

## Concerning a Week of Two Sabbaths

The Church teaches that Yeshua (Jesus) died on Passover (Good Friday) and arose on Sunday (Easter Day). Clearly, the formula ‘...and was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures’, used by the gospel writers, and others (e.g. Mt.16:21, 20:19, Lk.18:33, 1Cor.15:4) has been taken to mean, Friday = day 1, Saturday = day 2 and Sunday = day 3. Sounds logical – but is it correct? Yes, in a sense, but not completely so! – for surely Yeshua himself qualified this statement when he said:

”For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly: so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Mt.12:40)

Clearly, it is not possible to get three days and three nights from Friday to Sunday! So, exactly what did happen?

To get a complete picture of the truth concerning these events it is necessary, (a) that we fully understand what the Old Testament has to say about the Passover season and, (b) that we assemble and take into account all that the New Testament has to offer concerning them.

We know that Yeshua celebrated the Passover in obedience to the commandments set out in Leviticus 23 (also in Exodus 12 and Numbers 28:16–25): Lv.23:5–7 reads

“In the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month (Nisan) at even is the LORD’S passover. And on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: 7 days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein (it was referred to as ‘a High day’ – a special Sabbath).”

Further, Lv.23:10–11 requires

“...on the morrow after the (aforementioned) sabbath (i.e. on Nisan 16<sup>th</sup>) ye shall bring the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.”

Observe that Passover is a movable feast – its occurrence determined by a lunar event, viz. the appearance of the crescent moon which introduces the month of Nisan. It follows that the Sabbath of the next day and Firstfruits are similarly dependent. Contrast this with the normal weekly sabbath which always occurs on a Saturday.

In our quest for truth concerning this central feature of the gospel we encounter the following key verse:

“And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdelene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him (Mark 16:1).”

Based upon what is already known from the OT, this raises the question “To which Sabbath is Mark alluding?” Clearly, it can’t be the normal Saturday Sabbath – for the discovery of the empty tomb was made in the early hours of Sunday morning, when no shops would have been open and no time available to prepare the spices. So, he must be speaking of the High Sabbath – the day following Passover. Thus, the necessary purchases must have been made on the day following that. This is confirmed by the following quotation from Luke’s gospel:

“And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them (Lk.23:55–24:1).”

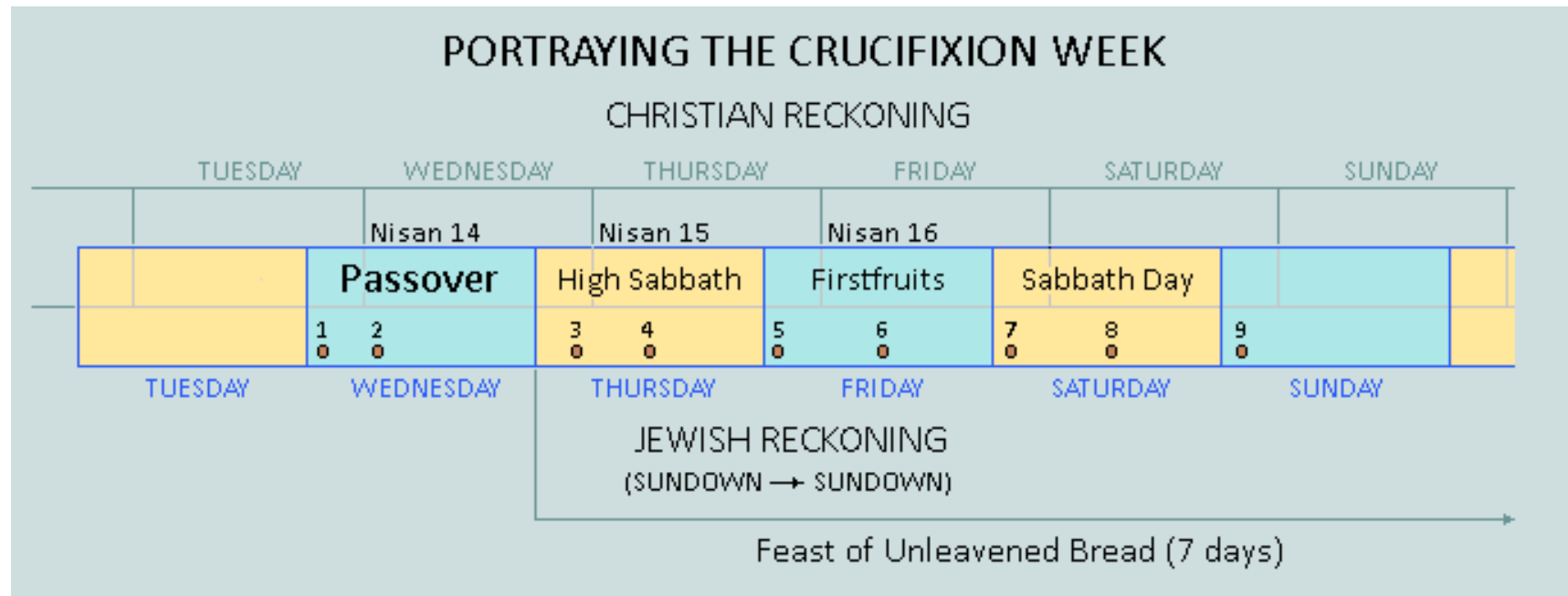
Clearly, what Luke refers to here must be the normal Sabbath. We therefore infer that – having bought and prepared the material for His anointing – the women weren’t able to carry out that task immediately, as was their intention.

