

SABBATH RESURRECTION –

THE CASE FOR THE WEDNESDAY CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

by Dennis Neufeld for: *Spirit of Truth Ministries* © 1999

For those of us that already worship God on His Sabbath (Saturday) the issue of whether Christ rose from the grave on Sabbath evening or on Sunday morning (as is commonly held) is of little consequence. **The fact is that He is Risen, He is Risen indeed!** Yet for most of the Christian Church the Sunday resurrection of Christ is of paramount importance. It is the basis for their worship on Sunday. Little, if any thought is given to the WHY or the WHEN of their choice of day. They have even given Sunday the auspicious title of “The Lord’s Day.” Nowhere in Scripture is there any evidence of a change of day from the Saturday Sabbath to the Sunday “Sabbath”.

So, when the question of the day upon which Christ was crucified is raised, we tend to go along with the commonly held belief that Jesus was crucified on Friday and was resurrected on Sunday morning.

But if, (and it IS a big “BUT IF”), it can be proven from Scripture that Christ was crucified not on Friday (Good Friday), but on Wednesday, and was resurrected not on Sunday morning but on Sabbath evening before sundown, then what significance would this have to the majority of Christian believers? The validity of the 4th Commandment would be brought to bear against the counterfeit Sabbath upon which most of the Church places its confidence. It would also call attention to the validity of the 7th day Sabbath as the day upon which Christ was raised from the dead. This would be a major victory for the growth of God’s Truth in the Church, which is expected before the “End”.

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God established Passover for Israel as a graphic illustration of the power and might that God has over the enemies of His people, and to signify the sacrifice of the lamb as the penalty payment for release from bondage.

This is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is the night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations. Ex. 12:42

Chapter 12 of Exodus tells how God established the timing of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Ex. 12:2

On the 10th day of the month each household of Israel was to separate out from their flock one lamb to be used for the sacrifice. On the 14th day of the 1st month it was to be killed at twilight, where-upon the blood of this sacrifice was to be put on the two door posts and the lintel of the household in which it was to be eaten.

So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Ex. 12:17

We can clearly see the example of the lamb as the sacrifice for the freedom of Israel from bondage in Egypt. This example was to be carried over and completed in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, (Jesus Christ), for the freedom from the bondage of sin for the Kingdom of Heaven, (Literal: then spiritual Israel).

On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. Lev. 23:5-6

The Passover lamb was to be killed the evening before, (14th day), the day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, (15th day), which was to last for seven days. (Ex. 12:15) The first day and the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were to be festival Sabbaths (Ex. 12:16). They were to be observed as a holy convocation, and no work was to be done on them other than the preparation of food for the household.

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*Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days **and three nights** in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days **and three nights** in the heart of the earth." Matt. 12:39-40.*

Most erudite Bible scholars say that any part of three days fulfills the qualification that the "Temple" would be raised up in three days. (John 2:19). Yet Jesus, as we have just seen, specifically gave the exact amount of time he would be in the grave—three nights and three days. The question seems obvious; whom do you believe, the scholars or Jesus? The decision needs to be made as to whether you take Jesus at His word or use some form of obfuscation to qualify a particular position. Christ said that He would be in the heart of the earth for three nights and three days. How do you fit three nights and three days into a 48 hour period from sundown Friday to Sunday when it is still dark?

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Now we come to an even more difficult issue—that of translator bias and error. In almost any English translation of the New Testament you will find any number of places where the translators had a variety of options as to how a Greek word or phrase should be translated into English. This has tremendous bearing on the perspective that the final translation gives to a passage. By way of example we see the translators of the 1610 KJV giving voice to their bias toward the immortality of the soul by translating the words of Christ on the cross to the thief as "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." Luke 23:43. In the original Greek text there are no punctuation marks. The translators chose to place the comma before *today* instead of after which allowed them to express their deeply held belief that the soul goes directly to heaven when the body dies. In reality, the comma could just as easily have been placed AFTER the word *today*, but this would have defeated their purpose and would have changed the entire meaning of

the text. This type of situation is, unfortunately, not uncommon with translators through the ages.

It should be remembered that all of the first translations of the Septuagint were made by people who were biased toward the Sabbath being changed to Sunday. I do not necessarily believe that they were malicious in this. Their belief in the Sunday resurrection dictated the bias with which they made the translations that we read today.

It is also well known that many words in Greek have more than one meaning depending upon context. The bias of a translator will most assuredly effect the ultimate outcome of the translation of a passage. Taking this into consideration, let us now look at some passages relative to the few days before and after the crucifixion of Christ to see if the possibility of translation errors exist.

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Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. John 20:1.

