

## ***THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS***

“Liar!” they must have screamed. “You promised the Kingdom, but look at you: bloodied to a pulp, nailed to the stake like a common criminal,” they must have thought. “You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God,” they sarcastically taunted, “come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:40). There’s hardly anything uglier than an angry mob. And it was a mob who with one voice declared, “Crucify Him!” Why were they so venomously angry at Jesus? After all, He had healed many of them. He had performed miracle after miracle. He had preached love and mercy. He said, “Love your enemies,” but the angry mob had no use for such advice. At that moment, they were convinced that Jesus was their enemy.

A week earlier some of them had hailed Jesus as their prophesied Savior: “Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!’” (Matthew 21:8-9). Jesus said and did nothing to dampen the excitement. On the contrary, He made a bold entry into Jerusalem by dramatically cleansing the Temple of God: “And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And He said to them, ‘It is written, ‘My house shall be called a ‘house of prayer,’ but you are making it a robbers’ den’” (Matthew 21:12-13). The people were excited. Apparently Jesus was not just another prophet, like the failed Judas of Galilee or Theudas, who promised but failed to deliver Israel from the despised Romans. To them, Jesus seemed like the real deal, the prophesied Messiah who would bring glory to Israel by overthrowing the Romans and restoring the great Davidic Kingdom.

The atmosphere was thick with anticipation. Even Jesus’ disciples had succumbed to the excitement. During His last supper, they argued about whom would be greatest in the new kingdom of Israel: “And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest” (Luke 22:24). Some wanted to be the equivalent of our secretaries of State, Defense, and Treasury.

On at least three occasions, Jesus had predicted His own death. However, the disciples failed to understand His predications, or perhaps they did not want to understand. In many ways they were clueless. They did not understand that Jesus had to die: “For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, ‘The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise *three days* later.’ But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him” (Mark 9:31-32). Nor did they understand that Jesus would rise three days after His crucifixion: “For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead”” (Mark 9:31-32).

The disciples spent three and one-half years under Jesus’ tutelage, and yet, they were still confused. We could hardly expect much more from a mob thirsty for bloody revolution. They expected Jesus to lead them into battle. Instead, when they saw Him nailed to that stake—a spectacle for all to see, an example to all would-be revolutionaries—they became bitterly

disappointed, and then murderously angry. Jesus had failed them, just like Judas of Galilee and Theudas. Jesus promised so much, and in the end, nothing!

Of course, Jesus never promised a revolution, at least not then and there. Jesus' battle was not with the Romans, but with someone much more dangerous, much more sinister. The outcome of this battle would decide the fate of mankind.

### **The Mother of all Battles**

It was the proverbial battle between Good and Evil, personified by Jesus and Satan. The battle raged for thirty-three and one-half years; in other words, as long as Jesus had lived. Satan tried to destroy Jesus at His birth: "The dragon stood in front of the woman [symbolically, Mary] who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter" (Revelation 12:4-5). Here the Apostle John was perhaps identifying the satanic inspiration for Herod's decree to kill all the male children in Bethlehem (the birthplace of Jesus), from two years old and under (Matthew 2:16). Furthermore, time and again, Satan tried to tempt Jesus into sinning. One sin—one wrong thought, one lustful glance, one curse—would disqualify Jesus from becoming our Savior. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, *but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15).

Satan was losing the battle; he failed to kill Jesus, and to tempt Him into sinning. But he had another trick up his sleeve. He inspired Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus into the hands of the Pharisees, who beat and humiliated Him. The Pharisees then delivered Jesus unto the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. Pilate was a thug. According to tradition, he routinely tortured and killed people for imagined or petty offenses. Even Luke had attested to Pilate's cruelty: "Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices" (Luke 13:1). However, in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' trial, Pilate comes across sympathetically. He tried to release the beaten and bloodied Jesus (John 18:38; 19:4). "From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, 'If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar'" (John 19:12). Egged on by the jealous Pharisees, the mob chanted, "Crucify Him!" Finally they persuaded Pilate to accede to their demands by questioning his loyalty to Caesar.