A consideration of these matters *in toto* suggests the following day-by-day sequence of events for Holy Week:

Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Passover	High Sabbath	Normal Day	Weekly Sabbath	Empty Tomb

**Observe that all has to be anchored to the fixed normal Sabbath!**

But how does this arrangement fit in with the words of Yeshua: “... so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”? Based on the above, here is the proposed scheme:



### The Events:

1. Tuesday night – Passover Seder (meal), prayer in Gethsemane, arrested, brought before the Jews
2. Wednesday morning – before Pilate, on the cross by 9 a.m., dead by 3 p.m.
3. Wednesday night – Yeshua in the tomb – **first night**, High Sabbath begins
4. Thursday – Yeshua in the tomb – **first day**, High Sabbath
5. Thursday night – Yeshua in the tomb, **second night**, end of High Sabbath
6. Friday – Yeshua in the tomb, **second day**, spices bought and prepared
7. Friday night – Yeshua in the tomb, **third night**, weekly Sabbath begins
8. Saturday – Yeshua in the tomb, **third day**, weekly Sabbath
9. Saturday night/Sunday morning – end of weekly Sabbath, tomb visited, EMPTY!

## **This scheme alone appears to fulfil all the requirements! – including the formula ‘...and was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures’!**

Some further comments:

- (1) Let us again take note of John 19:31: the Sabbath immediately following Yeshua’s crucifixion was no ordinary Sabbath.
- (2) In Matthew 28:1 we find the Greek word for ‘Sabbath’ (as it is rendered in the AV) correctly pluralised – for there were indeed two Sabbaths in that Passover week! Why that was not picked up at the time by the KJV translators must be considered a mystery!
- (3) It cannot be simply happy coincidence that ‘Firstfruits’ (Nisan 16) also occurs within this time frame.
- (4) Historical data obtained from the U.S. Naval Observatory Astronomical Applications Department confirms the fact that in 31 AD, Passover occurred on Wednesday, April 25<sup>th</sup> (= Nisan 14) – and this appears to accord with other considerations concerning the Lord’s earthly ministry (see APPENDIX).
- (5) The tradition of Yeshua dying on ‘good Friday’ and rising from the dead on Sunday has long been the justification of believers changing the seventh day Sabbath God instructed His people to keep, to Sunday, as the supposed ‘day He arose’. But nowhere in Scripture do we find God has given us permission to do that!
- (6) That this prominent ‘skeleton in the cupboard’ of Christianity is so readily exposed as a serious misunderstanding will shock and dismay lovers of truth. How can it be that those responsible for upholding this false impression over the centuries have ignored the words of Yeshua in order to propagate a fiction?! It really is inexcusable – even malicious. It has, undoubtedly, created much uncertainty concerning the inerrancy of the Scriptures. and much else.  
*[However, in all this, it is important that we do not lose sight of the ‘Big Picture’. Clearly, for a long time, Satan (together with his human accomplices – ‘the tares’) have been permitted to demonstrate the frailties of mankind – and thus alert us to the further potential pitfalls and deceptions ahead. All who wish to live in a dream world (fuelled by their own imaginations) are, of course, free to do so – even encouraged to do so. But that is not an option for the redeemed of God!]*
- (7) We now have abundant empirical evidence that proves the Scriptures to be Inerrant. There really can be no excuse for allowing human tradition or imagination to override the Word of God!

