

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #64

"Christ's Burial - Friday or Wednesday" (Part 1)
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Mark 15:42; 16:1:

Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,

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

Matthew 28:1; 12:40; 27:62-64:

Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

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.

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

INTRODUCTION: As we saw in the last lesson, the body of Jesus has been placed in the tomb owned by Joseph of Arimathea. This was witnessed by Joseph, Nicodemus and a group of women. Pilate, the Roman Governor, released the body to Joseph for burial after he had been assured by the Roman Centurion that Jesus was dead.

On the Sabbath day, following the day of Preparation, the Jewish chief priests and the Pharisees, approached Pilate with a concern. They had remembered that Jesus had said that ***"After three days I will arise."*** They requested that the tomb be made secure ***"until the third day"*** lest the disciples come by night and steal His body and tell the people that He had risen from the dead. In so doing they broke their own law regarding the Sabbath. The tomb is made secure by sealing it with the stone and a guard of soldiers was put in place.

As to the time-frame when these events took place, the Biblical texts give us these facts:

First: Jesus died and was placed in the tomb on the day before the Jewish Sabbath (Mark 15:42).

Second: Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, the day after the

Sabbath (Matthew 28:1).

While these facts are clear, they have led to two different views regarding the time of Jesus' death and the time of His resurrection. In a more particular manner, it deals with the question as to how long the body of Jesus remained in the tomb before His resurrection. We will call these two views: First, the "Minority View" and Secondly, the "Majority View." We do so, by the number of supporters holding to each view.

Those holding to the Minority View believe that Jesus was crucified and buried on the day which we call Wednesday and rose from the dead on the first day of the week, the day which we call Sunday. This is a time period of seventy-two hours. Meanwhile, those holding to the Majority View believe that He died and was buried on the day we call Friday and rose from the dead on the first day of the week, the day we call Sunday. This covers an indefinite period of hours, but fulfills the time period of three days as viewed by Jewish time.

Let it be known that both of these views are held by those who view themselves as orthodox Christians who believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Both are looking at the same data, trying to harmonize the Scripture. That being said, we will devote the remainder of this lesson to the presentation of the Minority View.

A. THE PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED

1. The commonly accepted tradition held by the Majority View is that Christ was crucified on Friday, dying around 3:00 p.m., placed in the grave sometime between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m., and then was raised from the dead very early in the morning on the following Sunday.

2. The obvious problem is that this does not literally fit the prophecy of Jesus regarding the sign of the Prophet Jonah which He gives in Matthew 12:40 - ***"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."*** The Old Testament contains two kinds of prophecy regarding Christ. The first is that of verbal prophecy. Examples of this include those which predict that Christ would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). He would also be a descendent of David (Jeremiah 23:5), and that He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

In addition to verbal prophecy, there was also that of pictorial prophecy. This is when a person or event serves as a type of the person or work of Christ. We can only be certain of pictorial or typical predictions if they are specifically identified as such in the New

Testament. In the Matthew 12:40 verse, Jesus tells us that like Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish before he was vomited up on the seashore, He, as the Son of Man would spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth before He would be raised from the dead.

It is obvious that Jesus believed in the literal account of Jonah as found in the Bible. If Jonah was not a real person, or had not been literally swallowed and miraculously protected while submerged for three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, that event could not have typified the literal burial and resurrection of Jesus. It follows then that if the events in the lives of Jonah and Jesus were literal, then the time period of three days and three nights must also be literal. This covers a span of seventy-two hours.

3. The problem with the Friday crucifixion then becomes evident. It does not allow sufficient time for Jesus to be in the tomb for seventy-two hours. If He was crucified and buried on Friday, He would have been in the grave two nights, one day and a very small portion of another day. The time span from Friday to Sunday would not contain seventy-two hours.

B. THE CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM

1. This focuses on the Jewish Sabbath, which was observed on a Saturday. Mark 15:42 plainly declares that He was crucified on **"the day before the Sabbath."** Mark says, **"Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath."** Thus those who hold to the Majority View reason that He must have been crucified and buried on Friday, the day before the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

2. But Saturday was not the only Sabbath. There were a number of other Sabbaths.

a. In Exodus 12:14-20, the Israelites were given the instructions concerning the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We thus read:

So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day

I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.

b. In Leviticus 23:1-8, the instructions were repeated -
And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings. These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.'"