Why would a thug like Pilate try desperately to release Jesus? Did Pilate suddenly develop a conscience? Pilate knew that the Pharisees were jealous of Jesus (Matthew 27:18). Did he therefore try to 'stick it' to the Pharisees by releasing the hated Jesus? We must place Pilate and the others in the context of that great cosmic battle between God and Satan. Satan knew that Jesus had to die to become our Savior. He had failed to kill Jesus, and to tempt Him into sinning. Now Satan tried to prevent His death (and thus prevent Him from becoming our Savior) by inspiring Pilate's desperate attempt to release Jesus (John 19:12). Thus Satan's plan was to inspire the Jewish officials and the Romans to beat Jesus to within an inch of His life, and then to inspire Pilate to release Jesus from His divine destiny.

Satan failed again. By dying on the stake as our sacrificial lamb (“For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed,” I Corinthians 5:7), and by fulfilling His destiny, Jesus achieved victory over Satan. Indeed, Satan was condemned the very moment that Jesus died (John 16:11).

Now what? Satan failed to kill Jesus, to tempt Jesus into sinning, and to prevent Jesus from becoming our Savior. Satan, however, doesn’t give up. He lost the battle but is trying to win the war by distorting Jesus’ image and message, and the events concerning his death, burial, and resurrection.

Satan failed to prevent Jesus from achieving His destiny. Now he is trying to prevent us from achieving our destiny: “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together*” (Romans 8:15-17). Our destiny is to become God’s literal children (see our article entitled *Pentecost & the Meaning of Life*). By distorting the truth of God, including the events surrounding Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, Satan is attempting to divert us from the plan of God, as revealed in His glorious holy days and festivals. One such distortion concerns the amount of time that Jesus was dead and buried.

### **The Sign of Jonah**

The scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees: they were the elite of Israel. These men felt threatened by Jesus, whose message and miracles appealed to the masses. “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, ‘What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and *the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation*’” (John 11:47-48). Unlike the commoners, these men were quite comfortable with the status quo. They did not agitate for revolution, but (like the masses) they saw Jesus as a revolutionary. And they sought to brand Him as an insurrectionist bent on overthrowing the Romans in Judea. Hence the very imperial form of Jesus’ punishment: crucifixion. The stake was reserved for political criminals. “By delivering Jesus to Pilate...the members of the Sandhedrin [the administrative council of Jewish elders, priests, and officials] could expect the sentence ‘death by crucifixion,’ for the claim to be the Messiah could be understood as rebellion against Rome...” (*The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, article on crucifixion).

In an effort to undercut Jesus’ appeal and legitimacy, the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees constantly challenged Jesus. They attacked His character (for example, calling him an alcoholic: Matthew 11:19) and even the legitimacy of His birth (by insinuating that He was born out-of-wedlock). On at least one occasion, they demanded a supernatural sign from Jesus. This sign, they claimed, would lend divine credence to Jesus and His message. Exasperated by their constant taunts and challenges, Jesus chastised them and then provided them with only one sign: “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” (Matthew 12:38-40).

### **Jonah and the Whale**

The prophet Jonah lived during the height of the Assyrian Empire, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. God had commissioned Jonah to “go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me” (Jonah 1:2). Before this commission, God had somehow used Jonah to protect Israel from the encroaching and imperialist Assyrian Empire. Jonah helped restore the borders of Israel (II Kings 14:25). By doing so, he achieved fame in Israel and throughout the Mediterranean world, and notoriety in Nineveh, the seat of the Assyrian Empire. Thus by the time of his second commission from God, Jonah was well-known.

