

Appendix 1

The Day of the Crucifixion—Friday or Wednesday?

The Christian Church down through the ages has traditionally held that Jesus was crucified on a Friday and was resurrected on the third calendar day thereafter, early on Sunday morning. A simple reading of the Gospel accounts shows that it was the day before the Sabbath that Jesus was crucified. Nevertheless, the Good Friday/Easter Sunday tradition has been recently challenged by a modern theory based upon the statement that Jesus made in Matthew 12:40, that he would be in the heart of the earth for “three days” and “three nights.”³⁸⁹

One can find this explanation in the popular Companion Bible, appendix 144, wherein Dr. Bullinger writes:

“The fact that ‘three days’ is used by Hebrew idiom for any part of three days and three nights is not disputed; because that was the common way of reckoning, just as it was when used of years. Three or any number of years was used inclusively of any part of those years, as may be seen in the reckoning of reigns of any of the kings of Israel and Judah.

“But when the number of ‘nights’ is stated as well as the number of ‘days’, then the expression ceases to be an idiom, and becomes a literal statement of fact.”³⁹⁰

This compelling argument was made a part of the teachings of a number of Churches, especially those of a Sabbatarian persuasion, mainly because of the de-emphasis it would mean for Sunday as a commemoration day for the Resurrection. The attention getting aspect

389. An overview of the chronology of passion week based on this belief can be seen on the World Wide Web, *The Chronology of Christ's Crucifixion & Resurrection*, (<http://www.centuryone.com/crucifixion.htm>). This view can also be seen on the web in an article by Wilber Berg, “The Good Friday-Easter Sunday Question,” *The Good News* (The United Church of God, March/April 1997), vol. 2, no. 2 p. 17 ff. (<http://www.ugc.org/articles/gn10/frideast.html>).

390. E. W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), p. 170.

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certainly played right into the hands of former soap advertising man turned “Apostle,” Herbert W. Armstrong, who believed, based upon this misunderstood phrase, that Jesus had to have been crucified on a late Wednesday afternoon and resurrected 72 hours later, on the Sabbath, just before sunset. He felt, therefore, that the 72 hour duration of Jesus lying in the tomb was actually the sign of Jesus’ Messiahship. He wrote:

“The doubting Pharisees were asking Jesus for a SIGN—a supernatural evidence—in proof of His Messiahship.

“Jesus answered: “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas 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.*’ (Matt. 12:38-40).

“Now consider, please, the tremendous import—the overwhelming significance—of Jesus’ statement.

“He expressly declared that the ONLY SIGN He would give to prove He was the Messiah was that He should be just THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS in the rock-hewn sepulchre in ‘the heart of the earth.’

“The Christ-rejecting Pharisees demanded PROOF. Jesus offered but one evidence. That evidence was not the fact of the resurrection itself—it was the LENGTH OF TIME He would repose in His grave, before being resurrected.”³⁹¹

Do notice the amazing statement that the proof of Jesus’ Messiahship “...was not the fact of the Resurrection itself—it was the LENGTH OF TIME He would repose in His grave, before being resurrected.” With this powerful explanation we begin to appreciate the significance that the followers of Armstrong’s teaching has had concerning the interpretation of Matthew 12:40.

The impact of this emphasis on the time element was also brought out by another minister and scholar in the Armstrong organization, Dr. Herman L. Hoeh (pronounced “hay”), with the following captivating and compelling remark:

“Either the ‘Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition is a fable—or

391. Herbert W. Armstrong, *The RESURRECTION was NOT on Sunday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1952), p. 3.

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you have NO Savior! Jesus gave only one sign to prove that He was the Messiah! And that sign was the length of time He would be dead and buried.

“...If He did not fulfill that sign, then He was an impostor and you are without a savior!”³⁹²

Thus speaketh the masters of shock evangelism. What is intended to be shocking is that the proof of Jesus’ Messiahship was not His Resurrection—but the length of time He spent in the tomb. The whole point of this approach goes beyond a thought provoking challenge. It was designed to captivate by astonishment. This approach demonstrated one of Herbert Armstrong’s greatest talents—and it worked.

Also, since Mr. Armstrong was a promoter of the seventh day Sabbath, and traditional Christianity congregates on Sunday in recognition over the fact of the Resurrection, what better way to undermine the entire basis of traditional Christianity’s key doctrines than to lay a bomb shell of the magnitude as this. The approach worked, for multiple thousands bought into it and cling to it as a result, despite the fact that no one in the early Christian Church ever made a point of the time element of the Resurrection—*especially the Apostles!*

Therefore, this subject deserves an investigation due to the importance that is placed on this aspect. After all, it certainly is impossible to fit three full day periods and three full night periods between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning. And the sign of Jonah argument concerning Jesus’ Messiahship turns the entire issue around from just an interesting, secondary fact of history into a primary doctrinal point of one’s Christian beliefs.

This new theory claims that Jesus was already risen the evening before the women arrived in the morning. Therefore, by this line of reasoning it is possible to count three full, 24 hour days from Wednesday evening to Sabbath evening. But this would seem to do violence to the fact that Jesus died the day before the Sabbath, as the Gospel accounts record.

392.Herman L Hoeh, *The CRUCIFIXION was NOT on Friday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1959), p. 1.

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This is resolved, so we are told, by realizing that the Sabbath mentioned in John 19:31 is not just a simple, weekly Sabbath day, but was an “annual” Sabbath known as the First Day of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15, which could land on any day of the week, and in the year of the Crucifixion fell on a Thursday.³⁹³ With this apparent obstacle overcome by the proponents of this new theory, then, this opens up the entire discussion to see whether this idea really is supported in the accounts.

Preliminary Observations

A serious quest for the truth first must analyze not only the structure of Jesus’ wording in the light of the rest of the Bible, but also must weigh the implications imposed by a literal reading. Was Jesus really trying to define precisely the exact number of hours, minutes, and seconds of the time he was going to be lying in the tomb?

Are we to believe that after making such a point of his exact time in the tomb that no one was there to witness that fact—that exactly one second after 71 hours, 59 minutes and 59 seconds in the tomb Jesus suddenly opens his eyes—yet no one was even remotely aware of this fact, nor was it ever mentioned in any literature until now that this was the all important aspect of the Resurrection?

This is why this question is so important. It shades the entire essence of what Jesus was trying to convey. In other words, if the day/night formula was merely an expression indicating calendar days, then the emphasis of what Jesus said was not the amount of elapsed time but on the Resurrection itself. But if the expression was to indicate that 3 day periods and 3 night periods, consisting of 12 hours each, must transpire, then the emphasis is only secondarily on the Resurrection, but primarily on the exact timing for Jesus to be in the heart of the earth. Simply put, it changes the entire color of the event from the miracle of restored life into a stop-watch event which nobody, it seems, took special note of.

Another very important factor to keep in mind is that if the expression is to be understood in the sense of 72 hours, is that, unless you begin the timing of the event exactly at the beginning of the day, the only way that you can total 72 hours is to spread the balance of the

393. Herbert W. Armstrong, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

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remaining day or night portion not used in the beginning period to be applied to the *fourth* calendar day. This is a very, *very* important factor to keep in mind throughout this study.

Some have maintained that since Jesus was entombed right at sunset, then there is no balance to be brought over to the fourth calendar day. This is plausible, but there is one thing that doesn't sit right with this idea either. This would mean that Jesus was entombed in reverse order of three nights and three days and not the other way around. Why did Matthew get it backwards? For sure, it seems that his order was the traditional order of the Hebrew term for calendar days, which are counted from morning to morning. Indeed, this fact alone lends more weight to the idea that this was an expression for calendar days, rather than trying to be precise in mapping out the timing of the Resurrection.

Another theory that has been advanced to solve the problem is that of Charles Kimbrough and Mark Carr. They see the three days and three nights being literal and explain:

“The three days and three nights, then, began from the time he was HANDED over to Pilate—which started AS IT BEGAN TO DAWN on Thursday morning the 14th of Nisan, the DAY portion...The time while He was being prepared for burial before the High Sabbath; all of Thursday (day portion of 14th), Thursday night, Friday (15th), Friday night, Saturday (16th), and Saturday night up to the earthquake WHILE IT WAS YET DARK (John 20:1) on Sunday (Nisan 17), ‘As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week’ (Matt. 28:1). EACTLY 2 DAYS and 3 NIGHTS!”³⁹⁴

This is a fascinating theory, but it is still based upon the traditional assumption that Matthew's Hebrew expression was a stop watch event.

