greater travelling distance than was lawful to be travelled on the Sabbath. With the commencement of "First Fruits" - one of the days termed in the Jewish Traditional Law as a "half-holy day" - these disciples, who had been trapped in Jerusalem for the three High Holy Days, could then immediately hurry out of the city to escape the possible threat of being apprehended by the Judeans or Romans because they were followers of Christ. The expression "Sabbath Day's Journey" is used only in Acts 1:12, where it designates the distance between the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem. This distance was a journey of limited extent that the scribes thought a Jew might travel on the Sabbath without

breaking the law. Such a distance consisted of 2,000 cubits (3,000 feet or 938 meters) from one's house, a sum derived from a statement found in Joshua 3:4, where there was to be that much space between the Ark of the Covenant and the people during their march to the Promised Land. On "half-holy days," however, one was allowed to travel any distance necessary to return home.³⁵

*And they were conversing with each other about all these things which had taken place. And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began travelling with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him.³⁶ And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. And one of them named Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed besides all this, **it is the third day** since these things happened.³⁷ But also some women among us amazed us. **When they being early at the tomb**³⁸ did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He would go farther. And they urged Him, saying "Stay with us, **for the day is now nearly over.**"³⁹ And He went in to stay with them. And it came about that when He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.⁴⁰ And they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" And they arose that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, "The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon." And they began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread." (Lk.24:13-35) In the **evening that same day, the first day of the week,**⁴¹ when the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors out of fear of the Judeans, **Jesus came and stood in their midst and said,***

"Shalom aleikhem!"⁴²
"Peace be upon you!" (Jn. 20: 19)

³⁵ See Edersheim regarding the Sabbath regulations for Holy Days.

³⁶ Most probably because it was the dark part of Saturday evening.

³⁷ Still Saturday night. These disciples have obviously waited until the weekly Sabbath is over--sunset on Saturday--before beginning their homeward journey.

³⁸ The Greek text reads "being **early** at the tomb", **not** "early morning at the tomb" or "being early dawn" as mistakenly indicated in most English translations. (Lk. 24:1)

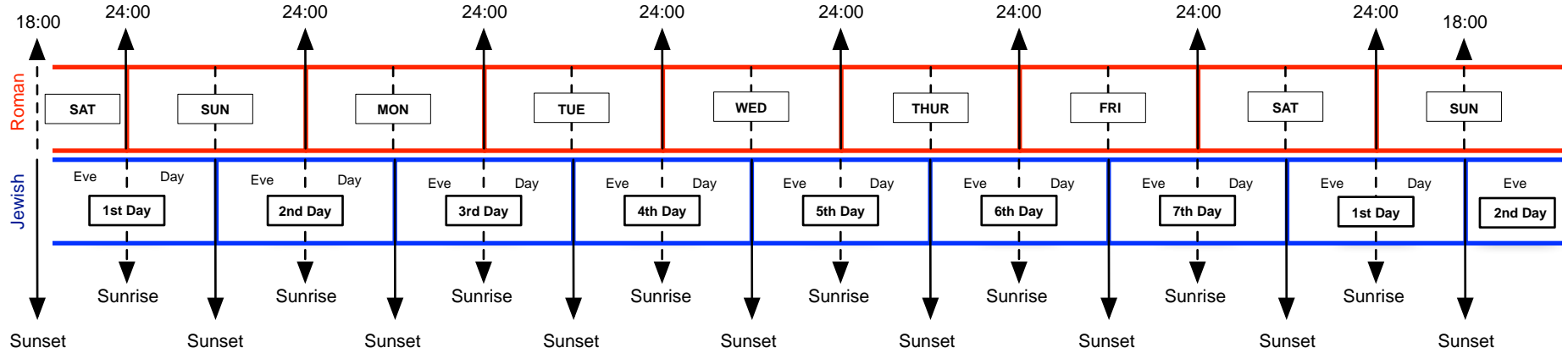
³⁹ One could take this to mean that it is getting late Saturday night, and therefore ridiculous to continue His journey any farther in the darkness but rather to wait until daylight Sunday morning.

