

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #65

“Christ’s Burial - Friday or Wednesday” (Part 2)
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Matthew 28:1:

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.

Luke 23:50 - 24:3:

Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Luke 24:7, 21, 46:

The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.

Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.”

INTRODUCTION: This is the second part of the lesson entitled “Christ’s Burial - Friday or Wednesday.” At the outset let me say that in order to understand the second part of this lesson, it will be necessary for you to have first listened or read the first part.

In the first part, we presented what I have chosen to call “The Minority View.” In this lesson we will present “The Majority View.” The Minority View maintains that Jesus died and was buried on a Wednesday, the day before the Passover Sabbath. This Sabbath would begin at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday or on Thursday by the Jewish way of calculating time. By counting off the days between 6:00 Thursday and 6:00 Saturday, you have exactly seventy-two hours, thus fulfilling the Jesus’ prophecy that He would be in the heart of the earth (the tomb) for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40).

The Minority View starts with the assumption that the three days and three nights must be understood in one way only; that being the literal way of containing a total of seventy-two hours. They reject the Majority View of Friday being the day of crucifixion and burial as not allowing enough time for Christ to be in the tomb. The Friday date would only allow for a part of a day on Friday, a full day on Saturday, and a part of a day on Sunday. It would also only include two nights, namely Friday and Saturday nights.

The Minority View rejects the idea that the Sabbath mentioned is the Jewish Sabbath observed on the seventh day. Instead it believes that it is the first day of the Passover feast which would have necessarily began on Thursday at 6:00 p.m. in order to provide a full three day and night scenario to fulfill the prophecy. Thus the whole foundation of the Minority View rests on a literal interpretation of the term "three days and three nights." If this can be shown to be false, then the whole belief system collapses and falls to the ground.

The Majority View rejects the Wednesday date of Christ's crucifixion and burial. It does so on five grounds.

First: On how the Gospel writers understood the meaning of the expression "**the third day.**"

Second: On how the Jews historically understood the usage of the term "**day and night.**"

Third: On how the Old Testament Scriptures make use of the term "**three days.**"

Fourth: the lack of an adequate period of time to allow for all of the events to occur which the Bible describes as occurring between Palm Sunday and Wednesday morning when Jesus was put on the cross at 9:00 a.m.

Fifth: A word study of the words, "Preparation" and "high day."

In the early years of my ministry I imbibed the Minority View, but I soon changed and now hold to the Majority View. I am now in the fifty-second year of my ministry, and I have yet to discover any more Biblical data which would influence me to return to my earlier position. So I will now proceed to present the view that Jesus was crucified and buried on a Friday before the Jewish Sabbath day of Saturday.

A. HOW DID THE GOSPEL WRITERS UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE TERMS DAY AND NIGHT?

1. Question: What was the day number on which Jesus rose from the dead?
 - a. The Biblical facts:

(1) He rose on the first day of the week. We are told this in Matthew 28:1. This would be our Sunday.

(2) The Minority View requires this to be day four in this scenario. Day one taking place on Thursday; Day two occurring on Friday; and Day three occurring on Saturday. This requires that Sunday is Day four!

2. Question: On what day number do the Gospel writers say that Jesus rose from the dead? Was it day one, two, three or four? The Scriptures are clear.

a. Matthew 16:21 - ***"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."*** What day was it? Third day.

b. Matthew 17:22, 23 - ***"Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.' And they were exceedingly sorrowful."*** What day was it? Third day.

c. Matthew 20:18, 19 - ***"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."*** What day was it? Third day.

d. Luke 24:5-8 - ***"Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' And they remembered His words."*** On what day did Jesus rise from the dead? The third day.

e. Luke 24:17-21 - ***"And He said to them, 'What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, 'Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?' And He said to them, 'What things?' So they said to Him, 'The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be***

condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened."

f. Luke 24:46 - ***"Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.'" On what day was Jesus talking to the disciples on the road to Emmaus? The third day.***

g. I Corinthians 15:3, 4 - ***"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."***

3. Question: What is the significance of all this?

a. First, it means that Jesus was not in the tomb on the third day, but was alive from the dead and talking to people.

b. Secondly, it does not allow for the full three days and three nights of the Minority View to occur. That view requires that Jesus be raised on the fourth day in order to complete the literal seventy-two hour requirement.

c. Thirdly, it means that the Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John did not believe that the prophecy required a literal fulfillment of seventy-two hours.

d. This is a fatal flaw which destroys the Minority View.