The prophet Nahum describes Nineveh as the “bloody city, all full of lies and booty” (Nahum 3:1). And the Assyrian Empire was among the cruelest in history. “There is absolutely no doubt that the Assyrian armies and their kings carried out exquisite torture and extensive atrocities. Defeated enemies were flayed alive, impaled on pillars or stakes, walled up alive, castrated, and decapitated. After the defeat of Elam its king was decapitated and his head slung round the neck of a captured courtier; three rebellious chieftains had their tongues pulled out by the roots and were then flayed alive; three other noble rebels were slaughtered and their flesh distributed around the surrounding lands. Two more were forced to crush the bones of their father....From the time of Tiglath-Pileser III the deportation of the conquered peoples was institutionalized....The reasons were various—to punish, to weaken the rival power, to enlarge the Assyrian manpower base, to import skilled craftsmen, to populate urban centers and strategic sites and to re-cultivate abandoned lands” (J.M. Roberts, *History of the World*, pgs 235-236).

Because of his notoriety, Jonah was afraid to go to Nineveh and thus fulfill his divine commission. He therefore tried to escape his fate. “But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord” (Jonah 1:3). Tarshish was located at the western end of the Mediterranean, hundreds of miles from Nineveh and God’s commission.

There is no escape from God. He frustrated Jonah’s plans by whipping up a fierce Nor’easter in the Mediterranean. The superstitious and polytheistic mariners traveling with Jonah sought protection from the storm by throwing their provisions overboard. However, the sea raged on. They then sought to appease the gods by finding the person responsible for their ‘cursed’ voyage. They cast lots, and the blame fell on Jonah. He identified himself to the mariners. The mariners knew of Jonah, for his reputation preceded him. “Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, ‘Why have you done this?’ For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. Then they said to him, ‘What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?’—for the sea was growing more tempestuous. And he said to them, ‘Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me.’ Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them. Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, ‘We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You.’ So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its

raging. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows” (Jonah 1:10-16).

At first the mariners were reluctant to throw such an auspicious man into the raging sea. Nevertheless, the mariners eventually gave into their fears by throwing Jonah overboard. Throwing a man into that tempestuous sea was certainly a death sentence, so they thought. However, God had other plans for Jonah. “And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish *three days and three nights*” (Jonah 1:17). Jonah miraculously survived his ordeal, both on the ship and in the belly of the whale. His reappearance on dry land, after spending three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, was likened by Jesus to a resurrection from the dead.

### **Three Days and Three Nights**

Jesus offered only one sign of his divine mission: the sign of 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” (Matthew 12:38-40). In other words, Jesus plainly said that He would be dead and buried for three days and three nights before His resurrection.

On other occasions Jesus confirmed the duration of His death and burial:

- a) “And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after *three days* rise again” (Mark 8:31);
- b) “So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in *three days* I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said” (John 2:18-21);
- c) “For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, ‘The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise *three days* later.’ But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him” (Mark 9:31-32).

Clearly, Jesus predicted that He would be dead and buried for three days and three nights. The fact that Jesus died is indisputable:

- a) “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the *firstborn from the dead*” (Revelation 1:5);
- b) “I am He who lives, *and was dead*, and behold, I am alive forevermore” (Revelation 1:18);

- c) “But now *Christ has been raised from the dead...*” (I Corinthians 15:20);
- d) “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the *firstborn from the dead...*” (I Colossians 1:18).

The Bible is unmistakably clear about Jesus’ fate and the duration of his death and burial. Indeed, Jesus died on that stake, and He was dead and buried for three days and three nights.

### **More Proof that Jesus was Dead and Buried for Three Days and Three Nights**

According to the ancient Hebrew idiom, “three days” can denote any portion of a three-day period of time. Therefore, according to some theologians, the duration of Jesus’ death and burial could have lasted for any amount of time within a three-day period. However, the Bible qualified the term “three days” by adding the word “nights.” In other words, in describing the duration of Jesus’ death and burial, the inspired authors of the Gospels could not have meant any portion of a three-day period of time. Rather, they said Jesus would be dead and buried for three days *and* three nights. From the *Appendix Notes* to *Bullinger’s Companion Bible*:

“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 the 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.