⁴⁰ Undoubtedly they saw the horrendous dark holes in His hands as He served the bread! This would have been unleavened bread, because they were still celebrating the Week of Unleavened Bread. (i.e. Matzah)

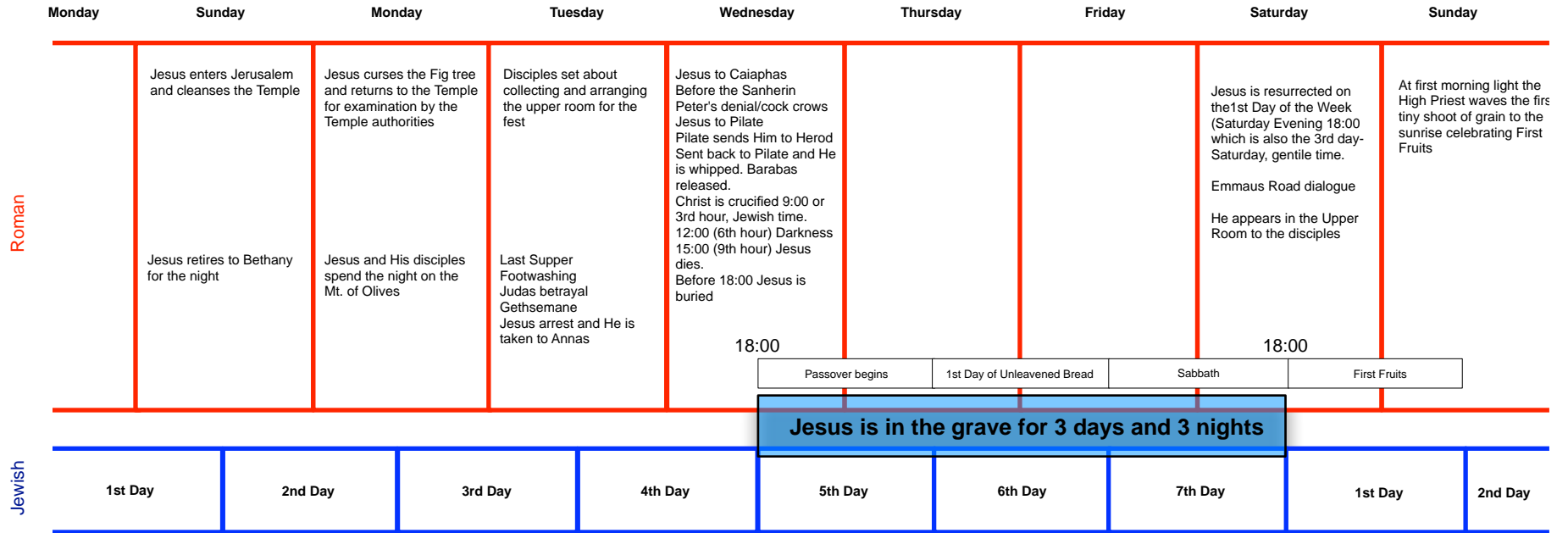
⁴¹ Saturday evening (Gentile time) or early the 1st Day (2nd evening) Jewish time. (NOTE: Gentile "Sunday Evening" would already be called "the 2nd day of the week" in Jewish time allocation.)

⁴² The Hebrew form of greeting which actually means to be well and whole in body, soul and spirit. Jesus had most certainly "accomplished it"! From the moment of His resurrection, the "End of Days" began with the last enemy (death) being ultimately defeated. Our own resurrection is our "most blessed hope" in Christ!

The Correlation of Roman and Jewish Times



Passover Week Illustrated with these Time Overlaps



Appendix

Daniel's 70 Weeks:

To aid in the understanding of Daniel's prophecy dealing with 70 weeks, which includes the 69 weeks mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the author has chosen to include in the Appendix, along with the list of references, the proper biblical understanding of these terms and the mathematical equations as well. A section of Dr. Alva J. McClain's little booklet entitled "*Daniel's Prophecy of the 70 Weeks*" (Zondervan Publishing House, 1940, 1969; ISBN: 0-310-29012-0) is assimilated and directly quoted below.

THE FIRST 69 WEEKS AND THE COMING OF THE MESSIANIC PRINCE: In approaching the first 69 weeks of the prophecy in Daniel, it should be remembered that this period of the 69 "weeks" begins with the "going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem" and that it ends with the manifestation of Messiah as the "Prince" of Israel. Our purpose is to ascertain the nature and length of the "weeks," to discover in history the events which mark their beginning and end, and then to see whether the prediction fits the history from a chronological standpoint: for the one point in the prophecy upon which all interpreters agree is that the first 69 weeks have been fulfilled and are past. These four questions cover this field of investigation.

