**The Day He Died!**

**By Roger Rusk**

***Jesus died during a Passover Festival in the early part of the first century. Which Passover? Which year?***

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The Passover was instituted when the children of Israel were in Egypt, on the eve of their flight. The account is in the twelfth chapter of Exodus. Let us look at the time elements in the instructions. The month in which it happened was to be called the first month of the year. The sacrificial lamb was to be selected on the tenth day of this month and. "kept up" until the fourteenth day, when it was to be slain. It was to be eaten that night. Since the Hebrew day began at sunset, the eating of the Passover Iamb took place in the early hours of the fifteenth day of the month, which was called the first day of unleavened bread. This fifteenth day was to be observed by a holy convocation. No work was to be done. It was regarded as a Sabbath.

When did the year begin? The Hebrews observed a lunar calendar: twelve lunar months made a year of 354 days, eleven days short of the normal year. In order to keep the calendar in step with the seasons, some years had thirteen months. This was the case in seven of every nineteen years.

Not having the accurate astronomical tables of modern times, the priests announced the beginning of each new year after they saw the new moon near the vernal equinox. In the clear atmosphere of Palestine, the crescent moon could be seen much sooner than we are accustomed to seeing it in North America. So rigid were the requirements and attention given to this work that the priests could observe a pale, thin crescent of the moon in the twilight sky immediately after sunset even if it had been a new moon as late as noon of the very same day. This fact, found in the Jewish Encyclopedia, is astonishing to us today, for we ordinarily do not observe a crescent moon until it is at least two days old. To take care of cloudy times, and for the benefit of Jews living away from the environs of Jerusalem, the priests used tables, somewhat crude by modern standards.

The traditional view is that Jesus was crucified on a Friday in a year near AD. 30. The Roman Catholic Church has insisted upon Friday, April 7, A.D. 30, as the day. Protestant scholars have differed from this and among themselves. Does this date accord with the rules governing the observance of the Passover and the astronomical data as well?

Two aspects of the traditional view call for investigation. About one-third of the Gospels is taken up with the record of the events of the last week of the life of Christ. We might infer that such a detailed account is intentional and is designed to relate all the events of this short time with the utmost of detail. Yet in order to preserve the hypothesis of the Friday crucifixion, all harmonies of the Gospels call for an entire day on which there is no account of any activity whatever on the part of Jesus, a day of silence in the midst of this very busy week, a day usually designated as Wednesday.

The Gospels say nothing about such a day of silence. It is an invention designed to support the Friday thesis. The accompanying assumption is that a small part of Friday, all of Saturday, and a small part of Sunday, fulfill all that Jesus taught concerning three days and three nights in the earth and a resurrection on the third day. According to this principle, the time interval between 11:59 P.M. Friday and 12:01 AM. Sunday, which is twenty-four hours and two minutes, can be called these days and three nights. Really? Is this not just another supposition made to support a theory?

Now if Jesus fulfilled to the letter the stipulations as our Passover Lamb, then he was selected on the tenth day of the first month, called Nisan, kept shut up until the fourteenth day, and slain in the afternoon of the fourteenth day. What event constituted his selection on the tenth day? The most likely is his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when his followers hailed him with palm branches and cries of "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." This happened the day after a sabbath, a day we commemorate as Palm Sunday. There is no event recorded the following day, a Monday, that would qualify as a "selection."

If Palm Sunday was the tenth day, then the four teenth day was Thursday, not Friday. This would mean that all the events usually assigned to Thursday should be moved back to Wednesday, and there would be no need to designate Wednesday a day of silence. This also would mean that all the events usually assigned to Friday really occurred on Thursday, and Friday would be a day of silence while the body of Christ lay in the grave. In this way, all the time from Jesus arrival in Bethany on the previous Friday until the resurrection would be accounted for.

According to the instructions in Exodus, the fifteenth day of Nisan was to be observed as a day of convocation, a day of rest, a sabbath. One of the keys is in [John 19:31](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+19.31&t=NKJV), which reads, "The day of that sabbath was a high day." The important point is that the fifteenth day of Nisan, observed as a Sabbath, could fall on any day of the week. If the crucifixion occurred on a Thursday, then Friday would be the Sabbath of the Passover, followed immediately by the Sabbath of the week on Saturday. There would be two Sabbaths, hack to back, in that week. Another key is in [Matthew 28:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+28.1&t=NKJV), which uses "sabbaths" (plural) in the Greek. There would be no call for this unless more than one Sabbath was involved.

From these considerations we can construct a plausible chronology:

FRIDAY. Jesus came to Bethany six days before the Passover. [John 12:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+12.1&t=NKJV).