In other words, if Jesus was buried on Wednesday, Nisan 14, according to this new theory, he was resurrected on the Sabbath, Nisan 17, the fourth calendar day from the Crucifixion. The traditional view has Jesus arising on the third calendar day, Nisan 16. Therefore, the entire subject boils down to whether Jesus was trying to convey a stop watch event or merely used an expression which was in vogue among the Jews

394. “The Real 3 Days & 3 Nights,” *The Jerusalem Sentinel*, as found on the Internet [<http://www.esper.com/jersent/3d3n.html>], n.d.

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expressing calendar days.

Understanding The “Day/Night” Formula

There are many places in the Scriptures that link the day and night in referring to a calendar day in a historical event.³⁹⁵ In the creation story,³⁹⁶ the Flood story—[we’re all familiar with the “forty days and forty nights”],³⁹⁷ Moses’ stay on Mount Sinai,³⁹⁸ Elijah’s stay on Mount Horeb,³⁹⁹ as well as Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness.⁴⁰⁰

Further, the day/night expression was used with Job’s friends who were with him “seven days and seven nights” before they began their discussion with him.⁴⁰¹ Again, we see the expression used with the Egyptian slave who was without food and water for a period of “three days and three nights.”⁴⁰² And of course, the very analogy that Jesus referred to was Jonah, who was in the great fish for a period of “three days and three nights.”⁴⁰³ Always these expressions are given in the precise order of the demarcation of a calendar day from sunrise to sunrise.

It is time that one should reasonably ask whether this Hebrew expression is trying to define for each one of these historical occurrences

395. The writer has drawn a number of insightful observations for much of the material in the following section from R. L. Odom, “Was Christ Crucified on Wednesday?,” *The Sabbath Sentinel*, vol. 31, no. 7 (Fairview, OK: The Bible Sabbath Association, July, 1979), pp. 3-11. For those wishing to do further research beyond what is presented herein, the following, more accessible works are recommended: Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The TIME of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection*, (Berrien Springs: Biblical Perspectives, 1985); Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) [both supporting the Friday Crucifixion]; and *The Time Element in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ*, (Denver: Bible Advocate Press) [this work supports the Wednesday Crucifixion teaching and is the position of the Church of God (Seventh Day)].

396. Gen. 1:5; 8, 13, 19, 23, 31.

397. Gen. 7:4, 12.

398. Ex. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 11, 18, 25.

399. I Ki. 19:8.

400. Matt. 4:2.

401. Job 2:13.

402. I Sam. 30:12, 13.

403. Jonah 1:17; Math 12:40.

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the exact number of hours, minutes and seconds of a stop-watch event? Or is the “day/night” formula to be taken simply as an ancient expression of how the Hebrew people designated a calendar day?

This is an entirely reasonable question to ask without any fear that we are trying to compromise the words of Scripture. Modern interpreters appear to be the guilty party in running wild with speculative thought based upon a lack of understanding of Hebrew usage. After all, we know that an entire calendar day does consist of a 12 hour day portion and a 12 hour night portion? But if an event occurs on a given calendar date, where is the justification to punch a stop watch at that time and measure blocks of 24 hours when counting time from that event, making sure that event only ends precisely at the same time of day that it started? Is that what the writers were trying to convey in the above examples when reporting these historical events? There are even further examples of this usage. Let us go on asking ourselves whether this is true as we go along.

Further examples of calendar days are found in the following expressions. In the case of Joseph’s brothers, “he put them all together in prison for three days. On the third day Joseph said unto them...”⁴⁰⁴ Obviously, here calendar days are referred to and it is seen to be in an inclusive sense.

Rehoboam’s controversy with his subjects about taxation says: “he said to them, ‘Come to me again in three days.’”⁴⁰⁵ “So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said.”⁴⁰⁶ Again, there is no question that calendar days are here referred to and measured inclusively. A parallel account reads: “He [Rehoboam] said to them, ‘Go away for three days, then come again to me,’”⁴⁰⁷ “So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said, “‘Come to me again the third day.’”⁴⁰⁸

Also, when Queen Esther was informed by her kinsman of the plan to exterminate every Jew in Persia, she sent this message to him:

404.Gen. 42:17,18.

405.II Chron. 10:5.

406.v.12.

407.I Ki. 12:5.

408.v. 12. The Hebrew reads literally “on the third day.”

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“Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day.”⁴⁰⁹ Here again we have an expression for a calendar day that includes the day and night formula. Yet in chapter 5:1 it says that “ON THE THIRD DAY Esther put on her royal robes...” and went to a banquet for the king in the hope of asking him to spare her people.

These Scriptures interpret themselves. They are a clear record of inclusive time reckoning and not exclusive which is demanded by the stop watch method. The third day can only mean the third *calendar day* in an inclusive sense and can not in any way be interpreted as the fourth.

Once again we are faced with a clear indication that the inclusion of the words “day” and “night” coupled to a time reference is idiomatically understood to refer to calendar days and not an indication to measure blocks of 24 hours of time from the event mentioned to the next.

The point is that in Hebrew usage the expressions “*after three days*,” “*yet for three days*,” “*the third day*” “*three days and three nights*” were all idiomatic expressions used to indicate “on the third day” only in a calendar sense and never are we witnessing a stop watch event being indicated.

The Inclusive Principle

The inclusive principle must be understood and not violated in interpreting chronological matters in the Bible, especially the New Testament because, whether it makes sense to us in modern times or not, that is the method that all authorities agree was in vogue in Biblical times. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* informs us that:

“In Jewish communal life part of a day is at time reckoned as one day; e.g., the day of the funeral, even when the latter takes place late in the afternoon, is counted as the first of the seven days of mourning; a short time in the morning of the seventh day is counted as the seventh day; circumcision takes place on the eighth day, even though on the first day only a few minutes remained after the birth of the child, these being counted as one day.”⁴¹⁰

409.Est. 4:16.

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As shown above, inclusive time reckoning is found in the law of circumcision. Hebrew law requires every boy baby to be circumcised when he was “eight days old.”⁴¹¹ “In the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”⁴¹² We are told that John the Baptist was circumcised “on the eighth day.”⁴¹³ In the case of Jesus, “when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus.”⁴¹⁴ Again “accomplished” means to us moderns after the completion of the eighth day. According to Hebrew usage, circumcision was to take place on the eighth calendar day, counted from and including the one on which the child was born, regardless of the particular hour, minute, or second when the birth occurred.

Inclusive time reckoning is a Biblical fact of life that was very commonly used in time references. We always must be careful of the context in determining whether this principle was used in the time references given. The fact that the Jews of the first century reckoned time references in an inclusive manner is the biggest stumbling block to modern, western interpreters. Even when people know better they just can’t get this principle embedded into their thinking.

For example, Herbert W. Armstrong used the exclusive method when he made the following appeal:

“IF Jesus had been killed on Friday, and then AFTER one day He had risen, the resurrection would have occurred on Saturday evening. IF AFTER TWO DAYS, it would have occurred Sunday evening, and if AFTER THREE DAYS, it would have occurred MONDAY EVENING!”⁴¹⁵

The logic of this kind of arithmetic is so appealing to some that they just can not see it any other way. But this is exclusive reckoning, pure and simple and it is entirely unbiblical. This same kind of reasoning went into Armstrong’s method of counting the fifty days of Pentecost. Notice these statements:

410. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Day,” vol IV, p. 475.

411. Gen. 17:12.

412. Lev. 12:3.

413. Luke 1:59.

414. Luke 2:21.

415. *The RESURRECTION was NOT on Sunday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1952), p. 6.

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“...count fifty days from this same Sunday, and that fiftieth (sic) day is Pentecost. It is very simple. One day from Sunday is Monday. Two days from Sunday is Tuesday. And so on until you count fifty days from Sunday—a Monday.”⁴¹⁶

What is interesting here is that eventually Herbert Armstrong was forced to change his stand on the exclusive reckoning method of Pentecost to an inclusive method due to external pressure to make that change. But the writer feels that in the mind of Herbert Armstrong he never did relinquish this concept that the inclusive principle was right. Some of Armstrong’s followers still adhere to his original method and keep Pentecost on a Monday primarily because of this all too powerful persuasion that the exclusive method has been to some.