“Moreover, as the Hebrew day began at sunset, the day was reckoned from one sunset to another, the ‘twelve hours in the day’ (John 11:9) being reckoned from sunrise, and the twelve hours of the night from sunset. An evening-morning was thus used for a whole day of twenty-four hours, as in the first chapter of Genesis. Hence the expression ‘a night and a day’ in 2 Corinthians 11:25 denotes a complete day (Greek *nuchthemeron*).

“When Esther says (Esther 4:16) ‘fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days,’ she defines her meaning as being three complete days, because she adds (being a Jewess) ‘night or day.’ And when it is written that the fast ended on ‘the third day’ (5:1), ‘the third day’ must have succeeded and included the third night.

“In like manner the sacred record states that the young man (in 1 Samuel 30:12) ‘had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights.’ Hence, when the young man explains the reason, he says, ‘because three days ago I fell sick.’ He means therefore three complete days and nights, because, being an Egyptian (verses 11, 13) he naturally reckoned his day as beginning at

sunrise according to the Egyptian manner (see Encyclopedia Britannica, 11<sup>th</sup> (Cambridge) edition, vol. xi, page 77). His ‘three days ago’ refers to the beginning of his sickness, and includes the whole period, giving the reason for his having gone without food during the whole period stated.

“Hence, when it says that ‘Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights’ (Jonah 1:17), it means exactly what it says, and that this can be the only meaning of the expression in Matthew 12:40; 16:4. Luke 11:30...”

### **It Doesn't Make Sense**

Jesus died on the stake. Most Christians believe that Jesus died on Friday and rose on Sunday. ***The amount of time between His death on a Friday and His resurrection on a Sunday is, at most, two days.*** Yet Jesus said that He would be dead and buried for three days and three nights. Therefore, the common belief that Jesus died on Friday and rose on Sunday doesn't make sense!

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, “Jesus died on Friday, the fifteenth day of Nisan. That He died on Friday is clearly stated by Mark (xv, 42), Luke (xxiii, 54), and John (xix, 31)”:

- a) Mark 15:42: “When evening had already come, because it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath;”
- b) Luke 23:54: “It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.”
- c) John 19:31: “Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”

Each of these scriptures contains the word “Sabbath.” Clearly, Jesus died on the “preparation day” before the Sabbath. However, the Catholic Encyclopedia errs when it automatically assumes that the “Sabbath” refers to the seventh-day Sabbath (which corresponds to our Saturday).

Most Christians, Catholics and Protestants alike, believe that Jesus died on a Friday because the next day was supposedly the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday). Yet John called this Sabbath a “high day.” *High Days* refer not to the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday) but to the commanded days of rest (hence the designation Sabbath) during God's holy days and festivals. “Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the ***Feast of Unleavened Bread*** to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. ***On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work***” (Leviticus 23:6-7). The first day of this Feast was a Sabbath because work was prohibited. The usage of *high day* denoted the difference between the weekly Sabbath (on Saturday) and the special Sabbaths occurring on the first and last days of the Festivals.

The “High Day” of John 19:31 refers not to the seventh-day Sabbath but to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a commanded day of rest (literally, a Sabbath). The preparation day, therefore, was the day on which all Israelites were commanded to prepare their homes for the ensuing seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. (They had to discard all leaven from their homes.) Jesus died on the preparation day before the first day (the “High Day”) of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Did the first day of Unleavened Bread (known as the “High Day” in John 19:31) fall on Saturday, and thus Jesus’ death on Friday?

Jesus’ disciples “did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead” (John 20:9). So three of His disciples—Mary Magdalene, the mother of James (her name was also Mary), and Salome—“brought spices” to Jesus’ tomb, in order to anoint His dead body. Because they observed the seventh-day Sabbath and therefore believed that preparing spices was prohibited work, they rested on Saturday. “Now after the [seventh-day] *Sabbath*, as it began to dawn toward the *first day of the week*, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightening and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said’” (Matthew 28:1-6).