The first thing to understand about this verse is that the word 'week' was translated from the Greek word Sabbatons. The Sabbatons refer specifically to the week of Sabbaths between Passover and Pentecost. Pentecost was calculated by counting seven Sabbatons (Sabbaths) from the first Sabbaton (Sabbath) of the Feast of Unleavened Bread plus one day (fifty days) to get to Pentecost. John, a product of Jewish culture, knew about the Feasts and would use the word Sabbatons only in relation to calculating the days to Pentecost. He would not have used the word to mean 'week', which is an entirely different word. Therefore, the better translation of the first part of this verse is "*Now on the first of the Sabbatons while it was dark*". This places Mary at the open grave just after sundown on Sabbath, which means that Jesus was resurrected before sundown on the first Sabbath after the Passover. This makes complete sense to a Jewish reader. However, it did not make sense to the translators or the translators understood the real meaning and changed the word to suit their purposes. Is it possible that the translators changed the meaning to place Jesus' resurrection on Sunday morning?

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*And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. **Then they returned and prepared** spices and fragrant oils. And they **rested on the Sabbath** according to the commandment. Luke 23:55-56*

*Now **when the Sabbath was past**, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Mark 16:1*

Notice that in one of the passages they prepared spices then rested on the Sabbath, and in the other, they rested on the Sabbath then bought spices. So who is correct, Mark or Luke? Is one lying? Are both correct? Or could this dichotomy merely be a different perspective looking at the same event? If that is the case then that would mean that there were two Sabbaths with a preparation day in between. Is this a real possibility? It appears that Scripture indicates that there were two Sabbaths: one was a Festival Sabbath, the Passover; the other was a 7th-day Sabbath. Each had their own preparation

day, but it was the one between the two Sabbaths that is indicated in the two previous texts.

Harken back to the description of the Passover in Exodus 12. God never gives any instructions or does anything without there being some lesson involved for His people. If the description and practice of Passover and Unleavened Bread as described in the Old Testament is the symbol of what would take place in order to free the world from sin, then would God, through Jesus, not follow exactly the same scenario to the letter? It should be evident that every element in the description of the Passover is followed to the letter in the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus. However, not necessarily as it would appear in most Bible's Gospel accounts.

We know from Scripture that Jesus, as the Passover lamb, was killed on the evening of Passover on the 14th day of the 1st month. This day had to be a Preparation day for a Festival Sabbath-the Passover.

Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people." Matt. 26:3-5

The chief priests and the scribes could not take the chance of putting Jesus to death on the Passover for fear of an uprising by the people. (Mk 14:1-2) His death would have to be accomplished prior to the Passover.

Would it be reasonable for the practicing Jews who wrote the Gospels to say that Jesus did not know or seem to understand the sequence of events that had to take place for the Passover Lamb (Christ Himself) to be killed at the proper time? Jesus was quite obviously familiar with the Scriptures in a way no one of His day (or ours) could match. Did Jesus not realize that He would not be eating the Passover meal with His disciples and that He would be the Passover lamb? (He ate the Last Supper with them on Tuesday evening.) Did He really not understand the significance of the timing of events of Passover and His role in them? Did the disciples not know about the order in which the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread must take place (according to the Law in Exodus 12?) It seems unreasonable to think that this could be the case.

On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. Lev. 23: 5-6.

Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover." Matt.26:17

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?" Mark 14:12

When the first day of Unleavened Bread came the Passover lamb had *already* been slain and the Passover meal had *already* been eaten. Either these writers had not studied the Scriptures well enough to understand the sequence of events pertaining to the Passover, (which is highly unlikely), or someone changed what they said to fit an

alternative understanding. The latter seems more than likely when you read these three passages together.

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*On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember, while he was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'" Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the **third day**, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, "He has risen from the dead." Matt 27:62-64*

On the surface it seems quite curious that Matthew would use the language that he did in describing the day that followed the Preparation Day. To a Jew, the 7th day Sabbath was the most important day of the week, held a very special place and had a very special purpose. Feast days were a 'type' of Sabbath, but they were not 'The [7th day] Sabbath'. If Matthew was speaking of 'The Sabbath', would he not have called it just that? His use of the phrase "*On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation*" indicates that the day in question was NOT the weekly Sabbath but another kind, a Feast Sabbath. Also, no Pharisee or priest would have been caught dead going to petition a hated Roman enemy, Pilate, for anything on "The Sabbath." Their duty to the Sabbath was far too important a religious requirement for them to do so. But this is not the case for a Feast day which was not a 'real' [7th day] Sabbath. The Law of Moses would not have been broken by their going to see Pilate on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The fact that the Pharisees mentioned Christ's resurrection coming after three days indicates that while they hated Jesus they knew who He was (John 3:2), and for that reason they felt it needful to take precautions against the event that He might actually come back to life. It should be evident by now that the chief priests and Pharisees wanted guards at the tomb to kill Jesus if He made an attempt to leave the tomb. Of course they couldn't imagine how badly this strategy would backfire.