The question for us to ponder, however, is that if Pentecost is figured on an inclusive basis, then why would the three days and three nights not also be? If what is true for the method of counting Pentecost, then it is true for the figuring of the three days of Christ’s burial. Yet, some writers who view Armstrong’s 72 hour scenario in the grave to be in error, still can not get away from this method of reasoning, “One day from such-and-such is the next day, *etc.*” They simply do not understand that the time references were not that of a stop-watch event which forces exclusive time reckoning methods.

Notice this same kind of reasoning is still appealed to by Charles Kimbrough and Mark Carr in their analysis of the subject:

“NOTE: The HANDING into the hands of the Gentiles, the CONDEMNING to death, and the CRUCIFIXION all happened on the SAME DAY, THREE DAYS BEFORE. When you count back from the first day of the week, Saturday would be ONE day back, Friday would be TWO days back, and Thursday would be THREE days back. Counting FORWARD from Thursday, Friday would be one day, Saturday would be the 2nd day, and SUNDAY would be the THIRD day.”⁴¹⁷

It seems that it is almost impossible to convince people that they are way off in left field in trying to make Matthew’s Hebrew expression

416. *Pagan Holidays—or God’s Holydays—Which?* (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1957)

417. “The Real 3 Days & 3 Nights,” *The Jerusalem Sentinel*, as found on the Internet [<http://www.esper.com/jersent/3d3n.html>], n.d.

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of calendar days a literal stop watch requirement. They therefore are hopelessly entrenched in a futile effort of trying to make an exclusive case for their erroneous reasoning. Of course, exclusive time reckoning just doesn't fit. It is context alone which must be our guide into when exclusive reckoning is to be used and not some arbitrary rule that implies that exclusive reckoning was the normal way of counting calendar dates when the fact is that it was just the opposite.

After Three Days

Appeal again is made forcefully by Mr. Armstrong that the expression "after three days" locks in a 72 hour interpretation. After quoting Mark's peculiar expression, he states:

"If Jesus was in the grave only from Friday sunset to Sunday sunrise, then this text too, must be torn out of your Bible or else you must reject Jesus Christ as your Saviour! If He rose AFTER THREE DAYS, it might have been more than 72 hours, but it could not have been a second less!"⁴¹⁸

The implication of this premise is that the resurrection occurred on the fourth calendar day. Thus, the Wednesday/Sabbath theory would actually have the period of time involved as falling upon *four* calendar days to make up a 72 hour period. If Jesus, in fact, was laid to rest in the afternoon of Wednesday, then we have the following scenario: [1] a part of Wednesday, [2] all of Thursday, [3] all of Friday, and [4] a part of the Sabbath. This theory never addresses the implication of the Resurrection occurring on the fourth calendar day from the Crucifixion.

We should note for those who would point out that the expression "after three days" can only mean after the completion of the third, consecutive 24 hour period, the parallel accounts prove a different interpretation. Indeed, this phrase is used by the same writers (Matthew and Luke) as being equivalent to the "third day." The Priests and the Pharisees had remembered what Jesus had stated, that after three days he would rise.⁴¹⁹ Based upon this statement they urged Pilate to keep a guard over the tomb *until* the third day. This is their interpretation of

418. *The RESURRECTION was NOT on Sunday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1952), p. 6.

419. Matt. 27:63.

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Jesus' words.

“On the third day” can only mean that the Resurrection took place on that particular calendar day, otherwise we are obliged to believe that it took place on the fourth day. But no account states that the Resurrection occurred on the fourth calendar day. Since, in parallel passages and in different Gospel accounts, it is easily seen that “after three days” was used interchangeably with “on the third day,”⁴²⁰ then we are obliged to adhere to the testimony of the parallel accounts.

Also, since “on the third day” can not mean the fourth day, and “after three days” can be used as meaning “on the third day,” we must interpret the ambiguity of the “after three days” expression in the light of the clarity of the “on the third day” statement. And we certainly can not take one ambiguous expression (that can have more than one meaning) and use it to interpret another ambiguous expression like Matthew 12:40. But this is exactly what modern interpreters have done. They reason in their own minds what “after three days” means to them, and then back feed this guess into the interpretation of Matthew 12:40.

We can not arbitrarily interpret an expression like “after three days” based upon our modern understanding of how to count days. In the modern sense it means after the third day has been completed and into the fourth calendar day. But the ancients obviously used it in the sense of, not “after” the *completion* of the third day, but “after” the *start* of the third day. The expression “after three days” must not be interpreted based upon some modern convention that implies a period into the fourth calendar day. It must be interpreted in view of the parallel accounts that use this expression, and that points to an inclusive reckoning and the third calendar day—*not the fourth!*

This principle can easily be demonstrated even as far back as in the Genesis account. When God told Noah: “Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth.”⁴²¹ We next read that “It came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.”⁴²² “Yet seven days” and “after seven days” can only make sense when understood inclusively.

420.cf. Mark 8:31 with Matt. 16:21 and Luke 9:22 with Mark 10:34.

421.Gen. 7:4.

422.Gen. 7:4,10. The actual Hebrew wording is “on the seventh day.”

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Notice further what Jesus told His disciples after His ministry in Caesarea Philippi:

“...that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and **on the third day** be raised.”⁴²³

Mark’s same account of this says that he must “be killed, and after three days rise again.”⁴²⁴ And Luke records yet another variant in his account by saying that Jesus must “be killed, and on the third day be raised.”⁴²⁵

The Gospel writers are only in agreement when we understand that they merely intended to convey three calendar days, counted from and including the day of Crucifixion and not under any circumstances four days. Obviously, after three days means after the third day began, not after the third day was completed. This was completely understood in a society that used inclusive time reckoning and is completely lost on a society that only sees exclusive time reckoning as the only method there ever was.

Pressing on, there are more examples. In one account, not long after Jesus’ Transfiguration, Jesus said to the disciples:

“The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised.”⁴²⁶

Mark’s parallel account words it differently by saying:

“The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.”⁴²⁷

Harmonizing “on the third day” with “three days after” can only be done when understanding that Christ would rise from the dead on the third calendar day—**not the fourth!**—counted from and including the day of the Crucifixion. This is proof that the Wednesday Crucifixionists refuse to acknowledge, but is absolutely devastating to their entire theory.

423.Matt. 16:21.

424.Mark 8:31.

425.Luke 9:22.

426.Matt. 17:22,23.

427.Mark 9:31.

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Again, we have another account where Jesus foretold his own Crucifixion:

“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified; and on the third day he will be raised.”⁴²⁸

Mark is consistent in his record of this same account in saying: “after three days,”⁴²⁹ while Luke says like Matthew “on the third day he will rise again.”⁴³⁰ Mark’s peculiar method of stating “after” three days is explained by Luke, who makes it very clear that this expression is “on the third day”—*not the fourth!*

It is only when we read all the parallel accounts where Jesus himself foretold of his death in phraseology that can only be interpreted as the third calendar day that Matthew 12:40 can be correctly understood. The “three days and three nights” is simply a throw back to a Hebrewism, as we have seen, which only Matthew, who wrote in Aramaic/ Hebrew, used. The other Gospel writers, writing in Greek, did not state the time interval using that Hebrew method.

The fact that Matthew was consistently referring to calendar days using this Hebrew expression, while the other Gospel writers never did, is a fact that *is never mentioned in Wednesday Crucifixion/Saturday Resurrection papers!* This fact can be seen in Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness.⁴³¹ While Matthew uses the customary Hebrew usage of linking the days and nights as he did in 12:40, the parallel passages in Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2 simply refer to it as a period of “forty days.”

72 Hours Span Four Calendar Days

An excellent example of how the Jews counted time in the New Testament is found in the story of Cornelius in Acts 10. Here we read that an angel appeared to Cornelius in Caesarea “one afternoon at about three o’clock”⁴³² telling him to send for Peter at Joppa to come and

428.Matt. 20:18,19.

429.Mark 10:34.

430.Luke 18:33.

431.Matt. 4:2.

432.Acts 10.3, NRSV.

