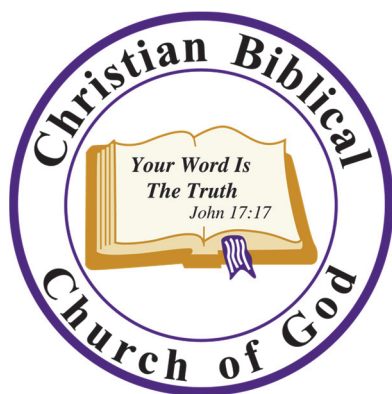


How Long Was Jesus In the Tomb?



by
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Introduction

A chief tenant of mainstream Christianity is that Jesus was killed on “Good Friday” afternoon and resurrected on “Easter Sunday” morning—a period that includes *parts* of two days, one full day, and two full nights. Christian apologists zealously defend this scenario in spite of Jesus’ clear statement that He would remain in the grave for *three days and three nights* (Matt. 12:38-40).

How do Christian scholars and teachers arrive at this inane conclusion? How do they reconcile the missing *third* night? How long was Jesus *really* in the tomb?

The most popular explanation is that Matthew (the only Gospel writer to note the three days and three nights) was using a common Jewish frame of reference wherein even a *portion* of a day counted as a whole day. Thus, Jesus’ claim of *three days and three nights* is said to be idiomatic, not literal. They reason that *part* of Friday, all of Saturday, and *part* of Sunday counts as three days.

Let us suppose for a moment that this is true. Where is the *third* night? One cannot add Sunday night or it would mean Jesus was raised from the dead on Monday morning. When pushed for an answer, some add Thursday night—claiming it was *included* as part of Friday. But according to that scenario, Jesus would be in the tomb before He was even dead!

Why all the confusion?

There is no question that Hebrew and Aramaic are largely idiomatic languages, and there are biblical passages dealing with time that are admittedly enigmatic. But what is at stake here is the *only sign* that Jesus gave to prove He was the Messiah! Jesus intentionally referenced Jonah’s three days *and* three nights in the belly of a whale. In both Jonah and Matthew, there is no difficulty with the translation—and there is no hidden meaning or cultural idiom. *Jesus was giving a very precise sign*: three days meant *three full days*; three nights meant *three full nights*.

Either this is true or we have *no proof* that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah!

Another way mainstream Christianity gets off track is by assuming that the Sabbath immediately following Jesus’

crucifixion was a *weekly* Sabbath (Mark 15:42). This fits in nicely with their “Good Friday-Easter” scenario. But as this booklet will demonstrate, *that* Sabbath was an annual High Day (John 19:31)—which fell that year on Thursday. As you will see, Jesus was in the tomb the entire High Day (Wednesday night and all of Thursday), all of Thursday night and Friday, and Friday night and all of Saturday, the weekly Sabbath. *This makes a full three days and three nights.* His death occurred late on Wednesday afternoon, and His resurrection took place Saturday evening.

With the help of this booklet, you can prove these things for yourself. Just believe what your Bible actually says—not what religious tradition would have you believe!

JESUS' THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS OF ENTOMBMENT AND THE RESURRECTION

THE EXACT LENGTH OF TIME THAT JESUS WAS IN THE TOMB

Many prophecies in the Old Testament foretold the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. The prophet Daniel foresaw that His life would be taken (Dan. 9:26), and both David and Isaiah described the suffering and humiliation that He would endure before His death (Psa. 22, Isa. 53). Other prophecies pointed to His resurrection to immortality (Psa. 16:10-11, Dan. 7:13-14, Isa. 9:6-7). However, there is no scripture in the Old Testament that foretold the length of time that the Messiah would be in the tomb before He was resurrected from the dead. This prophecy is found only in the Gospel accounts, spoken by Jesus Himself: "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Master, we desire to see a sign from You.' And He answered *and* said to them, '**A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, in like manner the Son of man shall be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights**'" (Matt. 12:38-40).

Jesus spoke these words because the scribes and Pharisees did not believe in Him, nor did they believe that His works of healing were done by the power of God. When they challenged Him to perform a miraculous sign in their presence, Jesus did not do so. Instead, the only sign He gave them was the sign of Jonah the prophet. The fulfillment of this sign was a testimony not only to that generation but to all future generations that He was the Messiah.

The vast majority of Christians today believe that Jesus was crucified and laid in the tomb on a Friday, and He was resurrected on Sunday morning. Thus, He was not in the tomb for three days and three nights, as He had prophesied, but for two nights and one full day. This traditional interpretation of Jesus' death and resurrection is completely contrary to the Gospel accounts.

Nearly all churches within Christendom have misinterpreted

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or rejected the scriptural record. In its place, they have adopted an ancient Babylonian religious tradition that predates the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ by thousands of years.* Various theories have been advanced in an attempt to reconcile this ancient religious tradition with the scriptural accounts, but the error is clearly exposed by examining the accounts that have been accurately recorded and faithfully preserved in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The Gospel accounts do not support the traditional belief in a Good Friday crucifixion and an Easter Sunday resurrection. The facts that are recorded by the Gospel writers reveal a profoundly different time frame for the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

The Scriptural Definition of a Day

Some have claimed that Jesus was using an idiomatic expression when He declared that He would remain in the tomb for three days and three nights. They teach that His words should be interpreted as referring to parts of days rather than to whole days. But when the scriptural use of the term “day” is examined one finds that it is very specific. The Scriptures of the Old Testament show that a day consists of an evening and a morning (Gen. 1). An entire day has two portions: the night portion, which begins at evening, or sunset; and the day portion, which begins at sunrise, or morning. These two consecutive periods are identified as one complete day, reckoned from sunset to sunset, or evening to evening (Lev. 23:32).

According to Scripture, each day has an average of twelve hours in the night portion and twelve hours in the day portion, making a complete day of twenty-four hours. Jesus Himself verified that the day portion is about twelve hours long when He said, “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” (John 11:9.) Jesus also spoke of the three watches of the night, which extended from sunset to sunrise and were each four hours long, making a total of twelve hours (Luke 12:36-38). There is no question that Jesus included a full twelve hours of daylight and a full twelve hours of night in reckoning the length of each calendar day. This scriptural method of reckoning time had been used by the Hebrews for centuries. Moreover, it is clear that Jesus and His disciples observed the Passover and the holy days of God each year according to the

**For historical evidence of the Babylonian practices, see The Two Babylons by Alexander Hislop and The Golden Bough by Sir James George Frazer.*

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determination of the Hebrew Calendar, as God had ordained. This is a key fact in understanding the exact length of time that Jesus was in the tomb.

When the four Gospel accounts are examined, it is clear that the Gospel writers used the scriptural method of reckoning each day from sunset to sunset, or evening to evening. Beginning six days before Jesus' last Passover until the day after His resurrection, the Gospel writers accurately recorded all the events day by day. They took careful note of the mornings and evenings, making it possible to determine the beginning and end of each day. The fact that they meticulously noted the mornings and evenings demonstrates that these days were whole days composed of twenty-four hours. Nowhere do the scriptural records leave room for an interpretation of partial days or partial nights.

