

– Additional Notes –
Was a “High Day” Always on a Weekly Sabbath?

December 26, 2004

Hi Bob,

That is a comment that often comes up, but Scripture doesn't define a “high day”. The SDA church promotes the understanding you expressed, but it is based entirely on speculation. I haven't found the expression in any Jewish writing. Jews commonly refer to the Feast of Trumpets and Yom Kippur as the “high holy days”, but these festivals are more than six months after the Passover season when Jesus was crucified.

Unfortunately, there is not a Jewish commentary on the gospels, so far as I am aware. The expression “high day” is not found in the Old Testament in connection with a Sabbath. The words “high day” are found in Genesis 29:7, but it is a reference to noontime in that passage and not a Sabbath. I am not aware of any authoritative source of information on this. This appears to be one of those things that must be understood by faith.

I believe the term “high day” of John 19:31 was used as a reference to the Sabbaths that began and ended the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the spring and the Feast of Tabernacles in the autumn. These feasts were 7 days and 8 days respectively and the entire set of days were to be reserved as time for the Lord. Most of these days were not Sabbath days, but work days. The Sabbaths that began and ended these festivals were “high days” because (1) they were part of the annual festival when all males were required to go to Jerusalem, but also because (2) the Lord set them aside as holy convocation days. It would be a special day as part of one of the three annual festivals required to be celebrated in Jerusalem, and a “high day” because it was a Sabbath – *kodesh mikrah* – that occurred only once a year as part of the festival.

I came to this conclusion before reading Batya Ruth Wooten's book *Israel's Feasts and Their Fullness*, wherein she identifies the “High Sabbath” – a *Shalosh Regalim* – as being associated with the three annual festivals for which all males were required to visit Jerusalem. p. 186. She does not suggest that the “High Sabbath” occurs when an annual Sabbath falls on a weekly Sabbath. Her writing is the closest to my understanding that I've found, although she doesn't give the detail that I understand.

Sorry I don't have any more information on this.

Jerry

----- Original Message -----

Hi again Jerry,

I had another comment made to me today that shows that in John 19:31 Christ was crucified on the day prior to the sabbath was a “high day”.

“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”

He comments that he thought a “high sabbath” occurred when the festical sabbath fell on the weekly Sabbath.

Is that the correct conclusion? It doesn't fit with our thinking that the Passover or the feast of Unleavened Bread fell on Saturday.

Thanks!

Bob