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instruct him.⁴³³

In stop-watch measurement of time this would be day zero but in calendar day reckoning this is calendar day one. Then “about noon the next day” Peter went to the housetop to pray.⁴³⁴ Upon finishing his prayers [and his vision] the messengers arrive and Peter lodges them.⁴³⁵ This is one full day from the time that this is measured by the clock [exclusive reckoning] but is day two on the calendar.

Then, “the next day he got up and went with them.”⁴³⁶ At three o’clock that day, 48 hours would have transpired but by the calendar this is calendar day three. “The following day they came to Caesarea.”⁴³⁷ And what does Cornelius explain to the apostles? “Four days ago at this very hour, at three o’clock, I was praying...”⁴³⁸ Exactly seventy-two hours had transpired since 3:00 PM on calendar day one to calendar day four and that period of time was called by Luke “four days” and not “three days!” How obvious it is that Luke is recording calendar days (inclusive reckoning) and not elapsed time (exclusive reckoning).

This is the difference in understanding that many people overlook in viewing time references in the Bible. The above event involved four calendar days. Yet the New Testament declares 13 times that the day on which Jesus rose was “the third day.”⁴³⁹ Not once do they ever say that He arose on the fourth day from the one on which His death occurred. *NOT ONCE!*

New Testament Examples

New Testament usage of chronological expressions is consistent with the “inclusive” principle. When some Pharisees intended to frighten Jesus to get out of town in a hurry by telling him that Herod sought to kill him, Jesus answered and told them:

433.vv. 1-8.

434.v.9.

435.vv. 9-22.

436.v.23.

437.v. 24.

438.v. 30.

439.Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; I Cor. 15:4.

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“Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work.’”⁴⁴⁰

Here “the third day” is specifically defined by Jesus, the School Master himself, as meaning the same as “the day following [tomorrow].” One just can not find clearer statements than these of inclusive reckoning and that calendar days are merely referred to.

Another example is when Jesus was brought to trial later on, false witnesses brought forth this accusation:

“This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’”⁴⁴¹

Mark’s account reads:

“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’”⁴⁴²

The scoffers at Jesus’ Crucifixion tied these comments to the events then happening by saying:

“You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself”⁴⁴³

Again, we read further that the Chief Priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said:

“Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ Therefore command the tomb to be made secure *UNTIL* the third day...”⁴⁴⁴

In all of these various expressions, i.e., “in three days,” “within three days [as the KJV/NKJV, NAB supports],” “after three days,” and “until the third day,” harmony can only be understood if the inclusive reckoning is used and the third day means the third calendar day—not the fourth.

440.Luke 13:31-2.

441.Matt. 26:61.

442.Mark 14:58.

443.Mark 15:29,30.

444.Matt. 27:62-64.

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What is an “Annual Sabbath?”

There are those who choose to believe that the Sabbath mentioned in John 19:31 was solely the “annual Sabbath” of Nisan 15 and that it fell during the week of the Crucifixion on a Thursday and not on a Saturday, otherwise, this would be a formidable obstacle to the Wednesday Crucifixion view. Therefore, by making the Sabbath of John 19:31 an “annual Sabbath” and making that “annual Sabbath” fall on a Thursday on Passion week, then this allows Jesus to be in the heart of the earth for a period of 72 hours, with no apparent discrepancy in the text.

The question that concerns us here that must be answered before this line of reasoning can go forward is, can the unqualified term “Sabbath” ever be understood as or even referred to as an “annual Sabbath?” The question is legitimate because the fact of the matter is that nowhere in the Bible do we ever run across the terms “annual Sabbath” or “yearly Sabbath” as a designation for an annual Holyday. Modern interpreters throw out a term that is never explained, and many unquestionably follow them like so many dumb, blind sheep. It is high time that we question the legitimacy of this pseudo-term.

One thing is painfully obvious. Those who accept this theory are forced to read John’s statement in the following manner. First, John is writing his Gospel account and makes mention of a Sabbath day. But then, suddenly, John, while writing his Gospel, immediately realizes that his readership might misunderstand that he wasn’t trying to record a weekly Sabbath that occurs on the seventh day of the week, but an “annual Sabbath” that can occur on any day of the week. He therefore says to himself, “oops,” better back up and clarify myself here, otherwise readers will surely misunderstand that an unqualified Sabbath might normally be interpreted as a weekly Sabbath.

Therefore, these modern interpreters tell you that John is only clarifying himself and that no other interpretation is acceptable, simply because any other explanation destroys their theory. This is supposedly the reason why John tells us, “(for that sabbath day was an high day).” In other words, apparently, John is not saying that the High Day fell on a weekly Sabbath day, but only trying to qualify the term Sabbath as being a “High Day,” which can occur on any day of the week.

But the reality is that this verse can be interpreted in one of two

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ways. Either John was stating that the seventh day Sabbath was a High day, because the First Day of Unleavened Bread coincided with it, or that this parenthetical explanation was to clarify himself, *i.e.*, that this particular Sabbath was in distinction to the weekly Sabbath, better known as an “annual Sabbath.” Let us understand the truth!

The Sabbath is a term that is specifically applied to the seventh day of the week, but can it rightfully be applied to and interchanged with a Holyday? One thing is for certain. It is modern usage that came up with the term “annual Sabbath” and we need to be cautious in its usage here before interpreting what John intended by this modern definition. In formulating the “annual Sabbath” explanation, notice what Herbert W. Armstrong states:

“Just what is a “HIGH DAY”? Ask any Jew! He will tell you it is one of the annual holydays, or feast days. The Israelites observed seven of these every year—every one called SABBATHS! Annual Sabbaths, falling on certain annual calendar dates, and on different days of the week in different years, just like the Roman holidays now observed. These Sabbaths might fall on Monday, on Thursday, or on Sunday.

“If you will notice the following texts, you will see these annual holydays were all called Sabbath days: Lev. 23:24; Lev. 16:31; Lev. 23:39; Lev. 23:15; Lev 23:26-32.”⁴⁴⁵

This last statement is false. These verses are not justification for calling all Holydays as an unqualified “Sabbath.” Only the Day of Atonement, like the weekly Sabbath is described in this chapter [and Leviticus 16:31] as being a “Shabbath shabbathon,” [which should rightly be interpreted as a “sabbath of solemn rest” or simply “a rest of rests.]”

Although the term “shabbathon” in Leviticus 23:24 and 39 is applied to the Day of Trumpets and to the first day of Succoth respectively, there should be no implication that these days are given the generic, and universally understood term of “Sabbath.”

In reference to the expression “Sabbath Sabbathon” in verse 3 and verse 32 we should note the following remark from a Jewish commentary:

445. Herbert W. Armstrong, *The RESURRECTION was NOT on Sunday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1952), p. 11.

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“The reference to the Sabbath in this connection is [i.e., ‘Sabbath Sabbathon’], according to the Rabbis, to emphasize the fact that the seventh day of the week must always be ‘a sabbath of solemn rest’—even when it coincides with a Festival, on which day, otherwise, only manual labour is prohibited, but not such as is necessary for the preparation of meals.”⁴⁴⁶

Thus, when we read the specifics of the Day of Atonement in verse 28, “you shall do NO manner of work in that same day” we see that the Day of Atonement is specifically described, unlike the other Holy Days, where only servile work was prohibited, but like the seventh day, as being a day just like the weekly Sabbath in respect to doing *no work at all!* The Day of Atonement only, of all the Holydays, is the only one singled out as being a “Shabbath shabbathon.”

This is hardly evidence that the term “Sabbath” is an equivalent term for each and every Holyday, especially the Feast days like the First Day of Unleavened Bread, Shavuoth, and Succoth. Feast days actually require a lot of food preparation and serving. Therefore, it is only in this light that we are able to really understand the summary statement concerning the Holydays in Leviticus 23:37: “These are the appointed seasons of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations...BESIDE the sabbaths of the Lord”—*which are the weekly Sabbath and the Day of Atonement, which is also called a Sabbath, and the ONLY other Holyday defined as such!*

Those who point to these verses as testimony that all Holydays are unqualified Sabbaths do so to their ignorance, because they ignore the all important word “beside,” which differentiates the Sabbaths from the other Holydays. Rather than being included as a Sabbath day, these other Holydays are BESIDE the Sabbaths—a different category.