(1) What is the measure of time indicated by the "weeks" of the Prophecy? What kind of "weeks" are they? To the casual reader, the word "week" means but one thing, that is, a period of 7 *days*. However, the simple facts concerning these "weeks" in Daniel, are aided by an exact analysis of the Hebrew text, re-translating the word "week" into the original word "*shabua*" which means only the number "7". Thus verse 24 of the 9th chapter of Daniel reads: "seventy *sevens* (*shabua*) are determined" (cf. Stuart's translation), and what these "sevens" are must be determined from the context and from other Scripture. The evidence is quite clear and sufficient, as follows: Most important is the fact that in their divinely inspired calendar, the Jews had a "seven" of *years* as well as a "seven" of *days*. In the first place, the prophet Daniel had been thinking not only in terms of years rather than days, but also in a definite multiple of "sevens" (10 X 7) of years (Dan. 9:1-2). Second Daniel also knew that the very length of the Babylonian captivity had been based on Jewish violations of the divine law of the Sabbatic year. Since according to 2 Chronicles 36:21, the Jews had been removed from off the land in order that it might rest for *seventy* years, it should be evident that the Sabbatic year had been violated for 490 years, or exactly seventy "sevens" of years. How appropriate, therefore, that now at the end of the judgment for these violations, the angel should be sent to reveal the start of a *new era* of God's dealing with the Jews which would extend for the same number of years covered by their violations of the Sabbatic year, namely, a cycle of 490 years, or "Seventy Sevens" of years (Daniel 9:24).

(2) If these "weeks" are composed of years, what is the length of the year? It is quite well known that various calendars of the nations have used years of different lengths, correcting the error by the addition of days from time to time. Even our own year of 365 days is not exact, the shortage being a little less than one day in four years. If, therefore, the time of the Seventy Weeks is to be calculated exactly, we must know the length of the year involved. And unless this information is supplied by the inspired Word, the case is hopeless. But there is conclusive evidence to show that the prophetic year of Scripture is composed of 360 days or twelve months of 30 days.

The first argument is *historical*. According to Genesis record, the Flood began on the 17th day of the 2nd month (7:11), and came to an end on the 17th day of the 7th month (8:4). Now, this is a period of exactly 5 months, and fortunately the length of the same period is given in terms of days--"150 days" (7:24; 8:3). Thus the earliest known month used in Biblical history was evidently 30 days in length, and 12 such months would give us a 360-day year.

The second argument is *prophetical* and is absolutely conclusive because it is based on a measure included within the prophecy of the 70 Weeks under discussion. Daniel 9:27

mentions a period of Jewish persecution at the hands of the Coming Prince who will make a covenant with that people. Since this persecution begins in the "midst" of the 70th Week and continues to the "end" of it, the period is obvious 3 ½ years. Daniel 7:24-25 speaks of the same Roman Prince and the same persecution, fixing the duration as "a time and times and the dividing of time"--in the Aramaic, three and a half times. Revelation 13:4-7 speaks of the same great political Ruler and his persecution of the Jewish "saints" lasting "42 months." Revelation 12:13-14 refers to the same persecution, stating the duration in the exact terms of Daniel 7:25 as "a time and times and half a time"; and this period is further defined in Revelation 12:6 as "1, 260 days". Thus we have the same period of time variously stated as 3 ½ years, 42 months, or 1, 260 days.

(3) When did the whole period of the 70 weeks begin? Having found that the 70 Weeks are "weeks" of years, and that these years are each 360 days in length, our next problem is to find the historical date when the whole period began. And here we are not left in any doubt, for the 25th verse of the prophecy names a definite historical event: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of *the commandment* to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be 7 weeks, and three score and two weeks. (i.e."7 sevens" and 3 score and "2 sevens"). If now we can locate this "commandment," or decree, and fix its date accurately, we shall have the terminus from which the prophecy takes its start. There is only one decree in OT history which, apart from all expedients of interpretation, can by any possibility be identified as the "commandment" referred to in Daniel's prophecy. That decree is found in the Book of Nehemiah. Read carefully 1:1-4 and 2:1-8, noting several facts: First, that it was a report of the ruined condition of the "wall" and the "gates" of the *city* that aroused the deep concerns of Nehemiah, Jewish "cupbearer" to King Artaxerxes. Second, that after earnest prayer he dared to petition the King "that thou wouldst send me unto Judah, unto the *city* of my fathers' sepulchres, *that I may build it*" (2:5). Third, that his bold request by the grace of God succeeded, as he tells us: "And the king *granted me*, according to the good hand of my God upon me" (2:8). But most important of all, we should notice how carefully Nehemiah, writing by divine inspiration, records the exact date of this decree: "*in the month of Nisan, in the 20th year of Artaxerxes the king*" (2:1). Even the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, certainly not biased in favour of prophecy, sets the date of Artaxerxes' accession as 465 B.C.; and therefore his 20th year would be 445 B.C. The month was Nisan, and, since no day is given, according to Jewish custom the date would be understood as the first. Hence in our calendar the date would be March 14, 445 B.C. Here we have the beginning of the 70 Weeks.