NOTE: In Numbers 28:16-25 the instructions are repeated again. It is from these Scriptures that we learn these facts:

- (1) The Jewish people were to observe the Passover feast each year.
- (2) It was to be observed for seven days beginning on the 14th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar year (Nisan - our month of April), and lasting until the 21st day of the same month.
- (3) The first and seventh days of this memorial feast were called holy days of rest or sabbath days in which no work was to be performed.
- (4) The lamb was to be slain in the evening on the 14th day.

C. THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

1. Which Sabbath does the Bible mean when it says that Christ was crucified on the day before? Was it the weekly Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, or was it the first Sabbath day

of the annual Passover feast? All of the Gospels report that Christ was crucified on the day of "the preparation of the Passover."

a. In Matthew 27:62 we read, **"On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate,"**

b. In Mark 15:42 we are told, **"Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,"**

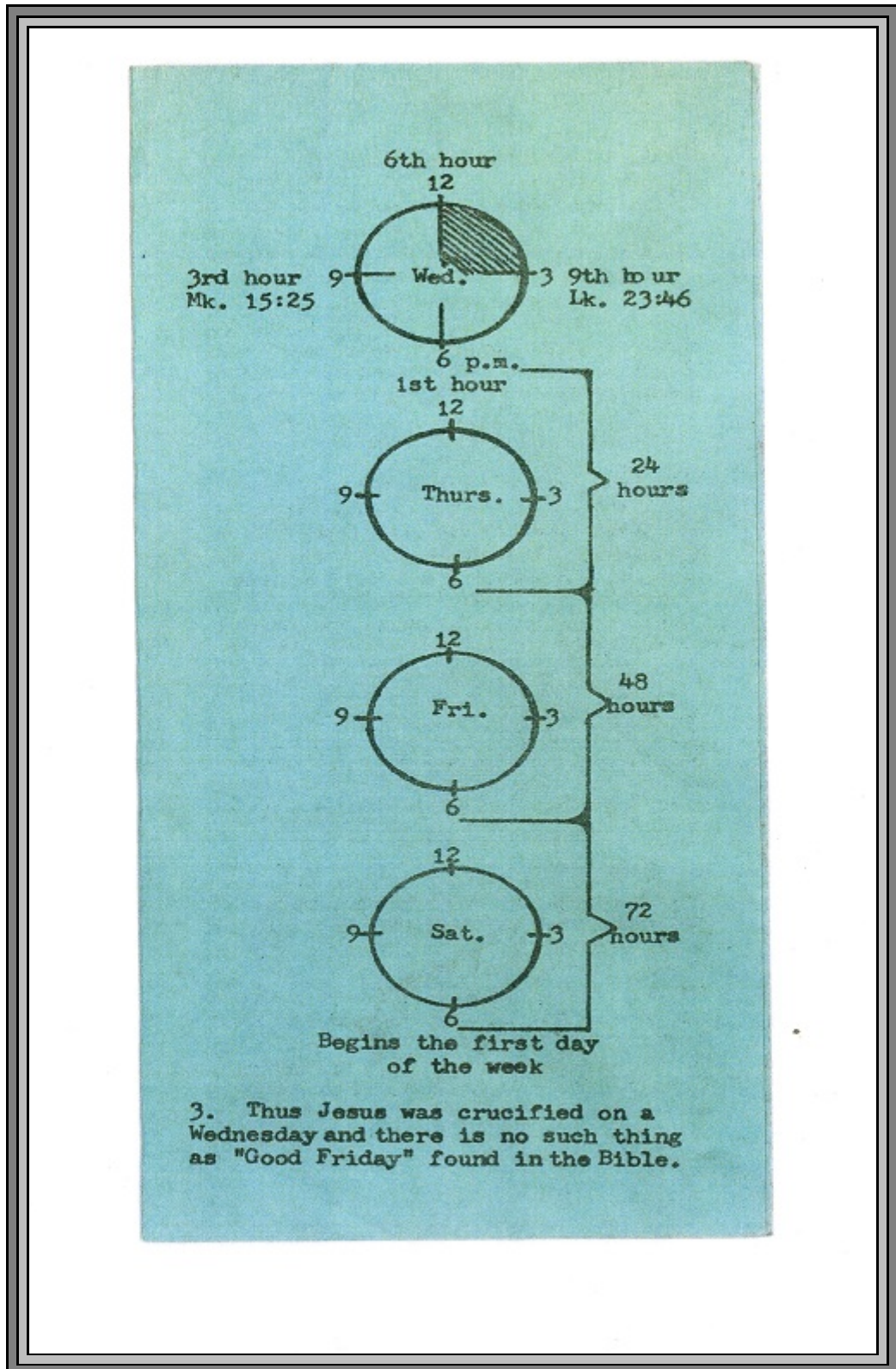
c. In Luke 23:54 it is recorded, **"That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near."**