Indeed, Leviticus 23 itself shows us that an unqualified reference to the Sabbath term means the weekly Sabbath day in describing how to count the fifty days of Shavuoth. In verses 11 and 15 it simply says “on the morrow after the Sabbath.” Is this the weekly Sabbath or is it Nisan 15, the First Day of Unleavened Bread? It is only the context that tells us. And the context of verse 15 tells us to count seven of these “Sabbaths” and in verse 16 after the seventh “Sabbath” is Shavuoth. Right in this

446. *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, ed. J. H. Hertz, (London:Soncino Press, 1938), p.520.

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chapter we can see that an unqualified “Sabbath” is simply the weekly Sabbath.

At any rate, it is a rather dubious interpretation of John 19:31 that he is clarifying himself by backing up and adding a qualification to the term “Sabbath.” Actually it is only those who are in desperate need of a justification for their theory that interpret John 19:31 in this fashion. Most commentators merely derive what the simple text tells us, and that is that John is explaining that the weekly Sabbath was also a Holyday because it coincided with it. This interpretation is cemented by the following powerful facts. Let us continue our investigation.

Following the Chronology

There are sufficient chronological benchmarks in the relationship of Christ’s Crucifixion and Resurrection to support the fact that Jesus died on a Friday (Nisan 14) and rose on the third calendar day inclusively, Sunday (Nisan 16). First of all, “It was the preparation of the passover” when Jesus was crucified.⁴⁴⁷ The preparation of the Passover lamb by killing it, dressing it, and roasting it for the Passover supper took place on Nisan 14 in the late afternoon of that day. After sunset, that night, the Passover meal, consisting of the roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread, was eaten.⁴⁴⁸

The fact that it was the preparation of the Passover when Jesus was crucified is evidence that He, as the Lamb of God, died on Nisan 14.⁴⁴⁹ Further, the men who took Jesus to Pilate for trial did not enter into the judgement hall “so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover.⁴⁵⁰” This is consistent with the statement that Christ met with His disciples in the upper chamber to wash their feet and to eat His last supper with them, “before the feast of the passover.⁴⁵¹”

The day of the week is specified as “the preparation, ...the day before the Sabbath.”⁴⁵² Any Jewish person would read this and

447.John 19:14.

448.Ex. 12:6, 8, 12, 29-31, 37, 51; Nu. 33:3.

449.John 1:29, I Pet. 1:18, 19; I Cor. 5:7.

450.John 18:28

451.John 13:1.

452.Mark 15:42; Like 23:54.

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understand exactly what day was being referred to. It is Friday, the sixth day of the week, the day before the weekly Sabbath.⁴⁵³ This would make Nisan 14 occurring on Friday and Nisan 15, the annual Holyday of the First Day of Unleavened Bread, coinciding with the weekly Sabbath. And John tells us specifically that this was the case when he explains:

“therefore, because it was the Preparation [day], that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was [also] a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”⁴⁵⁴

The parenthetical statement by John shows that he was explaining very clearly that this particular weekly Sabbath day was “a day of great solemnity (NRSV)” because the annual Holyday of Nisan 15 happened to fall on the weekly Sabbath making that day doubly holy, as it were.

The Chronology of Mark

It is necessary to ask whether Mark had in mind an “annual Sabbath” and not the weekly Sabbath and its day of preparation when he records:

“When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea...went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.”⁴⁵⁵

Mark gives no qualification to the term Sabbath here as did John. Following the chronology, on that day of preparation “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.”⁴⁵⁶ Then, when the Sabbath was over the women bought spices.⁴⁵⁷ “And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen they went to the tomb.”⁴⁵⁸

Now in the so-called longer ending of Mark, chapter 16, verses 9-20, (missing in the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus manuscripts, although

453.Ex. 16:22-26.

454.John 19:31, NKJV.

455.Mark 15:42,43.

456.Mark 15:47.

457.Mark 16:1.

458.v.2.

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nearly all other manuscripts of Mark contain them) it says specifically “Now when [He] rose early on the first [day] of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.”⁴⁵⁹ This witness says that it was indeed the first day of the week that Jesus rose from the dead.

However, the main point is that the simple reading of Mark does not support a theory of a Wednesday “day of preparation” in which Christ was crucified, a Thursday “annual Sabbath,” a Friday day of preparation, a weekly Sabbath at the end of which Christ is resurrected, and then the Sunday morning visit by the women. If all we had was Mark’s account, no one would ever have dreamed of such a scenario.

The Chronology of Luke

The account of Luke is appealed to as evidence that there is a discrepancy between Mark’s account and his own in regard to when the women prepared the spices. As we have seen in Mark, the women bought the spices just after the Sabbath.⁴⁶⁰ Luke, on the other hand, says that:

“It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning...and the women who had come with him [Joseph of Arimathea] from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments [still on the day of preparation]. ...on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb.”⁴⁶¹

The explanation given is that the women bought the spices after the “annual Sabbath” of Nisan 15 that was supposed to occur on Thursday, making it now Friday, the day of preparation of the weekly Sabbath mentioned in Luke. Yet, Luke’s narration is quite clear that Joseph of Arimathea received permission to take the body of Jesus, took it down from the cross, wrapped it in linen and laid it in the tomb all on the day of preparation and the women came with him and saw how the body was laid.

It makes no sense to say that Jesus was buried on Wednesday

459.v. 9.

460.Mark 16:1

461.Luke 23:54-56; 24:1-2.

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afternoon, then a whole day went by unrecorded, and then on Friday the women went to the tomb with Joseph of Arimathea to see how the body was laid and then prepare the spices, and then another Sabbath go by, and then the Sunday morning visit.

The plain reading in Luke's order is simply: day one—day of Preparation; day two—the Sabbath; day three—the first day of the week. And Luke continues his account with the angel who tells the women:

“Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and *on the third day rise again.*”⁴⁶²

Luke knows of no blank days in between the Crucifixion and the weekly Sabbath. His account alone would never have spawned a Wednesday Crucifixion. This is especially true when we read on in verse 13 about the two disciples who “went that same day to a village called Emmaus.” These two men recounted to Jesus, whom they had not recognized,

“...how the chief priests and our rulers...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.*”⁴⁶³

But in an amazing bit of double talk, Herbert Armstrong scrambles this simple and clear picture into one of the most incredible dodges imaginable. Like watching a slight-of-hand artist in a shell game, see if you can keep your eye on the shell with the pea:

“Another passage that might confuse, is Luke 24:21: ‘...and beside all this, today is the third day SINCE THESE THINGS WERE DONE.’ ‘These things’ included all the events pertaining to the resurrection—the seizing of Jesus, delivering Him to be tried, the actual crucifixion, and, finally the setting of the seal and the watch over the tomb the following day, or Thursday. Study verses 18-20, telling of ‘these things’ and also Matt. 27:62-66. ‘These things’ were not completed until the watch was set, Thursday. And the text says Sunday was the third day SINCE THESE THINGS were done. These things were not done until Thursday, Sunday truly was the third day since Thursday. But it was not the third day since Friday, so this text could not prove a

462. Luke 24:6,7.

463. vv. 20,21.

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Friday crucifixion.”⁴⁶⁴

The last statement is definitely false because it is based on ignorance of the inclusive reckoning principle that Luke is consistently using throughout his Gospel. As stated before, ignorance of the inclusive principle is one of the chief culprits in why people can’t make sense out of what the Gospel writers were unitedly saying with their seemingly different expressions. Indeed, Armstrong’s unfamiliarity of this simple principle got himself in deep trouble when counting the 50 days of Pentecost and this same *faux pas* is glaringly obvious in his interpretation of Matthew 12:40.

All of this really shows what lengths people will go to try to squirm out of reality when cornered by the truth and they refuse to believe their eyes. In spite of Armstrong’s ingenious explanation, the fact of the matter remains that if Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday, that would have been five days before his burial measured in the inclusive method, *not three!* That is certainly what Luke was talking about, and not trying to say since the guard was set. This is proven by Jesus’ own words at the close of that first day of the week saying, “thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day.”⁴⁶⁵

Certainly, Jesus wasn’t trying to refer only to when the guard was set. He very clearly here said that His Resurrection took place on “the third day”—not the fourth! Peter also declared years later that “God raised [Jesus] up the third day.”⁴⁶⁶ Paul, likewise, declared that “he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”⁴⁶⁷ These verses are powerful testimony in how to interpret not only Luke 24:21, but more importantly, Matthew 12:40.