(4)When did the first 69 weeks end and what happened on that date? Having found that the Weeks are composed of years, that the length of the prophetic year is 360 days, and that these years began on March 14, 445 B.C., the ground is now cleared for the chronological computation. (And for this I am indebted to the painstaking research of the late Sir Robert Anderson, the results of which are set forth in his great book, *The Coming Prince*, a work occasionally sneered at by the critics but never answered.) In order to find the *end* of the 69 weeks, we must first reduce them to days. Since we have 69 weeks of 7 years each, and each year has 360 days, the equation is as follows: 69 X 7 X 360 = 173,880 *days*. Beginning March 14, 445 B.C., this number of days brings us to April 6, 32 A.D. To prove that the 173,880 days equal exactly the period from March 15, 445 B.C., to April 6, 32 A.D., it is necessary to compute this period in terms of our own calendar year as follows:

445 B.C. to 32 A.D. is 476 years (B.C. 1 to A.D. 1 is one year)	
476 X 365 days	173,740 days
Add for leap-years	116 days (3 less in four centuries- See Note* pg.22)
March 14 to April 6	24 days (inclusive)
Total	<hr/> 173, 880 days

*Note: To divide 476 by 4 would give 119 leap-years. But since century-years are not leap-years unless divisible by 400 and since 476 years involve four centuries, it follows that only one of the four century-years would be a true leap-year. Therefore, it is necessary to subtract 3 from 119 to get the exact number of extra leap-year days in 476 years.

April 6, 32 A.D., therefore, is fixed definitely as the end of the era of the first 69 Weeks; and according to Daniel's prophecy, it should mark the very day of Messiah's manifestation as the *Prince* of Israel. Without attempting to enter into the clear but intricate chronological calculations set forth by Anderson in his book, *The Coming Prince* (pg. 95-105), I shall simply state his conclusion that April 6, 32 A.D. was the 10th of Nisan, that momentous day on which our Lord, in fulfilment of Messianic prophecy, rode up to Jerusalem on the "foal of an ass" and offered Himself as the *Prince* and *King* of Israel. That our Lord understood perfectly the crucial nature of His action on that day is unmistakably clear from the record in Luke 19:28-44, a passage which should be studied carefully noting the following details: First, realizing that the day had arrived for Him to ride up to Jerusalem in fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9, He sends His disciples to procure the "colt" upon which as the *King* He must appear (30-35). Second, the whole multitude of the disciples, clearly understanding the meaning of His act, began to shout a well known quotation from a Messianic Psalm (118:22-26), saying "Blessed be the *King* that cometh in the name of the Lord" (37-38). Third, although previously He had forbidden the disciples to make Him known as the Messiah, now He rebukes the Pharisees' protest and commends the disciples' shout, saying that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (39-49). Certainly something was happening here that had never happened before.

But most important of all, we have from the lips of Christ Himself an estimate of the unparalleled importance of that day and what He was doing. Weeping over the city because He knew in advance the certainty of His rejection, He laments, "*If thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes*" (42). What "day"? Why, the day God had fixed in Daniel's prophecy, the day that belonged to Israel, the day on which their "Messiah" would manifest Himself as the "Prince," the exact *173, 880th* day of the prophecy! And what were "the things" belonging to their peace? They are the identical "things" named in verse 24 of the prophecy of the 70 weeks, those marvellous blessings promised to Israel by God who never breaks a covenant. But now for a time all these "things" are to be hid from the eyes of the nation; their enemies will prevail over them; and the city will be once more destroyed. But why? The answer is tragic but just: "*Because thou knewest not THE TIME OF THY VISITATION*" (44).

Thus the 173,880 days of the first 69 Weeks ran their course to the very day--deep and abiding encouragement to all who love the Lord and His precious Word of prophecy. And I close this discussion with but one remark: The exact fulfilment of this prophecy is sufficient to demonstrate the accuracy of Daniel and also by implication the inspiration of the Bible and the truth of Christianity. **Only God can "declare the end from the beginning" and forecast to the very day "things that are not yet done"** (Isa. 46:10).