An Analysis of the Phrase "Three Days and Three Nights" in the Book of Jonah

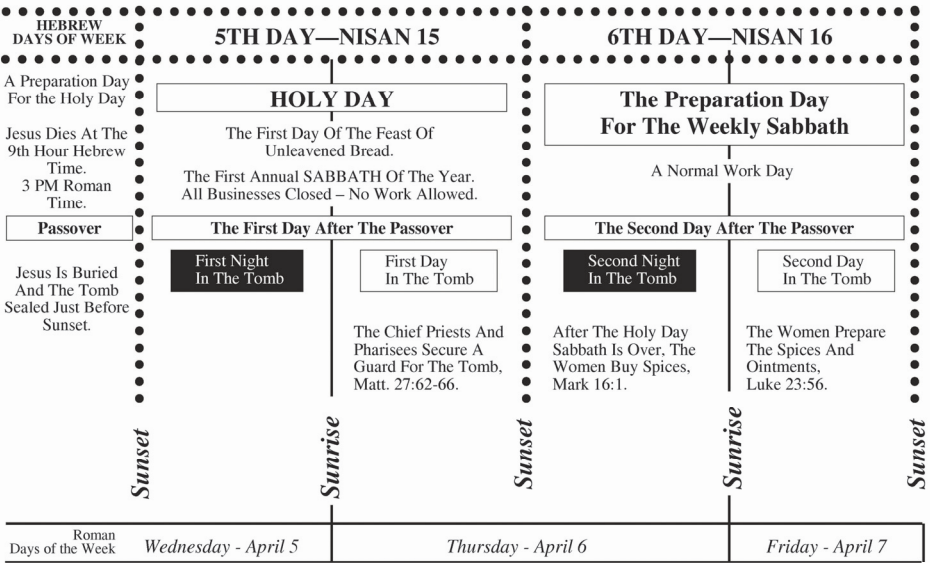
Jesus' prophecy that He would be in the grave for three days and three nights is a direct reference to Jonah 1:17, which speaks of Jonah's symbolic entombment in the belly of a great fish: "And the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

The word "days" in this verse is translated from the Hebrew *yom*, and the word "night" is translated from the Hebrew *lailah*. Both of these words are preceded by the cardinal number "three," which is translated from the Hebrew *shalosh*. This cardinal number is used as an adjective before the nouns "days" and "nights" to express a specific period of time. Other scriptural references confirm the use of cardinal numbers to record the exact duration of a condition or event:

Gen. 7:4	"seven days"
Gen. 7:12	"forty days and forty nights"
Ex. 10:23	"three days"
Ex. 24:18	"forty days and forty nights"
Lev. 12:4	"thirty-three days"
I Sam. 30:12	"three days and three nights"
I Kings 19:8	"forty days and forty nights"

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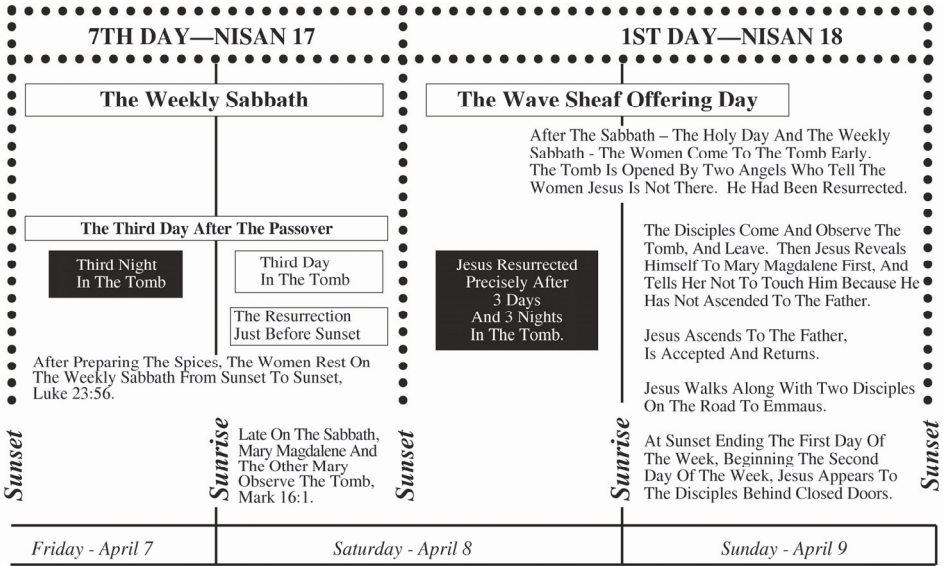
The Three Days and Three Nights In After Three Days



The Key To The Time Period From The Burial To The Resurrection:
Jesus Said He Would Be In The Heart Of The Earth (The Tomb)
Three Days And Three Nights; A Complete 72-Hour Period.

Matt. 12:38-40; 27:63	John 2:18-22
Mark 8:31; 9:31	Acts 10:40
Luke 13:32; 18:33; 24:7, 46	1 Cor. 15:4

The Tomb and The Resurrection and Three Nights



Knowledge of a Wednesday crucifixion was passed down for at least three centuries after the founding of the apostolic church. The *Didascalía*, which dates from the third century, offers historical evidence that the belief in a Friday crucifixion was a change from the original teaching. The following description of the day of Jesus’ crucifixion appears in Book V of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which contains the original words of the *Didascalía*:

“For they began to hold a council against the Lord on the second day of the week, in the first month, which is Xanthicus; and the deliberation continued on the third day of the week; but on the fourth day [Wednesday] they determined to take away His life by crucifixion” (*Apostolic Constitutions—Didascalía Apostolorum*, book V, section I, paragraph xiv). A church historian explains the significance of this record in the *Didascalía*: “...the only reason can have been that Jesus’ passion began on a Wednesday, i.e., the day when He was arrested [and crucified]” (Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church*, p. 69).

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The use of a cardinal number with the terms “days” and “nights” shows that these terms are being used in a very specific sense. The presence of the Hebrew *waw* (the conjunction “and”) between “days” and “nights” makes the meaning of the text even more emphatic, limiting the duration of time to the exact number of days and nights that are specified. By the Scriptural method of reckoning time, it takes an “evening” and a “morning” to complete one full day (Gen. 1:5). Just as “the evening and the morning” in Genesis 1 denote a whole day of twenty-four hours, so the term “a day and a night” denotes a full day of twenty-four hours. In the same way also, the expression “three days and three nights” denotes three whole days of twenty-four hours each.

The Hebrew text leaves no room to interpret the expression “three days and three nights” in Jonah 1:17 in a broad or general sense. The use of this same Hebrew expression in I Samuel 30:12 demonstrates that it is a literal period of three 24-hour days: “... for he had eaten no bread nor drunk water for three days and three nights.” The following verse in I Samuel 30 uses the expression “three days ago” in reference to the period of three days and three nights. These were the words of an Egyptian who was accustomed to reckoning days from sunrise to sunrise. The use of the expression “three days ago” by the Egyptian confirms that he had completed a full three days and three nights of fasting from sunrise on the first day until sunrise on the fourth day. The literal meaning of “three days” in I Samuel 30:13 is confirmed by the use of the same Hebrew expression in II Samuel 24:13 to describe a specific duration of time: “three days’ pestilence.”

The construction of the Hebrew text does not allow the expression “three days and three nights” in Jonah 1:17 to be interpreted in any manner except the literal sense of three 24-hour days. The Hebrew terminology cannot be interpreted as an idiomatic expression that is describing incomplete units of time, such as part of a day and part of a night. To denote incomplete units of time, the Hebrew text uses a word that means “to divide.” This word is not found in the expression “three days and three nights,” either in Jonah 1:17 or in I Samuel 30:12. However, this word is found in reference to a duration of time in Daniel 12:7: “... a time, times, and a half *a time*.” The word “half” is translated from the Hebrew word meaning “to divide.” Since this word is not used to describe the duration of time in Jonah 1:17 and I Samuel

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30:12, it is evident that the Hebrew text is describing complete units of time—three 12-hour days and three 12-hour nights. By testifying that Jonah was in the belly of the fish “three days and three nights,” the Scriptures reveal that a full 72 hours had elapsed before Jonah was cast out on the shore.

The New Testament reveals that Jesus the Christ was the Lord God of the Old Testament before He became a man. He was the one Who caused the great fish to swallow Jonah and descend to the bottom of the sea for a period of time before swimming to the shore and depositing Jonah on the land. As the Lord God, He knew exactly how long Jonah had remained in the belly of the fish, and He inspired Jonah to record this duration of time, which was a foretelling of His future burial. There is no question concerning the length of time that passed as Jonah lay in the belly of the fish, because this fact is preserved in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Since the Hebrew text cannot be interpreted in an idiomatic sense, but must be interpreted literally, it is clear that three whole days and three whole nights passed while Jonah lay in the fish’s belly. Jesus was fully aware of this fact of Scripture when He declared to the Jews, “... **in like manner the Son of man shall be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights**” (Matt. 12:40).

Jesus Said That He Would Rise Three Days After His Death

The Gospel writers record that Jesus made specific statements to His disciples concerning the length of time that He would be in the tomb and when He would be resurrected: “And He began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of man to suffer many things, and to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and **to be killed, but after three days to rise from the dead**” (Mark 8:31; see also Matt. 16:21 and Mark 9:31). Jesus proclaimed to His disciples that He would not rise from the dead until **three days after He had been killed**. Jesus’ statement that **He would rise three days after He had died** is most significant. According to Jewish law, to be declared legally dead, a person had to be dead for more than three full days. If someone who appeared to be dead revived and came back to life prior to three full days, he or she was not legally deemed to have been dead.