The Setting of the Guard

If there was an “annual” Sabbath that occurred on Thursday of Passion Week and the Crucifixion was the day before that “annual” Sabbath, then would it have not made sense that the authorities would have wanted a guard set after that first Sabbath and not only let Thursday

464. *The RESURRECTION was NOT on Sunday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1952), p. 12.

465. Luke 24:46.

466. Acts 10:40.

467. I Cor. 15:4.

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pass, but a full Friday to pass, then a second Sabbath and only then set the guard after both Sabbaths? Of course it does and the context of Matthew 27 is very clear. Verses 59-61 show us that Joseph of Arimathea buried the body of Jesus with the women watching. Then beginning with verse 62:

“The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, ‘Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can.’ So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.”⁴⁶⁸

The context is absolutely clear. It was the day after Jesus was crucified that the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate, urgently appealing to him to have a guard set immediately after that Sabbath. They certainly would not have waited an extra two days because they themselves asked to have the guard set “until the third day.”

Now notice this important fact. It must not be considered that the authorities went to the tomb to seal the huge stone to the rock escarpment with mortar without first looking inside to see if the body was in fact still there. It would be ludicrous to believe that they were securing the tomb from theft if they had not at least satisfied for themselves that Jesus’ body wasn’t already stolen. Would not have Pilate and everyone else have asked the authorities, “Did you not check to see if Jesus’ body still lay in the tomb before sealing it?”

It is obvious that the Jewish authorities were anxious in stopping the belief that Jesus would arise by the third day. The only time that there was no watch and the disciples could have stolen the body was up until the time they set the guard. So they must have made sure that during this time the body wasn’t already stolen, otherwise they would have been made fools and the whole intent of their actions would have been for nothing.

The Wednesday Crucifixion theory tells us that Jesus arose late on Sabbath afternoon. If this is so, then at the very time that the tomb

468.Matt. 27:62-66, NRSV.

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was being sealed the body of Jesus was already gone. But by the above analysis, a Sabbath afternoon Resurrection would be entirely impossible. And as the third calendar day since Christ's Crucifixion was beginning, it was necessary that the tomb be on careful watch from the beginning of that "third day" on.

There is another important clue that has been overlooked by the Wednesday crucifixion theorists that shows the crucifixion was not on the Sabbath afternoon. It is in the report of the guard to the chief priests. Notice:

"...some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened. After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them, 'You must say, 'His disciples came BY NIGHT and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.' So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Jews to this day."⁴⁶⁹

We should note here that Dr. Ernest L. Martin believes that the expression in Matthew 28:1, "after the Sabbath[s]," should be attached to the last verses of chapter 27 and refer to the fact that it was after the Sabbath that the tomb was sealed and the guard was set.⁴⁷⁰ This idea, of course, is based on days beginning and ending at sunset. Martin sees no other way to harmonize Matthew 28:1 other than chopping it up so that the "after the Sabbath[s]" expression is divorced from the women arriving at the tomb in the early hours of the first day of the week at sunrise. It is possible that Matthew did mean after the Sabbath DAY, but it is more likely that he was referring to the day and night which just past.

The fact is that the Jewish authorities were well aware that the body of Jesus was still there just after the Sabbath day had ended. This is when they sealed the stone. The body could only have been stolen during the night when the guards could have fallen asleep, most likely in the

469. Matt. 28:11-15, NRSV.

470. Ernest L. Martin, *The Case for a Thursday Crucifixion*, (The Foundation for Biblical Research, Pasadena, 1983), p. 2 and *101 Bible Secrets that Christians Do Not Know*, (ASK Publications, Portland, Oregon, 1993), pp. 60-1.

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early predawn hours. This is another powerful indication that Jesus could not have arisen on the afternoon of the Sabbath.

The Plural Sabbaths of Matthew 28:1

Some have tried to make a case of Matthew 28:1 as saying “after the Sabbaths”—the plural supposedly referring to Nisan 15 and the weekly Sabbath.⁴⁷¹ Once again this line of reasoning is based upon the assumption that all Holydays are also called Sabbaths. They are not. But Matthew does use a plural here. Why?

It was common for Jews to use a plural of excellence when the singular was intended. For instance, the word for “life” in Hebrew is in the plural, *chayim*. The face of the earth in Genesis 1:29 is plural. There is no end of speculation about the word *elohim* being plural in form but singular in meaning. The plural Sabbaths expression is also used several times in Exodus 16:23-29 when the singular is intended. In the Gospel of Mark there are examples where the Greek has plural Sabbaths but the context exhibits a single Sabbath meaning.⁴⁷² In Matthew 12:1-12, both the singular and the plural are used in the same context. Such idiomatic usage hardly can be cited for the precise meaning that is needed to support the idea that Matthew had in mind two distinct Sabbaths occurring that week.

Thus, there is no nuance in this verse that should alert us that there were two Sabbaths that week. The Scriptures are clear. Jesus died on a Friday, calendar day one, and rose on a Sunday, calendar day three. Again, this leads to the conclusion that the expression three days and three nights was not a measure of hours, minutes, seconds, but merely an idiomatic expression referring to calendar days.

The Women and the Preparing of Spices

The women prepared the spices on the day of Crucifixion, soon after Jesus was placed in the tomb, but before the sun went down which

471. Herbert W. Armstrong, *The RESURRECTION was NOT on Sunday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1952), p. 13 and Herman L. Hoeh, *The CRUCIFIXION was NOT on Friday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1959), pp. 2-3.

472. Mark 1:21; 2:23,24; 3:2.

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began the Sabbath.⁴⁷³ Now if this preparation occurred on Wednesday, why would they have not returned on Friday morning to anoint the Body of Christ? Why would they have waited until the fifth calendar day to anoint the body of Jesus? Are we to believe that they postponed for over three and a half days the anointing?

We know that in the case of Lazarus, after four days his body began to stink.⁴⁷⁴ What causes the stink is the body decaying, obviously. Peter quoted Psalm 16:8-11 concerning Christ, “Because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”⁴⁷⁵ When Christ died most, if not all his blood had been drained from his body.⁴⁷⁶ Also, John’s account says that there was an initial anointing of Jesus at his burial with about 75-100 pounds of myrrh by Nicodemus.⁴⁷⁷ Jesus’ body would be entombed in the cool spring air that Sabbath night, then one full day in of Spring time daylight, then another cool night until Sunday morning. This would have been a reasonable time for the women to return for the final anointing. But for them to wait until the fifth calendar day to return is excessively too long.

Yet there are those who insist that here is where it can be proven that there were two sabbath days during this week and the account of the anointing proves it. Again, Mr. Armstrong writes:

“According to Mark 16:1, Mary Magdalene and her companions did not by their spices to anoint the body of Jesus until AFTER THE SABBATH WAS PAST. They could not prepare them until after this—yet after preparing the spices THEY RESTED THE SABBATH DAY ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT! (Luke 23:56)....

“There is only one possible explanation: After the annual high-day Sabbath, the feast day of the days of unleavened bread—which was Thursday—these women purchased and prepared their spices on FRIDAY, and then they rested on the weekly Sabbath, Saturday, according to the Commandment! (Exodus 20:8-11).

“A comparison of these two texts PROVES there were TWO Sabbaths that week, with a DAY IN BETWEEN. Otherwise, these texts

473.Luke 23:56.

474.John 11:39.

475.Acts 2:27, NIV.

476.John 19:34.

477.John 19:39.

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contradict themselves.⁴⁷⁸

If this explanation is true, then it would seem to do violence to not only a Friday Crucifixion but also a Thursday Crucifixion, which would be like one 48 hour Sabbath. But, despite Mr. Armstrong's forceful remarks about his explanation being the only "possible explanation," two very good alternative explanations are here given by Anthony Buzzard of Atlanta Bible College:

"Some have thought that two Sabbath days must have occurred in the crucifixion week. They argue that the women bought spices after a Sabbath (Mark 16:1) and before a Sabbath (Luke 23:56). This detail should not be permitted to overthrow the strong evidence for a Friday crucifixion, the third day before Sunday. It may well be that two groups of women are distinguished in the account (as also after the resurrection—John 20:1; *cp.* Luke 24:1). In Mat. 27:55 there are 'many women,' among whom Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee are singled out. The larger group is the 'many other women' of Mark 15:41. They may have prepared spices before the weekly Sabbath (Luke 23:49, 56), while the group of three waited until after the Sabbath (Mark 16:1); or, alternatively, spices may have been hastily bought before the Sabbath and supplemented by others bought after the Sabbath. Mark 16:9 (as a very early witness to the facts) places the Resurrection on Sunday: 'Now after he had risen on the first day of the week, he first appeared to may Magdalene...' ⁴⁷⁹

The point of the matter here is that we are not compelled to envision two Sabbaths this week-end by a forced interpretation of the women buying spices at two different times.