Again, the aforementioned scriptures (Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31) state that Jesus died on the “preparation day”: the day preceding the first day (“High Day”) of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The preparation day was Passover, the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan (not the 15<sup>th</sup> day as the Catholic Encyclopedia claims!). Jesus was killed on Passover, and the next day (the “High Day,” or the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) is considered a Sabbath because work was prohibited on it.

Some days later, three of Jesus’ disciples visited Jesus’ tomb. The 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of John clearly states that their visit occurred on the earliest portion of the first day of the week, very shortly after the end of the seventh-day Sabbath (our Saturday). Thus we have two Sabbaths:

- 1 Sabbath #1: the day after Jesus was killed. Because, biblically, the days begin at sunset, and because Jesus died shortly before sundown, Jesus thus died shortly before the onset of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (the “High Day” or “Sabbath” of John 19:31).
- 2 Sabbath #2: Because three days and three nights separated Jesus’ death and resurrection, the second Sabbath referred to in the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of John must be the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath (our Saturday). The disciples entered Jesus’ tomb shortly after the expiry of the Sabbath, on the earliest portion of the first day of the week (our Sunday). Much to their surprise, Jesus was not there. He had been resurrected before their arrival. Therefore, He was resurrected on the Sabbath, shortly before sunset and the onset of the first day of the week.



Again, the Bible is very clear that Jesus would be dead and buried for three days and three nights. Calculating backward, three days and three nights from late Saturday (the seventh-day Sabbath on which Jesus was resurrected) would correspond to our Wednesday. Jesus therefore died on Passover of 31 AD, which fell on Wednesday. The next day was the first day of Unleavened Bread, which was considered a “High Day” (a special Sabbath). Three days and three nights after late Wednesday bring us to late Saturday, our seventh-day Sabbath. Again, from the *Appendix notes to Bullinger’s Companion Bible*:

“We are furnished by Scripture with certain facts and fixed points which, taken together, enable us (1) to determine the events which filled up the days of ‘the last week’ of our Lord’s life on earth; (2) to fix the day of His crucifixion; and (3) to ascertain the duration of the time He remained in the tomb.

“The difficulties connected with these three have arisen (1) from not having noted these fixed points; (2) from the fact of Gentiles’ not having been conversant with the law concerning the three great feasts of the LORD; and (3) from not having reckoned the days as commencing (some six hours before our own) and running from sunset to sunset, instead of from midnight to midnight.

“To remove these difficulties, we must note:

- 1 That the first day of each of the three feasts, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, was ‘a holy convocation,’ a ‘sabbath’ on which no servile work was to be done. See Leviticus 23:7, 24, 35. Compare Exodus 12:16.
- 2 That ‘sabbath’ and the ‘high day’ of John 19:31, was the ‘holy convocation,’ the first day of the feast, which quite overshadowed the ordinary weekly sabbath. It was called by the Jews *Yom tov* = (Good day), and this is the greeting on that day throughout Jewry down to the present time. This great sabbath, having been mistaken from the earliest times for the weekly sabbath, has led to all the confusion.
- 2 This has naturally caused the further difficulty as to the Lord’s statement that ‘even as Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights’ (Matthew 12:40). Now, while it is quite correct to speak according to Hebrew idiom of ‘three days’ or ‘three years,’ while they are only parts of three days or three years, yet that idiom does not apply in a case like this, where ‘three nights’ are mentioned in addition to ‘three days.’ It will be noted that the Lord not only definitely states this, but repeats the full phraseology, so that we may not mistake it...