SATURDAY. The Sabbath. Presumably spent in Beth-any. The curious crowd came to see Jesus and Lazarus. [John 12:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+12.9&t=NKJV).

SUNDAY. The Triumphal Entry. The Passover Lamb selected by believers on the tenth day of Nisan, four days before the Passover.

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY. Jesus appeared in Jerusalem many times, always within a "sabbath day s journey," spending nights in Bethany. The Lamb "kept up.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT. The Last Supper.

EARLY THURSDAY. Before dawn, Jesus Was examined by the high priest and the elders and condemned to die. Since the day began at sunset on the previous evening, this would be within the fourteenth day.

THURSDAY. Jesus executed by the Romans, dying about 3 P.M., toward the evening of the fourteenth day of Nisan, called the day of preparation in all four Gospels. He was buried hastily by Joseph and Nicodemus as the Sabbath drew on, which would begin at sunset. This would be the sabbath of the Passover, the fifteenth day of Nisan, the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, and could occur on any day of the week.

FRIDAY, SATURDAY. The fifteenth day of this particular month would be Friday. Jesus lay in the grave all Thursday night, all Friday and Friday night, all Saturday and Saturday night.

SUNDAY. He was resurrected before dawn early Sunday morning, exactly three days and three nights from the time the death sentence was passed upon him. The women who could not get to the tomb because of the two consecutive Sabbaths, and the disciples, saw Jesus alive on this, the third day since his death. See [Luke 24:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+24.21&t=NKJV).

In this chronology, all the time is accounted for, all the requirements of the Law governing the Passover are met, and all the types of the Passover Lamb are fulfilled.

A few evangelicals support a Wednesday crucifixion. They must get rid of sometime between Palm Sunday and the Last Supper, or claim a Triumphal Entry on a Sabbath. Moreover, they must allow for a secular day, Friday, on which the women could have gone to the tomb. This theory calls for a Saturday-evening resurrection, and a Saturday night during which the resurrected Christ revealed himself to no one. It is difficult to see how the gospel record can support this theory.

The Passover has not always been kept in strict conformity to the Law of Moses. In the time of Hezekiah, a Passover was observed an entire month later than specified. When Josiah was king, a Great Passover was kept that closely followed the instructions in Exodus. In the account of this in Second Chronicles 35, the idea of "preparation" is repeated throughout. Is there any Scripture indicating that the day before the Sabbath of the week was ever preceded by a day of preparation?

After the return from the Babylonian exile, the regulations imposed by the rabbis became quite elaborate, particularly with regard to the evening meal at the time of Passover. This meal became long and ceremonial. It involved three cakes of unleavened bread, one of which was divided, half being kept aside until the end of the meal and then distributed to those present. There were four cups of wine for each participant, at least one of which was passed around. Only men attended, and they ate in a reclining position, a symbol of free men. The Last Supper was such a meal.

Was there a double observance of Passover in New Testament times? A hint is given in the Lewish Encylopedia in the article entitled "Seder." The statement is made that Seder is the name given by Eastern European Jews in later centuries to the home service on the first night of Passover, "which, by those who kept the second day of the festivals, is repeated on the second night." These two meals are identical in modern practice. The problem posed by the language in the Gospels concerning which day was regarded as the "Day of Preparation" might be resolved in the light of a possible double observance in rabbinical law, but this is a problem somewhat independent of the timing of the Passover as set by the original instructions given by Moses in Exodus.

In which year did these events occur? By taking certain lines of data from Goldstine s New and Full Moons, and determining the days of the week from commonly published tables such as are in the World Almanac, we can compile a table of pertinent information. The times have been changed from the local time at Baghdad to the local time at Jerusalem.

Notice that in none of these years is a Wednesday crucifixion possible. Neither can the year of the crucifixion be shifted to just one or two years earlier or later than AD. 30. There is no year when the fourteenth of Nisan fell on a Thursday between AD. 26 and A.D. 34 except A.D. 30. A Friday would be possible in AD. 26, but this is regarded as too early. The fourteenth of Nisan also occurred on a Friday in A.D. 33, but this is late. The historical evidence is against it. Can the evidence in Scripture support a Friday crucifixion in any year?

The rules governing the observance of the Passover and the astronomical limitations governing the application of these rules combine to make Thursday, April 6, A.D. 30, the most plausible of the dates suggested for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

[Texas Cyber - The Day He Died](http://user.txcyber.com/~wd5iqr/tcl/dayhedie.htm)  (This hyperlink no longer links for me.  Pat)