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Therefore, if Jesus had risen from the dead before 3 PM on the afternoon of Nisan 17, a weekly Sabbath, He would not have been considered legally dead. As a result, His return to life would not have been considered a true resurrection from the dead.

Knowing this fact, one can understand why Jesus delayed going to Lazarus in the account in John 11. Jesus knew that Lazarus was sick unto death, but He deliberately remained where He was for two more days (John 11:6). He knew that Lazarus would not be considered legally dead until he had been dead for four days. When Lazarus was legally dead, Jesus went to resurrect him from the grave: “Jesus said, **‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of him who had died, said to Him, ‘Lord, he already stinks, for it has been four days.’** Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not say to you that if you will believe, you shall see the glory of God?’ Then they removed the stone *from the tomb* where the dead man had been laid. And Jesus lifted *His* eyes upward and said, ‘Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always; but because of the people who stand around I say *this*, so that they may believe that You did send Me.’ And after He had spoken these things, He cried with a loud voice, **‘Lazarus, come forth.’ And he who had been dead came forth, his feet and hands bound with grave clothes, and his face bound up with a napkin.** Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him and let *him* go’ ” (John 11:39-44).

Like Lazarus, Jesus had to remain dead for a minimum of three full days in order to be declared officially dead. If He had been crucified on a Friday and restored to life on Sunday morning at sunrise, His death would not have been “valid” since only two nights and one day would have passed between Friday sunset and Sunday morning. In order for His death to be publicly recognized and acknowledged, it was necessary for Jesus to remain in the grave for three nights and three days before He was raised from the dead. The Scriptures reveal that Jesus died at the ninth hour, or 3 PM, on the Passover day, Nisan 14, which fell on Wednesday, April 5, in 30 AD (Matt. 27:46 and Mark 15:34), and He was placed in the tomb just before sunset at approximately 6 PM. The Gospel of Matthew describes His burial by Joseph of Arimathea: “And **when evening was coming on**, a rich man of Arimathea came, named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. After going to Pilate, he begged *to have* the body of Jesus. Then Pilate

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commanded the body to be given over *to him*. And after taking the body, Joseph [with the help of Nicodemus (John 19:39)] wrapped it in clean linen cloth, and placed it in his new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and after rolling a great stone to the door of the tomb, he went away” (Matt. 27:57-60). Luke records that “a Sabbath was coming on” (Luke 23:54), which means that by the time they had closed the entrance of the tomb with a huge stone, the Sabbath was nearly upon them. Since all Sabbaths were reckoned from sunset to sunset, it is clear that the sun was about to set.

Both Matthew and Mark testify that Jesus died at the ninth hour, or 3 PM. Luke’s account shows that they closed the entrance to the tomb with a huge stone just before sunset. Because the Passover is in the spring of the year when the days are twelve hours in length, we know that the tomb was closed at about 6 PM. Since He died about 3 PM, Jesus was dead for approximately 75 hours before He was resurrected. The total length of time included three days (from sunrise to sunset) and three nights (from sunset to sunrise) plus approximately three hours. Because He had been dead for more than three days, His death was legally established. When He appeared to His disciples three days after He had been placed in the tomb, the reality of His resurrection was beyond question.

Additional Statements of Jesus Confirm That He Was in the Tomb for Three Days and Three Nights

While Matthew and Mark record Jesus saying that He would be raised “after three days,” Luke records that He would be raised “on the third day.” Luke wrote: “For He shall be delivered up to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and insulted and spit upon. And after scourging *Him*, they shall kill Him; **but on the third day, He shall rise again**” (Luke 18:32-33).

The apostle John records another statement by Jesus that He would be raised up “in three days.” Jesus made this statement when the Jews confronted Him for casting the money exchangers out of the temple and driving out the animals they were selling: “... The Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it**

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up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘This temple was forty-six years in building, and You will raise it up in three days?’ **But He spoke concerning the temple of His body.** Therefore, when He was raised from *the* dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scriptures, and the word that Jesus had spoken” (John 2:18-22).

The phrase “in three days” contains the Greek preposition *en*. This Greek preposition, which is translated “in” in John 2:19-20, can also mean “within.” At first glance, the statements “**in three days**” and “**on the third day**” appear to conflict with the statement that He would be raised “**after three days.**” How is it possible for all three of Jesus’ statements to be correct?

When we understand Jesus’ statements, we find that instead of being contradictory, they reveal the exact time that He was raised from the dead. Jesus made it clear that He would be raised after He had been dead for three days. The other statements, “**in three days**” and “**on the third day,**” do not include the total time that He was dead but only the time that He was buried in the tomb. The Gospel accounts show that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus closed the tomb just before sunset, three hours after Jesus died on the cross. Although He was in the tomb for exactly three days and three nights, He was dead for a longer period than that. Thus He rose from the dead “**after three days.**” The difference between this statement and the statements “**in three days**” and “**on the third day**” is that these two statements refer to His burial “**in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.**”

When one compares all of Jesus’ statements, it is evident that they place specific limits on the time frame between His death and resurrection. Of itself, “**in three days**” could mean any time on the third day, even the first minute of the third day. “**On the third day**” could mean any time on the third day up to the last minute on the third day. But the statement that He would “**be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights**” shows that three whole days and three whole nights would pass while He lay in the tomb.

When all of Jesus’ statements are taken into consideration, there is only one moment of time to which all can apply. Here is the explanation: The end of the third day is still “on” and “in” the third day. At the end of the third day, precisely at sunset, Jesus was resurrected. This was the only moment of time that could fulfill all

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of Jesus' prophecies concerning the time of His death, the length of time that He would be in the tomb, and the time of His resurrection.

The Gospels record that Jesus died on the Passover day, Nisan 14, which fell on a Wednesday in 30 AD. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus placed Jesus' body in the tomb and closed the entrance with a huge stone when the sun was setting at approximately 6 PM, ending Nisan 14. Jesus was resurrected from the dead precisely three days and three nights later, when the sun was setting at the end of the weekly Sabbath, or Saturday, Nisan 17, 30 AD. As He had prophesied, He remained in the tomb for three full days and three full nights. **Jesus the Christ was raised from the dead at sunset on the weekly Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. He had already been resurrected when the sun rose on Sunday, the first day of the week.** (*Please see the chart on pages 4-5*).

Scriptural Evidence of Two Sabbaths During the Three Days and Three Nights

According to religious tradition, Jesus was crucified on a Friday. This religious tradition appears to be supported by the statement in John 19:31 that the day of His death "was the preparation." Most have assumed that this statement refers to the Jews' preparation for the weekly Sabbath. They fail to realize that the Passover day, on which Jesus died, has always been a preparation day for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follows (Lev. 23:4-6). The first day of this feast, Nisan 15, is observed as an annual holy day, or "high day." Like the Passover day, it may fall on different days of the week. Regardless of which day of the week it falls on, it is always observed as an annual Sabbath, and the day portion of the Passover is always used as a day of preparation. It is erroneous to interpret "the preparation" in John 19:31 as evidence that the day of the crucifixion was a Friday.

The mistaken belief in a Friday crucifixion is based on the assumption that there was only one Sabbath during the crucifixion week. However, the Scriptures clearly reveal that during that week there were two Sabbaths. The first Sabbath was an annual holy day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The second Sabbath was the weekly Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

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Consequently, during the week of Jesus' crucifixion there were two preparation days. The day portion of Nisan 14, the Passover day, was the preparation day for the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 15th, which was an annual Sabbath. The following day, the 16th, which was a Friday, was the preparation day for the weekly Sabbath.

When the Gospel of John is examined, it is evident that the Sabbath immediately following the day Jesus died was an annual Sabbath: "The Jews therefore, so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, because it was **a preparation day (for that Sabbath was a high day)** ..." (John 19:31). The term "high day" was never used to refer to the weekly Sabbath, but only to annual Sabbaths. John's use of this term makes it clear that the Sabbath that was about to begin was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15. Mark's account makes reference to the coming of sunset, which would bring the end of the preparation and the beginning of the annual Sabbath, or high day: "**Now evening was coming, and since it was a preparation, (that is, the day before a Sabbath)** ..." (Mark 15:42).