“We have therefore the following facts furnished for our sure guidance:

- a) The ‘high day’ of John 19:31 was the first day of the feast.
- b) The ‘first day of the feast’ was on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan.
- c) The 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan, commenced at sunset on what we should call the 14<sup>th</sup>.
- d) ‘Six days before the sabbath’ (John 12:1) takes us back to the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan.
- e) ‘After two days is the sabbath’ (Matthew 26:2. Mark 14:1) takes us to the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan.
- f) ‘The first day of the week,’ the day of the resurrection (Matthew 28:1, etc.), was from our Saturday sunset to our Sunday sunset. This fixes the days of the week, just as the above fix the days of the month...
- g) Reckoning back from this, “three days and three nights” (Matthew 12:40), we arrive at the day of the burial, which must have been before sunset, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan; that is to say, before our Wednesday sunset.
- h) This makes the sixth day before the sabbath (the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan) to be our Thursday sunset to Friday sunset.
- i) Therefore Wednesday, Nisan 14<sup>th</sup> (commencing on the Tuesday at sunset), was ‘the preparation day,’ on which the crucifixion took place: for all four Gospels definitely say that this was the day on which the Lord was buried (before our Wednesday sunset), ‘because it was the preparation [day]’ the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, ‘for that sabbath day was a high day,’ and, therefore, not the ordinary seventh day, or weekly sabbath. See John 19:31.” (Send for our free audio tape, "The Three Resurrections.")

It’s inescapable. Jesus died on Passover, the 14th day of Nisan. Most Christians believe that this Passover fell on a Friday, and that he rose *two days* later on Sunday. But Jesus clearly stated that He would be dead and buried for three days and three nights. So whom should you believe: most Christians or Jesus?

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for *Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light*. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end

shall be according to their works” (II Corinthians 11:13-15). Indeed, Satan has transformed himself into an “angel of light;” by doing so, and by twisting the Scriptures, he has deceived “the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

In this case, Satan has twisted the Scriptures in such a way to make most Christians believe that the Sabbath immediately following the day on which Jesus was killed was the seventh-day Sabbath (our Saturday). To most Christians, this means that Jesus was killed on Friday, or rather, on “Good Friday.”

However, as we’ve seen, there are two Sabbaths mentioned in the account of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. The **first Sabbath** was a special “High Day,” the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus died and was buried on Passover, that is, on late Wednesday, shortly before the onset of this special Sabbath (“High Day”) that occurs on the first day of the Feast. The **second Sabbath** is the seventh-day Sabbath (our Saturday). Jesus was resurrected on this day, shortly before His disciples arrived at His tomb on the earliest portion of the first day of the week (our Sunday). Hence Jesus was crucified on late Wednesday and resurrected on late Saturday: the prophesied three days and three nights of Matthew 12:38-40.

Why does this matter? Why should we care that Jesus was killed not on Friday but on Wednesday, and raised not on Sunday but on Saturday? The answer lies within the context of that great cosmic battle between God and Satan.

### **That Great Cosmic Battle between God and Satan**

As I stated earlier, Satan is losing that great battle. Satan failed to kill Jesus. Satan failed to tempt Jesus into sinning. Satan failed to prevent Jesus’ death and thus prevent Him from becoming our Savior. However, Satan is persistent. When all else fails, try and try again. Instead, now Satan is setting his sights on the children of God.

Satan is the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4). He has deceived the “whole world” (Revelation 12:9). He subtly twists the Scriptures and therefore distorts God’s truth (see our articles entitled *Satan Exposed* and *Satan Does Not Want You to Read this Article*). God’s truth reveals His plan for mankind. In particular, God’s holy days and festivals (Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 16, etc.) reveal His seven-step plan for mankind.