Another Enigma

If Jesus arose on the Sabbath afternoon, then what was He doing all the time from then until the morning? Was He sitting in the dark tomb all night until dawn? Did He walk through the tomb miraculously as He did when He went to the upper room? If so, where did He go? Some will say that since Jesus is the first fruit from the dead,⁴⁸⁰ then this ties in

478. Herbert W. Armstrong, *The RESURRECTION was NOT on Sunday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1952), p. 13.

479. Sir Anthony Buzzard, *The Law, The Sabbath and New Testament Christianity*, Published by Restoration Fellowship, Morrow, GA, 1992, p. 21.

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with the Wave Sheaf offering that occurs after the weekly Sabbath of Passover week.⁴⁸¹

The time for this offering was during the daylight hours of Sunday along with an offering of a lamb without blemish. Jesus told Mary Magdalene “do not hold on to me for I have not yet ascended to my father.”⁴⁸² indicating that the offering of First Fruits hadn’t occurred yet. If Jesus’ sacrifice occurred at the precise moment the priest offered the Pascal Lamb, would not the offering of First Fruits coincide with the Temple ritual as well? Later that evening we see the disciples were able to touch Jesus in the upper room, indicating that the event had occurred that day.⁴⁸³

The Calendar and the Year of Crucifixion

Some have appealed to the Jewish Calendar date as proving that the Crucifixion occurred on Wednesday. But first, in what year did the Crucifixion occur? The technicalities involved in determining the year of Jesus’ Crucifixion puts the answer beyond the scope of this study, but this author believes it to be in the year AD 30. Suffice it to say that the majority of scholars do favor the year AD 30.⁴⁸⁴ Indeed, one scholar, Professor A. T. Olmstead concluded that: “The year of crucifixion can be only 30 AD. ...Friday, April 7, AD 30 is established as firmly as any date in ancient history.”⁴⁸⁵

Realizing that a Wednesday Crucifixion for AD 30 is impossible, some have suggested that the year was in fact AD 31, and that it occurred according to Parker and Dubberstein on Wednesday, April 25, AD 31.⁴⁸⁶ Yet, this date is impossible because it would involve adding an

480.Col. 1 and I Cor. 15.

481.Lev. 23:10-12.

482.John 20:17.

483.John 20:27.

484.Raymond Brown cites the German Scholar J. Blinzer having catalogued the opinions of about 100 scholars, with 53 opting for AD 30, 24 choosing AD 33, and between one to three choosing the other years from AD 26-36, *The Death of the Messiah*, (New York:Doubleday, 1994), vol. 2, pp. 1374-1375.

485.“The Chronology of Jesus’ Life,” *Anglican Theological Review*, 24 (1942), p. 4,6

486.*Babylonian Chronology, 626 B.C.-A.D. 75*, (Providence:Brown University Press, 1956), p. 46.

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intercalary month the previous year when no such month was required as Fotheringham's calculation shows.⁴⁸⁷ In fact, Parker and Dubberstein's Calendar would have Passover occurring six days before May, and the barley harvest would never have occurred as late as that.

Others have simply taken the rules of the present Hebrew Calendar and backed calculated them to arrive at a date of Wednesday, April 5, AD 30 for Nisan 14. But this date can not be correct because the visibility of the new moon could not have occurred so early in that week as this, as professor Fotheringham maintains.⁴⁸⁸ Thursday is possible, but Friday still remains the most likely.

Also, the attempt to back calculate the present Hebrew Calendar and artificially adjust the 19 year cycle to coincide with a Wednesday, Nisan 14, in AD 31 can not in any sense be offered as proof, simply because our precise knowledge of the workings of the Hebrew Calendar in Jesus' day is incomplete.⁴⁸⁹ This method would also produce a date the same as Parker and Dubberstein, and must be rejected also as being too late for the barley harvest.

Therefore, based upon astronomical calculations, the following table offers the reader the best data that can be reasonably derived from astronomy. The results of these tabulations are here provided for critical analysis:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Nisan 14</u>	<u>Nisan 14</u>
AD [Fotheringham]	[Parker and Dubberstein]	
27	Thursday, April 10	Thursday, April 10
28	Tuesday, March 30	Wednesday, April 28
29	Monday, April 18	Monday, April 18

487. "The Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 35 [1934], pp. 146-162.

488. *ibid.*, p. 162

489. This fortuitous endeavor was brought out by Herman L. Hoeh, *HOW to Prove the Crucifixion Was NOT on Friday!*, (Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1961), pp. 2-3. The author intends to show why the present Hebrew Calendar can not be back calculated to the time of Christ in a forthcoming volume on the History of the Hebrew Calendar.

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30	Friday, April 7	Friday, April 7
31	Tuesday, March 27	Wednesday, April 25
32	Monday, April 14	Monday, April 14
33	Friday, April 3	Saturday, April 4
34	Wednesday, March 24	Thursday, April 22

A Thursday Crucifixion?

Before moving on, we should ask whether there is a compromise between Wednesday and Friday, namely could the Crucifixion have occurred on Thursday?

There are a few of scholars who have advocated a Thursday Crucifixion, such as J. K. Aldrich⁴⁹⁰ and elaborated by B. F. Westcott.⁴⁹¹ Harold Hoehner addresses this theory also and rejects it as having too many problems to be valid.⁴⁹² Yet, as already cited, Dr. Ernest L. Martin has reviewed this theory and finds that the case for a Thursday Crucifixion is not all that problematic and does offer some solutions to some Friday Crucifixion difficulties as well as being a good compromise to the arguments for a Wednesday Crucifixion.⁴⁹³

Dr. Martin notes that recently, Roger Rusk, Emeritus Professor of Physics at the University of Tennessee, has revived the Thursday theory.⁴⁹⁴ He has provided new astronomical evidence that shows that in AD 30, the New Moon crescent for the month Nisan would have been visible a day earlier than had previously thought and would make Nisan 14 occur on a Thursday. Of course, this assumes that AD 30 is the

490. "The Crucifixion on Thursday---Not Friday," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, xxvii, (JULY, 1870) pp. 401-429.

491. *An Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, (Cambridge, 1881), pp. 343-49.

492. *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), chapter 6, pp. 65-7.

493. Ernest L. Martin, *The Case for a Thursday Crucifixion*, (The Foundation for Biblical Research, Pasadena,; 1983), 6 pp. This was a revised view of his earlier paper advocating a Friday Crucifixion, *Was Christ Crucified on Wednesday?* (Exposition No. 121, The Foundation for Biblical Research, Pasadena,; 1975), 12 pp.

494. *Christianity Today*, March 29, 1974.

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correct year for the event.

This is how the scenario would run if a Thursday Crucifixion had happened. Christ dies at 3:00 pm Thursday, Nisan 14. At sundown commenced the so-called “annual” Sabbath called the First Day of Unleavened Bread. This would be Friday, Nisan 15 (John 19:31). The next evening would be the beginning of the weekly Sabbath, Nisan 16. This would make a double holyday, one in tandem with another. Such an occurrence, in fact, occurred the year of 1994 with Nisan 15 occurring directly on the heels of the weekly Sabbath. Then, after those two Sabbaths, or as Matthew puts it, “at the end of the Sabbaths,”⁴⁹⁵ the Priests and Pharisees posted the guard and put mortar around the stone, effectively sealing it to the rock escarpment. Then, about 12 hours later, as it began to dawn on the first day of the week, the stone was rolled away by angel and Christ emerged, now resurrected from the dead.

This reckoning would supposedly allow the “three days and three nights” of Math. 12:40 to be more literal (using the inclusive count for the first day). It would also satisfy the “after three days”⁴⁹⁶ as literal (using again the inclusive for the first day). And thirdly, it dovetails with the new astronomical data that points to Nisan 14 occurring on Thursday in AD 30.