As the Gospel of Luke shows, this Sabbath was about to begin when Jesus was put into the tomb: "Now it was **a preparation day, and a Sabbath was coming on**. And *the* women also, who had come with Him from Galilee, followed *and* saw the tomb, and how His body was laid" (Luke 23:54-55).

The Gospels record the events that followed Jesus' burial. On Nisan 15, the day after the crucifixion, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate to request that guards be assigned to watch Jesus' tomb. Because they were afraid that the disciples would come and steal away His body, they did not hesitate to take care of their business on the holy day (Matt. 27:62-66). While the priests and Pharisees went to Pilate, the women who followed Jesus were observing the annual Sabbath, as commanded by God. They could not buy spices on that day because all the businesses were closed in observance of the command to rest (Lev. 23:6-7). After the end of that Sabbath, or high day, they bought spices and aromatic oils to anoint Jesus. Mark relates this event: "**Now when the Sabbath had passed**, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the *mother* of James, and Salome bought aromatic oils, so that they might come and anoint Him" (Mark 16:1).

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It is quite evident that the women could not have purchased the spices until after the high day, or annual Sabbath, had ended. The high day began when the Passover day, Nisan 14, ended at sunset. The observance of the high day, Nisan 15, lasted until the following sunset, which began Nisan 16. The women bought the spices “**when the Sabbath had passed**” and prepared them on the same day. When they had finished, they observed a **second Sabbath**: “And they returned *to the city, and* prepared spices and ointments, and *then rested on the Sabbath* according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56). The Gospel records concerning the buying and preparation of the spices by the women clearly reveal the observance of two Sabbaths during the crucifixion week.

Two Women View the Tomb Late on the Weekly Sabbath

Before the weekly Sabbath came to an end, Matthew records that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to observe the tomb: “Now late on the Sabbath, as *the first day of the weeks* was drawing near, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to observe the sepulcher” (Matt. 28:1). Because it was still the Sabbath day, the women did not come to anoint His body with the spices they had prepared. Perhaps they went to observe the tomb because they remembered Jesus’ words that after three days and three nights in the grave, He would rise from the dead.

After the two women viewed the tomb and saw that the stone covering the entrance was still in place with the soldiers standing guard, they returned home for the night. The next morning, as they were coming back to the tomb, they were wondering who might roll back the stone so that they could anoint Jesus’ body: “And very early on the *first day of the weeks*, at the rising of the sun, they were coming to the tomb; and they were asking themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ ” (Mark 16:2-3) But when the women arrived, they found that the stone had already been removed and the tomb was empty. The three days and three nights had ended at sunset on the weekly Sabbath, and Jesus had risen from the dead! (See Chart on pages 4-5 for The Three Days and Three Nights in the Tomb and the Resurrection After Three Days and Three Nights.)

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“Today Is the Third Day Since These Things Took Place”

Those who believe in a Sunday resurrection point to a statement in Luke 24:21 as evidence that Jesus rose from the dead at sunrise on the first day of the week. This statement was made by two of Jesus’ disciples: “... today is the third day since these things were done.” Because this statement was made on the first day of the week, many have assumed that Jesus rose from the dead early that morning. The King James Version reads:

“And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

“And he said unto them, ‘What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?’ And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, ‘Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?’ And he said unto them, ‘What things?’

“And they said unto him, ‘Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and **beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done**’ ” (Luke 24:13-21 KJV).

An Exegesis of Luke 24:21 Reveals the True Meaning of the “Third Day”

The translation of Luke 24:21 that appears in the *King James Version* has been used to support the teaching that the resurrection took place at sunrise on the first day of the week. However, the Gospel accounts clearly show that Jesus had already risen from the dead before the women came to the tomb at sunrise. There is no question that Jesus was in the tomb for “three days and three nights,” beginning at sunset on Wednesday, Nisan 14, and ending

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at sunset on the weekly Sabbath, Nisan 17, in 30 AD. Jesus rose at the end of the three days and three nights, exactly as He had declared.

When one analyzes the phrasing that is used in the Greek text, one will see that the disciples were not talking about that day being the “third day” since Jesus was crucified. Let us examine this verse as translated in interlinear form by George Ricker Berry from the Stephens text of 1550, the same text that was used by the King James translators:

ημεις δε ηλπιζομεν οτι αυτος εστιν ο μελλω λυτρουσ
θαι τον Ισραηλ.

But we were hoping he it is who is about to redeem Israel.

αλλα συν πασιν τουτιος τριτην ταυτην ημεραν αγει
ει ηνερον αφ ου

but then with all these things third this day brings today since
ταυτα εγενετο.
these things came to pass.

In order to correctly interpret the meaning of the Greek text, we must examine the two expressions that are underlined:

1) τριτην ταυτην ημεραν αγει (*triten tauten hemeran agei*)

A. T. Robertson informs us that this expression is an idiom: “{Now the third day} (τριτην ταυτην ημεραν αγει *triten tauten hemeran agei*). **A difficult idiom for the English**” (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, s.v. Luke 24:21). *Vincent’s Word Studies* concurs that this is a difficult idiom to render into English.

Because τριτην ταυτην ημεραν αγει *triten tauten hemeran agei* is an idiomatic expression, its true meaning cannot be understood by translating the Greek words literally, as the King James translators have done. The literal translation of this expression in the *KJV* (and many other translations) only serves to distort the true meaning of Luke’s words in the Greek text. Edward Hobbs, a scholar who began teaching the Greek language over 50 years ago, recently wrote the following to another scholar regarding the translation of idioms: “But may I speak to the larger question of what are called ‘**IDIOMS**’ in language-teaching....What older books almost always meant by an ‘idiom’ was **something which,**

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when translated word-for-word into English either didn't make sense or made the wrong sense ... But the fact is, very little in other languages means the same thing when put word-for-word into English....**The semantic value of a word should always be evaluated contextually ... the good lexicons** [like Arndt and Gingrich] **already do this**, without singling such phrases for separate listing....**This principle applies equally to individual words and to strings of words which are semantically opaque (Idioms)**" (Bold emphasis added).

Hobbs concludes his remarks by stating, "One of the real reasons for studying ancient Greek is to learn how they thought about things, especially how they thought DIFFERENTLY about things, not simply what different thoughts they had about things....**We need to learn what translations cannot reveal: How the thinking itself was oriented differently**" (Edward Hobbs, EHOBBS@wellesley.edu, 12 Jul 1997, bold emphasis added).

Since the true meaning of Luke 24:21 depends on a proper understanding of the idiomatic expression that Luke used, we must examine the use of this expression by other writers of that era. When we examine their works, we find that **τριτος** *tritos* often appears in classical Greek literature as an expression of **completed time** (Liddell, Scott and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. "Tritos"). Notice Josephus' use of the word in this manner: "When the rigour of winter was over, Herod removed his army, and came near to Jerusalem, and pitched his camp hard by the city. Now this was the third [*tritos*] year since he had been made king at Rome ..." (Josephus, *Ant.*, 14:15:14). As defined by classical Greek literature, Josephus' words indicate that Herod undertook the conquest of Jerusalem at the completion of his third regnal year; that is, after three full years—not at any time during the third year. As we will see, the additional use of **αφ ου** *aph hou* in conjunction with **τριτος** *tritos* makes the meaning of this idiom even more emphatic.

2) **αφ ου** *aph hou*

The function of this Greek expression is quite different from the idiomatic use of the first expression. **Αφ ου** *aph hou* is a linguistic formula and is very precise in meaning. It is used in

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classical Greek to delimit a **period of time that has been completed**. Arndt and Gingrich inform us that the translators of the Septuagint used **αφ ου** *aph hou* as a formula in Daniel 12:1, showing that this usage was common as early as the fourth century BC. **Αφ ου** *aph hou* was used in the same manner by the Levitical writers of the Maccabees nearly a century and a half later (see I Macc 9:29; 16:24; and 2 Macc 1:7 in the Septuagint). Arndt and Gingrich report that Josephus also used the expression in the same manner. The usage of this Greek formula by Josephus is of great value to our understanding, as he wrote within a short time after Luke wrote his Gospel. The English translation of Josephus' words is given below:

“(6)[78] Then it was that Miriam, the sister of Moses, came to her end, **having completed her fortieth year since [αφ ου** *aph' hou* **she left Egypt**, on the first day of the lunar month Xanthicus.”