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*Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, you shall bring a sheaf of the **firstfruits** of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; **on the day after the Sabbath** the priest shall wave it." Lev. 23: 10-11*

The Wave Sheaf Offering, according to the Law of Moses, took place on the third day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread and always on the day after a 7th day Sabbath. This would have to mean that the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would also have to be a Sabbath, a high feast day. Thus TWO Sabbaths. This offering celebrated the harvest by a priest waving a sheaf of barley before the Lord in the Temple. A responsible man would lead a group of people to a specially prepared shock of barley growing just outside the city wall. Just as the sun was setting, the man would ask the crowd if the Sabbath was over, and then ask them (holding up a sickle) if he should harvest the grain. This harvesting of the barley was never done on a Sabbath as that would be construed as work. They would then take the barley shock back to the Temple

where it would be waved before the Lord.

Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." John 20: 17

Mary Magdalene, finally realizing with who she was speaking, was clinging to Jesus for dear life. Jesus told her not to hold tightly to Him for He had yet to go to His Father. This dovetails beautifully with the Wave Sheaf Offering. Christ is called the *Firstfruits* of those who sleep. (I Cor. 15:20). Jesus became the Firstfruits of those who will eventually be resurrected from the grave as He was. The reason that He did not want Mary to cling to Him was that He was the real 'Wave Sheaf Offering' and had not yet appeared, ('Waved'), before the Father in Heaven. This would mean that Jesus would have to have been raised from the grave before the Sabbath was over in order to follow the pattern of the Wave Sheaf offering. At the exact time that the priest 'waved' the barley sheaf in front of the Alter in the temple, Jesus appeared before His Father. Later on that same day, Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room and said that they could now touch Him and see that He was indeed very real.

If the Passover had occurred on Friday, then this clearly would have put the wave sheaf offering on a Monday, which is an impossibility according to Scripture. Also, if Christ was resurrected on Sunday morning, then He would have missed being the 'Wave Sheaf' offering because the wave sheaf offering occurred shortly after sundown of the first Sabbaton.

And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. Lev. 23: 15-16.

The Day of Pentecost is fifty days from the day of the wave sheaf offering, and was counted by Sabbatons; that is, seven Sabbatons plus one day. The counting toward Pentecost started on the 'first of the Sabbatons'. With Christ being resurrected on the first of the Sabbatons and being the 'Wave Sheaf Offering', the counting of days to Pentecost comes out correctly. Did Jesus know ahead of time what would occur to His disciples on the Day of Pentecost? If Christ is not resurrected on the first of the Sabbatons, the timing to Pentecost does not work. With Christ's resurrection occurring on the first of the Sabbatons, the timing works perfectly. Once again, it seems that the timing of events is critical to the outcome.

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The beauty of the Wednesday crucifixion is that all the texts that describe what went on during the latter part of that week fit so neatly, and without effort. Jesus said that He would be in the grave three days and **three nights**. Both, the timing of the events of the Passover **and** the Feast of Unleavened Bread fit perfectly. First, the Lamb is slain on the day before the Passover, then the Passover meal is eaten between dark and dawn. The Feast of Unleavened Bread starts after Passover and is followed three days later by the Wave Sheaf Offering, which was always on the day after a Sabbath. It is, and should be

evident that there were two Sabbaths — one, the Festival Sabbath, the other the 7th day Sabbath. The First Fruits, (wave sheaf offering), always occurred three days after Passover on the day following that Sabbath.

The Passover always occurred on a full moon 15 days following the first day of the month as signified by the new moon.

Translator bias and/or error is evident in the way Scripture is currently presented. Great care must be taken in separating what is truth from what is manipulated to achieve a personal or corporate belief. To Catholics and many Christians, this solid evidence is hard to accept. It would do away with the popular 'Good Friday' and 'Easter Sunday'.

All of this indicates that Jesus Christ was resurrected on the 7th day Sabbath just before sundown. Was Jesus resurrected on 'Easter Sunday' morning as most Christians believe? Or, was Jesus resurrected on the 7th day Sabbath as Scripture seems to indicate? What an incredible vision God has for the Sabbath! On it He rested after Creation and set it aside as a permanent memorial. He resurrected His Son on the Sabbath as the Firstfruits of those who sleep, and in the earth-made-new we will all gather together to worship our Creator/King from one new moon to another and from one Sabbath to another. It would be entirely within God's character and should not surprise us in the least if Jesus Christ returned to this earth in the clouds of glory on a Sabbath day.