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*“Yes, but does it really matter?”  
“IF TRUTH MATTERS, IT MATTERS!”*

## APPENDIX

The data in the first three columns of the following table is obtainable from the U.S. Naval Observatory Astronomical Applications Department and may be confirmed at this link: <https://aa.usno.navy.mil/faq/docs/SpringPhenom.php>

The data in columns 4 – 6 derive directly from this input.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Vernal Equinox</u>	<u>Astronomical New Moon Conjunction</u>	<u>First evening of visible crescent</u>	<u>Date of the first of Nisan</u>	<u>14th day of Nisan (Passover)</u>
		(On date, or first after vernal Equinox)	(Julian calendar. Midnight to midnight)	(Beginning at sundown the evening before...)	(Beginning at sundown the evening before...)
<u>26 A.D.</u>	<u>Fri. Mar. 22, 0</u>	<u>Sat. Apr. 6, 7 a.m.</u>	<u>Sun. Apr. 7</u>	<u>Mon. Apr. 8</u>	<u>Sun. Apr. 21</u>
<u>27 A.D.</u>	<u>Sun. Mar. 23, 6 a.m.</u>	<u>Wed. Mar. 26, 7 p.m.</u>	<u>Fri. Mar. 28</u>	<u>Sat. Mar. 29</u>	<u>Fri. Apr. 11</u>
<u>28 A.D.</u>	<u>Mon. Mar. 22, noon</u>	<u>Tues. Apr. 13, 2 p.m.</u>	<u>Wed. Apr. 14</u>	<u>Thurs. Apr. 15</u>	<u>Wed. Apr. 28</u>
<u>29 A.D.</u>	<u>Tues. Mar. 22, 6 p.m.</u>	<u>Sat. Apr. 2, 7 p.m.</u>	<u>Mon. Apr. 4</u>	<u>Tues. Apr. 5</u>	<u>Mon. Apr. 18</u>
<u>30 A.D.</u>	<u>Wed. Mar. 22, 0</u>	<u>Wed. Mar. 22, 8 p.m.</u>	<u>Fri. Mar. 24</u>	<u>Sat. Mar. 25</u>	<u>Fri. Apr. 7</u>
<u>31 A.D.</u>	<u>Fri. Mar. 23rd, 5 a.m.</u>	<u>Tues. Apr. 10, 2p.m.</u>	<u>Wed. Apr. 11</u>	<u>Thurs. Apr. 12</u>	<u>Wed. Apr. 25</u>
<u>32 A.D.</u>	<u>Sat. Mar. 22, 11 a.m.</u>	<u>Sat. Mar. 29, 10 p.m.</u>	<u>Mon. Mar. 31</u>	<u>Tues. Apr. 1</u>	<u>Mon. Apr. 14</u>
<u>33 A.D.</u>	<u>Sun. Mar. 22, 5 p.m.</u>	<u>Fri. Apr. 17, 9 p.m.</u>	<u>Sun. Apr. 19</u>	<u>Mon. Apr. 20</u>	<u>Sun. May 3</u>
<u>34 A.D.</u>	<u>Mon. Mar. 22, 11 p.m.</u>	<u>Wed. Apr. 7, 2 p.m.</u>	<u>Thurs. Apr. 8</u>	<u>Fri. Apr. 9</u>	<u>Thurs. Apr. 22</u>

Observe that in 28 A.D. Passover also fell on a Wednesday. However, other considerations lead to 31 A.D. as the preferred date; for example, Luke 3:1, by linking the public ministry of John the Baptist (beginning shortly before Jeshua's) with the known reign of Tiberius Caesar establishes the beginning of Jeshua's earthly ministry anywhere from mid A.D. 28 to A.D. 29.