The use of **αφ ου** *aph hou* in Josephus' works and the works of classical Greek writers enables us to understand the true meaning of Luke 24:21. As a formula, **αφ ου** *aph hou* specifically refers to completed time and cannot be construed as referring to time that is in progress. Thus Luke's use of **αφ ου** *aph hou* with **τριτην** *triten* must be interpreted as evidence **that the third day had already been completed**.

Thus it is erroneous to interpret Luke 24:21 as evidence that the first day of the week was “the third day since these things were done.” The use of **αφ ου** *aph hou* with the idiomatic expression **τριτην ταυτην ημεραν αγει** *triten tauten hemeren agei* clearly conveys time that had already been completed and should be translated accordingly. When the disciples spoke of the “third day,” the three days and three nights of Jesus' entombment had already been completed, although they did not yet know that Jesus had already been raised from the dead.

In addition, the use of **τριτος** *tritos* in the Gospel of Matthew clearly confirms that this Greek idiom refers to the completion of the three days: “Now on the next day, which followed the preparation *day*, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying, ‘Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while *He was living*, “After three days I *will rise*.” Therefore, command *that* the sepulcher be secured until **the third day** [**της τριτης ημερας** *tes trites emeras*]; lest His disciples come by night and steal Him

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away, and say to the people, “He is risen from the dead”; and the last deception shall be worse than the first’ ” (Matt. 27:62-64).

It is evident that the phrase “**the third day**” in Matthew 27:64 refers to the completion of the three-day period, as the chief priests and Pharisees were fully aware of Jesus’ declaration that He would rise “**after three days.**” It would make no sense to request a guard for the first and second days only, since He had declared that He would not rise before the third day; and this was the most likely day for an attempt to be made by the disciples if they had desired to steal His body.

As “**the third day**” in Matthew 27:64 refers to the end of Jesus’ three days and three nights in the tomb, so “**the third day**” in Luke 24:21 refers to the end of the three days and three nights. As in every other reference to “**the third day**” that we find in the Gospel accounts, the focus in Luke 24:21 is on **the completion of Jesus’ three days and three nights in the tomb.** Thus “the third day” did not include any part of the first day of the week. It is a mistake to apply this expression to the first day of the week when the records of Jesus’ crucifixion and burial clearly show that His three days and three nights in the tomb began at sunset on Wednesday, Nisan 14. He remained in “the heart of the earth” from the beginning of Nisan 15, which was an annual Sabbath or “high day,” until the end of Nisan 17, a weekly Sabbath. At the end of the weekly Sabbath, precisely as the sun was setting, He was resurrected from the dead. When the first day of the week arrived, the three days and three nights had been brought to completion.

The following translations of Luke 24:21 convey the true meaning of the phrasing that is used in the Greek text:

“... three days have already passed....” (Berkeley)

“... three days ago....” (Moffatt)

Both of these translations convey the idiomatic usage of **τρίτος** *tritōs* and the use of **ἀφ’ οὗ** *aph’ hou* as a formula to express a period of time that has been completed.

Based on this information, a precise translation of Luke 24:13-21, which conveys the true meaning of the Greek text, follows:

“And behold, on the same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, which was about sixty furlongs from

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Jerusalem. And they were talking with one another about all the things that had taken place.

“And it came to pass, as they were talking and reasoning, that Jesus Himself drew near *and* went with them; but their eyes were restrained, *so that* they did not know Him. And He said to them, ‘What *are* these words that you are exchanging with one another as you walk, and *why* are you downcast in countenance?’ Then the one named Cleopas answered *and* said to Him, ‘Are You only traveling through Jerusalem, and have not known of the things that have happened in these days?’

“And He said to them, ‘What things?’ And they said to Him, ‘The things concerning Jesus the Nazarean, a Man Who was a prophet, Who was mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to *the* judgment of death, and crucified Him. And we were hoping that He was the One Who would redeem Israel. But besides all these things, **as of today, the third day has already passed since these things took place**’”(Luke 24:13-21).

When correctly translated, Luke 24:21 does not support the teaching that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on the first day of the week at sunrise. Those who believe that He was resurrected at sunrise on Easter Sunday have been taught a falsehood! This religious myth rejects the sign of Jonah, which was the only sign that Jesus Christ gave as proof that He was the Messiah. Those who participate in the traditional observance of a Friday crucifixion and an Easter Sunday resurrection are observing traditions of men. Jesus said, “Well did Isaiah prophesy concerning you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me.’ But **in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men....Full well do you reject the commandment of God, so that you may observe your own tradition**” (Mark 7:6-9).

The God of truth cannot be honored by practicing a lie. God the Father rejects that kind of vain worship. Rather, He is seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth, as Jesus said: “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is indeed seeking those who worship Him in this manner. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24).

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In order to worship God the Father and Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth, one must repent of his or her sins, accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, be baptized by full immersion in water, receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands, and live from that time forward in the love and grace of God by keeping His commandments. These commandments include keeping the seventh-day Sabbath each week, and keeping the Christian Passover and the annual holy days of God at their appointed times each year. Only those who are under His grace, keeping all His commandments and living by His every word, are worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

THE FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD NISAN 15 – THURSDAY, APRIL 6 – 30 AD

ON THE HOLY DAY, GUARDS ARE PLACED AT THE TOMB

MATTHEW 27

62. Now on the next day, which followed the preparation *day*, the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate,

63. Saying, “Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while *He was* living, ‘After three days I *will* rise.’

64. Therefore, command *that* the sepulcher be secured until the third day; lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, ‘He is risen from the dead’; and the last deception shall be worse than the first.”

65. Then Pilate said to them, “You have a guard. Go, make *it* as secure as you know *how*.”

66. And they went *and* made the sepulcher secure, sealing the stone *and* setting the guard.

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**THE PREPERATION DAY FOR THE
WEEKLY SABBATH
NISAN 6 – FRIDAY, APRIL 7 – 30 AD
AFTER THE HOLY DAY IS OVER,
THE WOMEN BUY AND PREPARE SPICES**

MARK 16

1. Now when the Sabbath had passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the *mother* of James; and Salome bought aromatic oils, so that they might come and anoint Him

LUKE 23

56. And they returned *to the city, and* prepared spices and ointments...

**THE WEEKLY SABBATH
NISAN 17 – SATURDAY, APRIL 8 – 30 AD
THE WOMEN REST ON THE
WEEKLY SABBATH**

LUKE 23

56. ...and *then* rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

**TOWARD THE END OF THE
WEEKLY SABBATH, MARY MAGDALENE
AND MARY GO TO OBSERVE THE TOMB**

MATTHEW 28

1. Now late on the Sabbath, as *the first day of the weeks* was drawing near, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to observe the sepulcher.

THE EVENTS ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK—THE WAVE SHEAF DAY TO THE ASCENSION

The scriptural records and the calculations of the Hebrew calendar prove conclusively that Jesus was resurrected when the sun set at the end of the weekly Sabbath. The Gospel accounts do not directly reveal what Jesus did between the time that He was resurrected and the time that He was seen by Mary Magdalene the next morning. However, from the scriptural records we can piece together what Jesus did from the time that He was resurrected until He ascended to be accepted by God the Father in the morning as the true Wave Sheaf. The account in the Gospel of John gives us an understanding of what Jesus did first when He came back to life in the tomb: “Then Simon Peter came following him, and he went into the tomb and **saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that had been on His head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself**” (John 20:6-7).

The record of John shows that when Jesus came back to life, He rose straight out of the burial wrappings without disturbing them. When Peter entered the tomb, he saw Jesus’ burial wrappings still in the form of His body. This was absolute proof that Jesus had risen from the dead, and no one had taken His body. If someone had taken away His body, it would still have been wrapped with the linen burial cloths.