Although Dr. Martin believes that the Thursday Crucifixion is the correct explanation to the problem it is he, himself, who has shown us why this theory can not be correct:

“The only major difficulty to the whole scheme is ‘the third day’ of Luke 24:21, which if used in the normal *inclusive* fashion seems to reach back only to Friday. If one, however, accepts an *exclusive* reckoning in this special case, then the first day back from that Sunday afternoon would have been Sabbath afternoon, the second day back would have been Friday, and the third day back would, obviously, be a Thursday afternoon! If Luke abandoned his normal *inclusive* usage in Luke 24:21, then all the accounts in the biblical records appear compatible. But, it must be admitted, that the *inclusive* manner predominates in Luke’s writings. Perhaps (it has been suggested) that the annual Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath appearing in tandem with each other in AD 30 only represented one day in Luke’s reckoning.

495.Matt 28:1.

496.Matt. 27:63.

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This may be, but I know of no such usage in any other biblical or secular text. Indeed, the Day of Pentecost was the 50th day from the Sunday during the days of Unleavened Bread, and it always appears abutting to the weekly Sabbath that precedes it, yet that weekly Sabbath is always called the 49th day, and the day from that Sunday. This is *inclusive* reckoning!”⁴⁹⁷

For Luke to abandon his inclusive reckoning in the one instance would be inexplicable. There is no justification for Luke to “abandon” his normal inclusive usage in this one instance. All the accounts are only compatible when we realize that Matthew 12:40 is an idiomatic expression for three calendar days.

If one simply reads the account of the Crucifixion as Luke records it from chapter 23:47 through 24:1 no one would ever have come up with any other idea than a Friday Crucifixion. This was Dr. Martin’s earlier view⁴⁹⁸, and it still makes the most sense.

The Testimony of History

Some have tried to make a case that history proves the Wednesday/Friday theory. Again Dr. Hoeh writes:

Astounding proof exists of ... attempts to change the day of the resurrection and of the crucifixion. James A. Walther, in an article entitled ‘The Chronology of Passion Week,’ in the June 1958 Journal of Biblical Literature, mentions that numerous Catholic writers for centuries maintained that Jesus ate the Passover Tuesday night—that early Wednesday morning He was taken by the Jewish mob. He declares: ‘References in the *Didiscalia*, in Epiphanius, in Victorinus of Pettau, ...support the Tuesday {night} Passover dating and the subsequent arrest of Jesus in the morning hours of Wednesday.’”⁴⁹⁹

Unfortunately, Dr. Hoeh blindly followed his secondary source without, apparently, ever bothering to read what the *Didiscalia* really had to say. The truth of the matter is that the *Didiscalia* is not helpful to the Wednesday Crucifixion theory because *it still places the Crucifixion on Friday!*

497. *The Case for a Thursday Crucifixion*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

498. *Was Christ Crucified on Wednesday?* *op. cit.*, p. 8.

499. Herman L. Hoeh, **The CRUCIFIXION was NOT on Friday!**, (Pasadena, Ambassador College Press: 1959), p. 3.

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Read what the Didiscalia really had to say, which was included in the article that Dr. Hoeh cited, but which he failed to pass on to his readers:

“On day-of-the-week 3 Jesus ate the Passover; at night he was arrested. On day-of-the-week 4 he was guarded in Caiaphas’ house, and on the same day the chiefs of the people took counsel concerning him. On day-of-the-week 5 they led him to Pilate, and he was guarded at Pilate’s house. On day-of-the-week 5 they led him to Pilate, and he was guarded at Pilate’s house. On day-of-the-week 6 in the morning they brought charges against him in Pilate’s presence, and the same day he was crucified, and for six hours he suffered on the cross.”⁵⁰⁰

Wilber Berg, who promotes a Wednesday Crucifixion, believes that it was Catholic interpreters who distorted the facts of a Tuesday night Passover and a Friday Crucifixion. But his explanation is equally erroneous:

“A century later the Syriac Didiscalia recorded the attempts of teachers in Rome to reconcile Jesus’ words that He would be entombed “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40) with a Friday-afternoon crucifixion and a Sunday-morning resurrection. According to their reasoning, Jesus sufferings were part of the three days and three nights of Scripture. Friday morning from 9 to noon was counted as the first day, and noon to 3 p.m. (which was darkened) was considered the first night. Three in the afternoon to sunset was reckoned as the second day, whereas Friday night to Saturday morning constituted the second night. The daylight part of Saturday was the third day, and the night portion to Sunday morning was the third night. In other words, the three days and three nights in the grave that Jesus said would be the sign that He was indeed sent from God were transformed into a period of two days and two nights, or a total of no more than 48 hours. This has subsequently been reduced even further in modern times by figuring from late-afternoon Friday to early Sunday morning, which takes away another 12 hours or more. Such reasoning has to discount or somehow explain away Jesus’ clear promise that He would be entombed three days and three nights.”⁵⁰¹

500.From Vogt’s Latin, cited from James A. Walther, “The Chronology of Passion Week,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, (77, 1958), p. 118.

501.Wilber Berg, “The Good Friday-Easter Sunday Question,” *The Good News* (The United Church of God, March/April 1997), vol. 2, no. 2 p. 17 ff. (<http://www.ucg.org/articles/gn10/frideast.html>).

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This analysis is not an accurate portrayal of the Didiscalia, as one can see for themselves. The fact of the matter is that there is simply nothing in the Didiscalia or the historical documents to support a Wednesday Crucifixion.

Jesus' and Paul's Interpretation

When Jesus said in Matthew 12:40, "it is written," what was He referring to? The only scripture in the Old Testament that gives any interval of time for the duration of Jesus' stay in the tomb was that associated with Jonah. Jesus, himself, interpreted that interval of time as being "on the third day." The Apostle Paul also said: "and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures."⁵⁰² Those who would interpret Matthew 12:40 to be a reference to a 72 hour time period need to ponder these statements of Jesus and Paul on this matter. Their authoritative definition as to the fulfillment of the Jonah time interval should be the final word on the matter in the light of the daily record of events that prove that this interval was three calendar days, and no more.

There is no way around the fact that the 72 hour theory would transpire over a period of four calendar days. To the Greek audience that Paul was addressing he made no qualification to this expression in order to help them understand that calendar days were not intended! Jesus himself, in the clearest of words, teaches us what the "third day" means. His recorded words on one occasion are:

"Go tell that fox [Herod Antipas], behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures TODAY, and TOMORROW, and the THIRD DAY I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk TODAY, and TOMORROW, and THE DAY FOLLOWING."⁵⁰³

And further, if Jesus' Messiahship rests solely on the fact that Jesus had to be in the tomb 72 hours, then why did none of the Gospel writers follow this up by stating the exact time indications when Jesus was laid in the tomb and that on the fourth calendar day at the same hour his disciples were there waiting for the proof of his Messiahship. As it stands, not even the disciples seem to be aware that it was the exact

502.1 Cor. 15:4, NRSV.

503.Luke 13:32,33.

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timing of his stay within the tomb that was the all important factor, and not his Resurrection itself.

If some Houdini, magician type of person made a prediction today that he would die and be raised exactly 72 hours later there would be national coverage of this event, and you can be sure that the critics of this prediction would be first to record that it did not happen at the precise time predicted. You simply can not press the point of exact timing if none of the Apostles or Gospel writers themselves made such a point!

It is time for blindness to be replaced by vision. It is time that people wake up to the fact that Matthew alone is consistent in using this idiomatic Hebrew expression. In other words, if Mark and Luke are not trying to define the exact hours, minutes and seconds of the fast, where is the justification for assuming that Matthew is, other than faulty, modern reasoning? Had Matthew 12:40 never been in the Bible, no one would have ever reinterpreted all the other texts to conform to such an outlandish scenario.

The reality is that all these other scriptures have been reinterpreted based solely on this one verse. This should have cautioned many that something may have been amiss. Therefore, the burden of proof rests upon those who have opted for a literal understanding of this expression, without throwing all the other accounts into disharmony. But since Jesus and Paul interpreted the Jonah time interval as being on the third calendar day, why, therefore, should there even have been any dispute?