People could not have understood the prophetic significance of the holy days and festivals before Jesus’ sacrifice in 31 AD. Only then did the apostles realize that, for example, the ancient Passover foreshadowed Jesus’ death: hence Paul’s designation, “Christ our Passover.” They also realized the prophetic significance of the other holy days and festivals. In fact, they reveal God’s sequential seven-step plan for man:

1. **Passover:** Acceptance of Jesus as our atoning sacrificial Lamb that was foreshadowed by the ancient Passover sacrifice. “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (I Corinthians 5:7);

2. **Feast of Unleavened Bread:** In accepting the sacrifice of the unleavened “bread from heaven,” that is, Jesus (John 6:41), and understanding that, biblically, leaven represents sin (I Corinthians 5:7), Paul thus urges us to “*keep the feast* (of Unleavened Bread), not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:7-8).
3. **Pentecost**, anciently the *Feast of Firstfruits*: Those who have God’s Spirit are called firstfruits (I Corinthians 15:23, James 1:18, Revelation 14:4), and Jesus was the First of the firstfruits. Pentecost is also the birthday of Christianity and God’s Church, which is the collection of God’s saints or firstfruits.
4. **Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets:** The plan of God unfolds in these Festivals. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread point back to Christ, as does Pentecost in pointing us back to the birthday of the Church. Sequentially, the Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets looks forward to the return of Jesus and the first resurrection: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the *trumpet of God*, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (I Thessalonians 4:16).
5. **Day of Atonement:** What happens after Jesus returns? The banishment of Satan, itself symbolized in an ancient Israelite ceremony conducted on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The ceremony foreshadowed Jesus’ sacrifice in the first century and foretells Satan’s banishment during the Millennium. Only at that time will man be “at one” with God.
6. **Feast of Tabernacles:** After Satan has been banished, Jesus will establish His Kingdom. We shall be kings and priests in that Kingdom (Revelation 5:10). Since this Feast follows the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth.
7. **The Last Great Day** immediately follows the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This Day represents the second resurrection for everyone not resurrected one thousand years earlier, and the ensuing 100-year judgment period in which everyone will have an opportunity for salvation.

Jesus was killed on Passover in 31 AD, which fell on Wednesday. However, most Christians believe that Jesus was killed on Friday and call this day not Passover but “Good Friday.” By deceiving Christians into calling this day Good Friday, Satan has diverted Christians from the special significance of the Passover and the other holy days and festivals. (See our articles entitled *Passover or Easter– Which is Biblical?*; *Pentecost and the Meaning of Life*; *The Feast of Trumpets and the Return of Jesus*; *The Day of Atonement and Satan’s Fate*; and *The Feast of Tabernacles, Christmas, and the Kingdom of God*.)

Most Christians also believe that Jesus was resurrected not on the seventh-day Sabbath (our Saturday) but on Sunday. Thus Satan has diverted mankind not only from the special

significance of the Passover and holy days and festivals, but also from significance of the seventh-day Sabbath. The Sabbath reminds us of creation, provides us with a needed day of rest, is a sign between God and His people, and foreshadows the millennial rule of Christ. (See our article entitled *Why Have Christians Abandoned the Sabbath?*)

The seventh-day Sabbath is also the fourth of the Ten Commandments. Therefore, by deceiving mankind into believing that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, Satan has cunningly diverted Christians from the Law of God. The Law of God leads us to Jesus: “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

Again, God and Satan are engaged in a cosmic battle that will determine the fate of mankind. Satan failed to kill Jesus and to tempt Him into sinning, and failed to prevent His death and thus prevent Him from becoming our Savior. However, for the most part, Satan has succeeded in distorting the truth of God, which leads us to Jesus. For example, Satan has deceived most Christians into believing that Jesus was killed on a Friday and resurrected on a Sunday. Not only does this undermine Jesus’ admission that He would be dead and buried for three days and three nights, this belief also diverts Christians from God’s significant festivals and holy days (especially the Passover), and from the Sabbath and Law of God. Therefore, what seems harmless—like the erroneous belief that Jesus died on Friday and was resurrected on Sunday—is actually very sinister.

Jesus said He would be dead for three days and three nights. There’s nothing ambiguous about that prediction. Three days and three nights: according to the Bible, Jesus was dead for 72 hours. It’s mathematically and scripturally impossible to get 72 hours between Friday and Sunday. And if they really think about it, I’m sure most Christians would agree!

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