After rising out of the burial wrappings, Jesus took off the napkin that covered His head and neatly folded it and placed it close by, separate from the other burial cloths. This was an additional proof that He was alive. If anyone had taken His body, the napkin would have either remained on His head or fallen to the ground. It would not have been folded and placed neatly by itself. The apostle John, who was with Peter, saw these things and believed (verse 8).

After folding the napkin, Jesus undoubtedly offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God the Father for raising Him back to life. Perhaps Jesus thought of the prophecy of His resurrection in Psalm 16: “The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup; You shall uphold my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a beautiful inheritance....Therefore

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My heart is glad, and My glory rejoices; **My flesh also shall rest in safety, for You will not abandon My soul to the grave; neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.** You will make known to Me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (verses 5-6, 9-11).

After offering His prayer of thanksgiving, Jesus must have left the tomb. He did not need to have the stone removed from the entrance of the tomb because He was now spirit and had the ability to pass through matter. The Gospel of Luke confirms this fact. Luke records that approximately twenty-four hours after His resurrection, Jesus suddenly appeared in a closed room where the disciples were assembled. This took place late on the first day of the week, after He had walked with the two disciples to the village of Emmaus: “And they [the two disciples] rose up that very hour *and* returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and those with them assembled together, saying, ‘In truth, the Lord has risen! And He has appeared to Simon.’ Then they related the things that had happened *to them* on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of the bread. Now as they were telling these things, **Jesus Himself stood in their midst** and said to them, ‘Peace *be* to you’ ” (Luke 24:33-36).

The apostle John also wrote of Jesus’ sudden appearance: “Afterwards, as evening was drawing near that day, the first *day* of the weeks, and **the doors were shut where the disciples had assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst**, and said to them, ‘Peace *be* to you.’ And after saying this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples rejoiced *because* they had seen the Lord” (John 20:19-20).

Because the resurrected Jesus had the ability to pass through matter, He was able to leave the tomb before the stone was rolled away from the entrance. It is certain that He left the tomb almost immediately after He was resurrected. Remember, Jesus had said, “...the Son of man shall be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.” If He had remained in the tomb for any length of time after His resurrection, He would have been in the heart of the earth for more than three days and three nights.

Where did Jesus go after He left the tomb? The Scriptures do not specify. However, it is probable that He went to a place on the Mount of Olives. Luke records that Jesus was accustomed to going there, where He had a special place of prayer. On the Passover

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night, after Jesus instituted the New Covenant ceremony, He and the disciples had gone to the Mount of Olives: **“Then He left the house and went, as He was accustomed, to the Mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He arrived at the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you do not enter into temptation.’ And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw; and falling to His knees, He prayed”** (Luke 22:39-41).

In his account, Matthew identifies the place of prayer as Gethsemane: “Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, ‘Sit here, while I go onward and pray’ ” (Matt. 26:36). This is the place where Jesus prayed for nearly three hours before He was arrested (verses 37-44).

Since Jesus did not ascend to the Father until the morning after His resurrection, it is very probable that He went to the Mount of Olives to His special place of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Once there, Jesus most certainly would have offered up prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God the Father the entire night for having raised Him from the dead. We are able to get a glimpse of what Jesus might have prayed from the prophecies in the book of Psalms that foretold Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Jesus Christ had complete faith that God the Father would raise Him from the dead. Psalm 108 reveals Jesus’ faith for that deliverance: “O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and I will give praise, even with my glory. Awake, harp and lyre; I will awake early. **I will praise You, O LORD, among the people; and I will sing praises to You among the nations,** for Your mercy is great above the heavens; and Your truth reaches unto the clouds.

“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and Your glory above all the earth, so that Your beloved [Jesus Christ, the Father’s beloved Son] may be delivered [from the power of death]; save with Your right hand, and answer me. God has spoken in His holiness [to raise Jesus from the dead]: “I will rejoice...” (Psa. 108:1-7).

Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews confirms that while Jesus was still in the flesh, He cried out to the Father to save Him from death: “Who, in the days of His flesh, **offered up both prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because He feared God.** Although He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience from the things that He suffered; and having been perfected, He

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became *the* Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him...” (Heb. 5:7-9). During His life in the flesh, Jesus had prayed fervently to the Father for strength to resist temptation, so that He would not incur the death penalty for sin, but might lay down His life as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. Since He prayed so fervently before He died, He must have been equally fervent in thanking and praising the Father for having raised Him from the dead.

We know that the words of Psalm 22 were uttered by Jesus as He was dying on the cross. Just before He died, He uttered the last words of Psalm 22, “It is finished” fulfilled in John 19:30. The following psalm, Psalm 23, has far more meaning when viewed in the context of His crucifixion and resurrection. Could He not also have uttered these words in His prayers to God the Father after He was resurrected?

“The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want [lack any thing]. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul [by the resurrection]; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death [the crucifixion], I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever [into the ages of eternity]” (Psa. 23:1-6).

The Events on the Morning After Jesus’ Resurrection

The Gospel accounts show that as the sun was rising, early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women came bringing spices to anoint Jesus’ body. Although Mary Magdalene left home while it was still dark, by the time she arrived at the tomb it was light enough for her to see that the stone had been removed (John 20:1). Apparently, just before she and the other women arrived, an angel had opened the tomb. If it had been opened for any length of time before the women arrived, the soldiers would not have been standing guard. “And *in the morning* suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of *the* Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone from the door,

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and sat upon it. Now his appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him, those who were keeping guard trembled, and became as dead *men*” (Matt. 28:2-4).

As the women were approaching the tomb, they were wondering who would roll away the huge stone from the entrance of the tomb in order for them to anoint Jesus’ body with the spices. But when they arrived, they saw that the stone had already been removed and the tomb was open. Mark gives this account: “And very early on the first *day* of the weeks, at the rising of the sun, they were coming to the tomb; and they were asking themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ For it was a massive *stone*. **But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away.** And after entering the tomb, they saw a young man [the angel who had rolled away the stone] sitting on the right, clothed in a white robe; and they were very frightened. But he said to them, ‘**Do not be afraid. You are seeking Jesus the Nazarene, Who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. Look, *there is the place where they laid Him.*** But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him, as He said to you.’ And they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them; and they did not say anything to anyone because they were afraid” (Mark 16:2-8).

The Gospel accounts clearly record that the angel told the women, “**He is risen. He is not here.**” **Jesus was not in the tomb!** Jesus was not there because He had been resurrected from the dead as the weekly Sabbath ended over twelve hours earlier. He did not need the stone to be rolled away to leave the tomb, because He had the power to pass through matter. However, it was necessary for the stone to be removed in order for the women to see that He was not there. They found the tomb empty except for the grave cloths that had been wound around His body.

When the other women left to tell the disciples, Mary Magdalene went to tell Peter and John: “Then she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, ‘They have taken away the Lord from the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.’ As a result, Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. Now the two ran together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and came to the tomb first; and he stooped down *and* saw the

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linen cloths lying *there*, but he did not enter.

“Then Simon Peter came following him, and he went into the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that had been on His head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had come to the tomb first, also went in and saw *these things*; and he believed. For they did not yet understand the scripture *which decreed* that He must rise from *the* dead. Then the disciples went away again to their *home*” (John 20:2-10).

After Peter and John left, Mary Magdalene remained at the tomb because she thought that “they had taken away the Lord,” and she did not know where He was. “But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white who were sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. 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’ ” (John 20:11-13).

After all those things transpired, Jesus returned to the tomb and appeared to Mary Magdalene: “And after saying these things, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ Thinking that He was the gardener, she said to Him, ‘Sir, if you have carried Him off, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ Turning around, she said to Him, ‘Rabboni’; that is to say, ‘Teacher.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Do not touch Me, because I have not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brethren and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’ Mary Magdalene came to the disciples, bringing word that she had seen the Lord, and that He had said these things to her” (verses 14-18).

Correcting the Misinterpretation of Mark 16:9

In the *King James Version*, Mark 16:9 reads as follows: “**Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week**, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene....” This translation makes it appear that Jesus was resurrected early in the morning on the first day of the week. However, the Gospel accounts show that Jesus

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was raised at the close of the weekly Sabbath, approximately twelve hours before the women came to the tomb. The erroneous impression that the *KJV* translation gives can be corrected simply by the addition of a comma in the proper place: “**Now when Jesus was risen**, early *the first day* of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene....” A more accurate translation, as well as the proper placement of the comma, clears up any misunderstanding or misinterpretation. It reads as follows: “**Now after Jesus had risen**, early *the first day* of the weeks He appeared first to Mary Magdalene....” With the proper translation and placement of the comma, this verse harmonizes with the rest of the scriptural facts as found in the other Gospel accounts.