See also Dr. Alva J. McClain's wonderful book: *The Greatness of the Kingdom*. BMH Books; Winona Lake, IN. 46590. ISBN: 0-88469-011-3

A Brief Discussion of Chiastic Construction

In Old and New Testament times, the structure of writing was different from that of today, because a certain form of economy was of utmost importance due to the scarcity of paper and writing implements. In the OT, for example, only the Hebrew consonants of words were written down, without any punctuation, spacing or indentation. (This method of writing was also used in the secular society at that time.) In the past century, Biblical scholars re-examined this earlier technique, which afforded clarification as to why things were written the way they were. Instead of paragraphs moving in a direct literary and chronological order toward a conclusion - the way we generally write today - the Biblical authors wrote using the technique of "inclusion" and "chiasm", which will be briefly explained below with some examples. "Inclusion", also known as "ring composition" is a narrating technique in which what was said at the beginning of a piece is repeated again at the end. The repetition forces the reader back to the beginning and thus it serves as a frame for the piece as a whole. This was necessary because, as formerly stated, there were no paragraphs or punctuation marks to make the end of sections and subject matter clear. For example, John frames his whole Gospel by repeating in chapter 21 the words and names used in 1:19-51 (Notice in chapter 21, the return of the names Simon, son of John; Nathanael; the two unnamed disciples; the words "follow me"; and the commissioning of Peter as the vicar-shepherd of the sheep, a commissioning already implicit in the changing of Simon's name to Peter in 1:42).

The word "chiasm" is Greek and literally means an "X" (Gr: *Chi*). To give coherence and unity to one complete subject matter, the writer would begin with certain words and end with the same words, or words of their exact opposite. In arranging them in this order, often a middle thought or sentence stood alone at the centre of the "X" indicating the most important crux of the message being written. Since a picture is worth a thousand words, and for the sake of brevity, observe the following examples taken from the introductory section of Dr. William Ramey's superb study of the chiastic structure of the Gospel of John, from which this explanation has been drawn.

One Old Testament Example:

The Lord's Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-25)

- A Abram's age (vs. 17:1a)
- B The LORD appears to Abram (vs. 1b)
- C God's first speech (vs. 1b-2)
- D Abram falls on his face (vs. 3)
- E God's second speech (names, kings, vs. 4-8)
- F **God's Third Speech** (the Abrahamic Covenant, vs. 9-14)
- E' God's fourth speech (names, kings, vs. 15-16)
- D' Abraham falls on his face (vs. 17-18)
- C' God's fifth speech (vs. 19-21)
- B' God "goes up" from Abraham (vs. 22)
- A' Abraham's age (vs. 24)

Epilogue: Abraham obeys the LORD (vs. 25-27)

Various New Testament Examples:

Mark 2:27--

- A** The Sabbath
- B** was made for man
- B'** and not man
- A'** for the Sabbath

Matthew 7:6--

- A** Do not give what is holy to dogs
- B** and do not throw your pearls to the swine
- B'** lest they trample them under their feet
- A'** and turn and tear you to pieces.

By recognizing the chiasmic structure one can make much better sense of these verses. For example, it is logical that dogs (A) tear to pieces (A') and the swine (B) do the trampling (B'). It also provides clarity in the interpretation of Scripture. Notice the example below:

1 John 1:6-7--

- A** If we say we have fellowship with Him
- B** and (yet) walk in the darkness,
- C** **we lie and do not do the truth.**
- B'** If we walk in the light as He is in the light,
- A'** we have fellowship with one another....

The chiasmic pattern above from 1 John concludes with a central doctrinal affirmation: "and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1: 7c). The effect of the chiasmic arrangement is to focus attention on the hypocrisy of those who claim to be in fellowship with God while nevertheless committing sin. Notice that the chiasmic pattern A-A' establishes that the fellowship which the believer sustains in verse 7 is not common ground with other believers (which most commentators understand by "one another"), but rather with "Him" in verse 6a. In these verses one can observe how chiasmic structure often serves to clarify its own meaning.

Therefore, in discerning the chronology of Passion Week, it is important to keep the form of chiasmic structure found in Scripture in mind when reading the various accounts and not be confused when certain events are mentioned earlier, or later in one Gospel than they are in another, or when some events are omitted and others put in their place. This has to do with the over-all structure of these written narratives and the mirroring effect of ending each of the individual themes or subject matter, according to the necessity in the style of composition prevalent at that time.

Modern translators have endeavoured to give us "more readable" texts in the Scripture by complying with the more current methods of composition and thus they avoid the repetition of the exact words which were found in the original by the substitution of synonyms and phrases that essentially mean the same. This modernization obscures the "chiasm" or "inclusion" in the text of the original authors. If one is persistent, however, one can discern this ancient structure by looking for like words or closely related synonyms and/or their antonyms. This is somewhat similar to doing a cross-word puzzle but it is certainly much more rewarding.

(The above examples are taken from: "The Literary Genius of the Apostle John"; by Dr. William D. Ramey; sponsored by The Sherwood Bible Church Enrichment Committee; Spring, 1993. Unpublished.)

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