d. In John 19:14 it is stated, **"Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he [Pilate] said to the Jews, 'Behold your King!'"**

2. So which Sabbath is it? Is it the seventh day Sabbath, or the first day of the Passover Sabbath? John 19:31 gives us the answer when it says, **"Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."** Notice that this Sabbath was a "high day" meaning it was a feast day. This means that the day after Christ was crucified was the first Sabbath day of the Jewish Passover feast.

3. The year in which Jesus died is commonly held to have been 30 A.D. Astronomers have confirmed that the Passover began that year on a Thursday. Thus Christ died on Wednesday, was placed in the tomb before 6:00 P.M. Then by counting off the time until Sunday morning, you have exactly three days and three nights.

4. This can be visualized by the chart which is given on the next page.



Let us notice how the Wednesday date for Christ's crucifixion allows for the literal or exact period of seventy-two hours.

a. First, Christ dies on Wednesday, the day of Preparation, at about the ninth hour or 3:00 p.m. This is verified in Luke 23:46. He is placed in the tomb by 6:00 p.m., which begins the Passover Sabbath. From 6:00 p.m. Wednesday unto 6:00 p.m. Thursday covers a period of twenty-four hours.

b. From 6:00 p.m. Thursday to 6:00 p.m. Friday, covers another twenty-four hours for a total of forty-eight hours.

c. From 6:00 p.m. Friday to 6:00 p.m. Saturday covers another twenty-four hours for a total of seventy-two hours, which equals the prophecy of the three days and three nights.

d. Since Sunday, or the first day of the week, started at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, then Jesus rose from the dead sometime prior to the dawn on Sunday morning.

e. This means Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday, and there is no basis for what is called a "Good Friday" to be found in the Bible.

D. REFLECTIONS ON THE MINORITY VIEW

1. The primary motive of the Minority View is to establish a period of time for the literal fulfillment of the "three days and three nights" prophecy. They believe they have proven their position.

2. A secondary motive surfaces in some of the advocates of the Minority View. It is by using the Wednesday view of crucifixion and burial to discredit the observing of the extra-biblical practice of "Good Friday," along with the other days of the Passion week. It is believed that by observing any special days, (even Easter and Christmas) which are not commanded by the Scriptures, is to substitute a body of human teachings and observances, making them of equal or superior authority to that of the Word of God as clearly expressed in the Scriptures. They believe it violates the principal of "Sola Scriptura" or the Bible alone.

It is pointed out that Jesus rejected the extra Biblical traditions of the Jews in His day when He said in Mark 7:9, 13, ***"You reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition . . . making the word of God of no effect through which you have handed down. And many such things you do."*** He goes on to say in Matthew 15:9, ***"And***

in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Some of the advocates of the Minority View go on to charge those who hold to the Friday day of crucifixion, as either being ignorant of their Bibles, or else are guilty of adding to the Bible the traditions founded upon the teachings of men. They give a warning to those who hold to the Majority View to heed the words of the Apostle Paul in Colossians 2:8, ***"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ."***

In the next lesson, we will examine the Majority View and see why they hold to the Friday date.