Jesus Fulfilled the Wave Sheaf Offering

In John’s Gospel we find this post-resurrection account: “Jesus said to her [Mary Magdalene], ‘**Do not touch Me, because I have not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brethren and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God**’ ” (John 20:17).

When Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, He did not allow her to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to God the Father. The words that He spoke to her show that He was about to ascend. We can conclude that He ascended to the Father soon after she left to tell the disciples. When Jesus ascended, He fulfilled a very special temple ceremony that God had commanded for this day. This ceremony was the presentation of the wave sheaf offering of the first of the firstfruits of the grain harvest, which was performed at approximately 9 AM in the morning, after the morning burnt offering had been made. It was at this time that Jesus ascended to God the Father.

The wave sheaf was offered each year on the first day of the week during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As the sacrifice of the Passover lamb was a foretype of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, so the offering of the wave sheaf was a foretype of Jesus’ ascension to the Father. This day was a special day, but not a holy day. At the temple, on the first day of the week during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the priest would perform the wave sheaf ritual. We find God’s command for the wave sheaf offering in the book of Leviticus: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

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‘Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, “When you have come into the land which I give to you, and shall reap the harvest of it, then you shall bring *the premier* sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD to be accepted for you. On the next day after the Sabbath [the first day of the week during the Feast of Unleavened Bread] the priest shall wave it” ’ ’ (Lev. 23:9-11).

Messianic Rabbi Alfred Edersheim records the details of the harvesting of the wave sheaf in his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*:

“This Passover-sheaf was reaped in public the evening before it was offered, and it was to witness this ceremony that the crowd had gathered around the elders. Already on the 14th [of] Nisan the spot whence the first sheaf was to be reaped had been marked out, by tying together in bundles, while still standing, the barley that was to be cut down, according to custom, in the sheltered Ashes-Valley across Kidron. When the time for cutting the sheaf had arrived—that is, on the evening of the 15th [of] Nisan [by Pharisaic reckoning], even though it were a Sabbath [the journey to harvest was undertaken before the end of the Sabbath, but was within the prescribed traditional “Sabbath day’s journey”], just as the sun went down, three men, each with a sickle and basket, set to work.

“Clearly to bring out what was distinctive in the ceremony, they first asked of the bystanders three times each of these questions: ‘HAS THE SUN GONE DOWN?’ ‘With this sickle?’ ‘Into this basket?’ ‘On this Sabbath? (or first Passover-day)’—and lastly, ‘Shall I reap?’ Having each time been answered in the affirmative, they cut down barley to the amount of one ephah, or about three pecks and three pints of our English measure” (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 619).

Note: There was a dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees as to which Sabbath this verse is designating. The Pharisees applied this command to the first holy day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was the 15th day of the first month, or Nisan. In their view, the “morrow after the Sabbath”—the day for harvesting the wave sheaf—was always the 16th of Nisan. On the other hand, the Sadducees, who were in charge of the temple during the days of Jesus Christ, understood that God’s command in Leviticus 23:11 was referring to the weekly Sabbath which occurred in conjunction with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In

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years when the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread fell on the weekly Sabbath, both the Sadducees and the Pharisees would observe the 16th of Nisan as the day for the wave sheaf offering. Although the Sadducees and the Pharisees generally disagreed over the correct DAY for the wave sheaf offering, there was never any question about the correct TIME of the day for harvesting it.

After it was cut, the bundled sheaf was brought to the temple and placed alongside the altar of burnt offering. Then in the morning, after the daily burnt offering of a lamb, the priest would “wave” or elevate the sheaf to be accepted of the Lord. This was a special ceremonial sheaf. In *The Shocken Bible, Volume I, The Five Books of Moses*, Everett Fox translates Leviticus 23:10-11 in this manner: “Speak to the children of Israel and say to them; When you enter the land that I am giving you, and you harvest its harvest, you are to bring **the premier sheaf** of your harvest to the priest. He is to elevate the sheaf before the presence of YHWH for acceptance for you; on the morrow of the Sabbath the priest shall elevate it.”

Note the key words in God’s instructions for the wave sheaf offering: “for acceptance for you,” meaning “on your behalf.” When Jesus Christ ascended to the Father on the Wave Sheaf Day, as the first of the firstfruits, His sacrifice for our sins was accepted by the Father on our behalf. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, was accepted as the sin offering not only for our sins but for the sins of all mankind: “...The Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Jesus fulfilled the wave sheaf offering as the first of the firstfruits to be resurrected from the dead. The premier sheaf symbolized the risen Christ. When the priest elevated the sheaf to be accepted by the Lord, it represented Jesus Christ ascending to the Father to be accepted as the first of the firstfruits. The apostle Paul makes it clear that this premier sheaf of the firstfruits was a type of Jesus Christ after He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to present Himself to God the Father: “But now Christ has been raised from *the* dead; **He has become the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep**. For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came the* resurrection of *the* dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: **Christ *the* firstfruit**; then, those who are Christ’s at His coming” (I Cor. 15:20-23).

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Because Jesus is the first of many who will be resurrected from the dead as immortal children of God, He is also called “the firstborn from among the dead,” as Paul writes to the Colossians: “Because by Him were all things created, the things in heaven and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all, and by Him all things subsist. **And He is the Head of the body, the church; Who is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that in all things He Himself might hold the preeminence**” (Col. 1:16-18).

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul makes it clear that many will be resurrected from the grave and be added to the Family of God as immortal brethren of Jesus Christ: “Because those whom He did foreknow, He also predestinated *to be* conformed to the image of His own Son, **that He might be the firstborn among many brethren**” (Rom. 8:29). Paul also tells the Corinthians that those who die in the faith will be resurrected at His coming. The resurrection of the saints of God to immortality and glory will mark the end of the firstfruits harvest, just as the resurrection of Jesus signaled its beginning. As He ascended to heaven in the clouds, so He will return, and all the transformed saints will rise into the air to meet Him. The entrance of the saints into the Family of God has been made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which was accepted by God the Father on the Wave Sheaf Day.

Jesus Christ Accepted by God the Father

The ascension of Jesus to God the Father was an awesome event. Jesus Christ had finished the work that the Father had given Him to do. As God manifest in the flesh, He had lived a perfect, sinless life and had died by crucifixion to become the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. God the Father had raised Jesus back to life, and on the Wave Sheaf Day He was ready to ascend to the throne of God the Father to be accepted as the first of the firstfruits, the firstborn among many brethren, and the perfect sacrifice to propitiate the sins of the world.

As He was ascending to the Father, Jesus must have been filled with great joy and anticipation. He would see the Father face to face for the first time since He had become a pinpoint of

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life when He divested Himself of His power and glory as God to be born of the virgin Mary. Again, the Psalms help us comprehend some of the thoughts and feelings that Jesus might have experienced as He looked forward to being reunited with the Father: **“O God, You are my God, earnestly I will seek You! My soul thirsts for You. My flesh longs for You, as in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see Your power and Your glory—as I have seen You in the sanctuary. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You”** (Psa. 63:1-3).

As previously noted, Psalm 23 foreshadowed the prayers of Jesus after He was resurrected from the dead. The psalm to follow, Psalm 24, is in prophetic sequence and depicts Jesus’ ascension to be received of God the Father. When He arrived in heaven, the angels sang and shouted for joy. Perhaps this psalm was sung by the angels as they opened the everlasting doors and announced that the King of glory was entering into the presence of God the Father: **“The earth is the LORD’S, and the fullness of it, the world, and those who dwell in it, for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to vanity and has not sworn deceitfully [the perfect life of Jesus Christ]. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”**

“Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be lifted up, O you everlasting doors; that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle [He was victorious over human nature, sin, Satan the devil and death]. Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you everlasting doors; that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory” (Psa. 24:1-5, 7-10).

What a magnificent scene of splendor and glory Jesus would have seen when He entered through the everlasting gates of heaven! Standing on the sea of glass, He would have seen the resplendent glory and awesome majesty of God the Father seated on His throne with the heavenly host round about. The apostle John, the one whom Jesus loved, saw a vision of God’s throne and recorded it in the book of Revelation. What John recorded is what Jesus would have seen when He ascended to the Father.

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“After these things I looked, and behold, **a door opened in heaven**; and the first voice that I heard *was* as if a trumpet were speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you *the* things that must take place after these things.’ And immediately I was in *the* Spirit; and **behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One was sitting on the throne**. And He Who *was* sitting was in appearance like a jasper stone and a sardius stone; and a rainbow *was* around the throne, like an emerald in its appearance.

“And around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments; and they had on their heads golden crowns. **And proceeding from the throne were lightnings and thunders and voices**; and seven lamps of fire, which are the seven Spirits of God, *were* burning before the throne. **And before the throne was a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne and over the throne were four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind**; and the first living creature *was* like a lion, and the second living creature *was* like a bull, and the third living creature had the face of a man, and the fourth living creature *was* like a flying eagle. And each of *the* four living creatures had six wings respectively; *and* around and within *they were* full of eyes; **and day and night they cease not saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was, and Who is, and Who is to come.’**

“And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanksgiving to Him Who sits on the throne, Who lives into the ages of eternity, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him Who sits on the throne; and they worship Him Who lives into the ages of eternity, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, **‘Worthy are You, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power because You did create all things, and for Your will they were created and exist’**” (Rev. 4:1-11).

This was the scene that Jesus would have seen as He walked forward to present Himself to the Father as the perfect sacrifice for sin. He was the first of the firstfruits and the firstborn from the dead. As He walked on the sea of glass toward the Father sitting on His throne, the angels, the twenty-four elders and God the Father would see on His body the scars of the lashes that He had received when He was beaten with the cat-of-nine-tails which tore open His flesh. They would see the scars in His hands and feet where the soldiers had nailed Him to the cross. When the Father’s

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beloved Son greeted His Father, They must have opened their arms and embraced each other in profound love and tears of joy. Thus Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was accepted by God the Father on the Wave Sheaf Day.

After He was accepted of the Father, Jesus was selected to open the seven seals. He and He alone was qualified, because He had overcome all. The apostle John saw this tremendous scene in the vision and recorded it: “And in the right hand of Him Who sits on the throne I saw a book, written within and on *the* back, which had been sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘**Who is worthy to open the book and to loose its seals?**’ But no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth was able to open the book, or to look inside it. And I [John] was weeping greatly because no one was found worthy to open and to read the book, or to look into it.

“Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion Who is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome to open the book, and to loose its seven seals.’ **Then I saw, and behold, before the throne and the four living creatures, and before the elders, was standing a Lamb as having been slain,** having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God that are sent into all the earth; and **He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him Who sits on the throne.**

“And when He took the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having harps and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, ‘**Worthy are You to take the book, and to open its seals because You were slain, and did redeem us to God by Your own blood, out of every tribe and language and people and nation, and did make us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.**’

“**And I saw, and I heard *the* voices of many angels around the throne, and *the* voices of the living creatures and the elders, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and blessing.’ And every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and those that are on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing, and honor, and glo-**

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ry, and sovereignty into the ages of eternity.’ And the four living creatures said, ‘Amen.’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped *Him Who* lives into the ages of eternity” (Rev. 5:1-12).

This is the glory and majesty that Jesus Christ received when He was accepted by God the Father as the Savior and Redeemer of mankind on the Wave Sheaf Day. Jesus had overcome sin in the flesh and gained complete victory over death, opening the way for the redemption and salvation of all mankind through faith in Him. Now He lives in eternal glory, as the first of many sons of God who will be resurrected at His second coming to share His eternal glory and immortality. Those who are Jesus Christ’s are now being perfected through the love, grace and power of God the Father. They will be granted the identical spiritual existence that the Father and the Son have. They will be the sons and daughters of God the Father, and the brethren of Jesus Christ. Jesus shared human existence with mankind in order to become the sin offering for the world so that all who believe in Him may ultimately share His eternal existence and glory in the Family of God throughout the ages of eternity.

**NISAN 18 – SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 9 – 30 AD
EARLY THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK,
JUST BEFORE WOMEN ARRIVE AT THE TOMB,
AN ANGEL OPENS THE TOMB**

MATTHEW 28

2. And *in the morning* suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of *the* Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone from the door, and sat upon it.
3. Now his appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow.
4. And for fear of him, those who were keeping guard trembled, and became as dead *men*.

**EARLY THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK,
WOMEN COME TO THE TOMB, BUT JESUS HAS
ALREADY BEEN RESURRECTED**

MATTHEW 28

5. But the angel answered *and* said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are seeking Jesus, Who was crucified.

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6. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord Himself was lying.
7. And go quickly, *and* tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead. And behold, He goes before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him. Listen! I have told you.”
8. And they quickly left the tomb with fear and great joy, *and* ran to tell *it* to His disciples.

MARK 16

2. And very early on the first *day* of the weeks*, at the rising of the sun, they were coming to the tomb;
3. And they were asking themselves, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?”
4. For it was a massive *stone*. But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away.
5. And after entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right, clothed in a white robe; and they were very frightened.
6. But he said to them, “Do not be afraid. You are seeking Jesus the Nazarene, Who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. Look, *there is* the place where they laid Him.
7. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him, as He said to you.”
8. And they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them; and they did not say anything to anyone because they were afraid.

LUKE 24

1. Now on the first *day* of the weeks,* they came to the tomb at early dawn, bringing *the* spices that they had prepared; and certain *others came* with them.
2. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb;
3. And when they entered *it*, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
4. And it came to pass that while they were puzzling over this, suddenly two men in shining garments stood by them.
5. And *as* they bowed their faces to the ground, being filled with fear, they said to them, “Why are you seeking the living among the dead?”

*Refer to footnote on following page.

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6. He is not here, but has risen: remember when He spoke to you *while He* was yet in Galilee,
7. Saying, ‘It is necessary for the Son of man to be delivered into *the* hands of sinful men, and to be crucified, and to arise the third day’? ”
8. Then they remembered His words;
9. And after returning from the tomb, they related these things to the eleven and to all the rest.
10. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary, *the mother* of James, and the others with them, who told these things to the apostles.
11. But their words appeared to them as idle talk, and they did not believe them.
12. Then Peter rose up *and* ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen clothes lying alone; and he went home wondering about the things that had come to pass.

JOHN 20

1. Now on the first *day* of the weeks,* while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb; and she saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb.
2. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord from the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”
3. As a result, Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb.
4. Now the two ran together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;
5. And he stooped down *and* saw the linen cloths lying *there*, but he did not enter.
6. Then Simon Peter came following him, and he went into the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying,
7. And the napkin that had been on His head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself.

This literal translation of the Greek words **μια σαββατων or **μια των σαββατων** shows that the day which followed the weekly Sabbath was the first day of the seven-week count to Pentecost, thus identifying this day as the Wave Sheaf Day (Lev. 23:10-11, 15-16). The ascension of Jesus Christ on that day fulfilled the offering of the wave sheaf for all time.*

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8. Then the other disciple, who had come to the tomb first, also went in and saw *these things*; and he believed.
9. For they did not yet understand the scripture *which decreed* that He must rise from *the* dead.
10. Then the disciples went away again to their *home*.

JESUS APPEARS FIRST TO MARY MAGDALENE

MARK 16

9. Now after *Jesus* had risen, early *the* first *day* of the weeks He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons.
10. She went *and* told *it* to those who had been with Him, *who* were grieving and weeping.
11. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe *it*.

JOHN 20

11. But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb.
12. And she saw two angels in white who were sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid.
13. 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.”
14. And after saying these things, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but did not know that it was Jesus. 15. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Thinking that He was the gardener, she said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him off, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.”
16. Jesus said to her, “Mary.” Turning around, she said to Him, “Rabboni”; that is to say, “Teacher.”
17. Jesus said to her, “Do not touch Me, because I have not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brethren and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.”
18. Mary Magdalene came to the disciples, bringing word that she had seen the Lord, and that He had said these things to her.

Notes

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