4. Question: Which Sabbath did the women observe after Christ's death? They clearly observed the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday. Our text in Luke 23:50 - 24:3 gives us a three day scenario.

a. The burial took place on Friday afternoon, just before the Sabbath drew near. Luke 23:54 - ***"That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near."*** This is day one.

b. The women rested on the Sabbath, which was Saturday. Luke 23:56 - ***"Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment."*** This is day two.

c. The women went to the tomb early Sunday morning, the first day of the

week. Luke 24:1 - "**Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.**" This is day three.

d. NOTE: There is no escaping this piece of Biblical chronology. This is all the time there was between the two events, that is, between His burial and His resurrection. Jesus then was in the tomb from late in the afternoon of Friday until early Sunday morning.

B. HOW DID THE JEWS HISTORICALLY UNDERSTAND THE USAGE OF THE TERM "DAY AND NIGHT?"

1. If Jesus was buried on Friday, how could this fulfill the prophecy that He would rise AFTER three days? There would only be two full nights (Friday and Saturday). There would only be one full day (Saturday), and two pieces of days (Friday and Sunday).

2. The answer is seen in the well-known custom of the Jews to count a part of a day as a whole day of twenty-four hours. Thus a part of a day or night would be counted as a whole day. So then the part of Friday would count as one day, Saturday another, and the part of Sunday, the third day. This matter of reckoning gave no trouble to a Jew and explains why none of the Gospel writers saw any conflict in the way they used the three day and night scenario.

3. This can be historically verified by the Jewish Talmud, which is the official book of how the Jewish people interpreted and applied the Old Testament to every day life. It states that "a day and a night makes one *onah*, and a part of an *onah* is as the whole." A Jewish Rabbi named Elazar Bel Azaryah says, "A day and a night are an *onah* (Hebrew for a portion of time) and a portion of an *onah* is as the whole of it." Therefore the majority View maintains that Christ could have been three *onahs* or days in the tomb between Friday evening and Sunday morning. Is it not better to interpret the Scriptures in the historical setting in which they were written, than to begin with the western idea of time which is based on the assumption that three days and nights must be a literal seventy-two period of time?

C. HOW DID THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES MAKE USE OF THE TERM "DAY AND NIGHT?"

1. We have two examples of the use of a three-day period of time which cannot mean a full seventy-two hours.

a. The first is in I Kings 12:5, 12. The setting involves the dividing of the kingdom under Rehoboam and Jeroboam after Solomon's death. Rehoboam was Solomon's son, and Jeroboam was one of Solomon's servants who had rebelled against Solomon. They call a meeting together to discuss the political situation. After the issues were discussed, King Rehoboam says to Jeroboam in verse 5, **"Depart for three days, then come back to me."** At the end of the three day period of time, we read in verse 12, **"So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the King had directed, saying, 'come back to me the third day.'" Here they reconvened on the third day, not after the third day was literally fulfilled. This corresponds to Jesus rising on the third day, not on a fourth day as the Minority View requires.**

b. The second example occurs in the book of Esther, chapters 4:16 and 5:1. Here Queen Esther calls for a three-day fast for the Jewish people. In 4:15-17 we are told, **"Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai: 'Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!' So Mordecai went his way and did according to all that Esther commanded him."** NOTE: The three days included "nights and days" in verse 16. At the end of this time period we read in chapter 5:1, **"Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace, across from the king's house, while the king sat on his royal throne in the royal house, facing the entrance of the house."** It is obvious that when she told the Jews to fast "for three days," she did not have in mind three full days. It was "on the third day" that she **"put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the king's palace"** to intercede for her people. There is no question that she stood on the third day, not after the third day was completely fulfilled. This is the same way the Gospel writers describe the resurrection being on the third day, not after the full complete period of time.

2. We have been shown that:

FIRST, the Gospel writers did not hold to a literal seventy-two hour period of time for Jesus to be in the tomb.

SECONDLY, we have been shown from Jewish history that the day does not require a full twenty-four hour period.

THIRDLY, we have been shown from the Old Testament Scriptures that a three-day period of time does not require three full days of twenty-four hours. This clearly refutes the Minority View.

3. John MacArthur, who holds to the Majority View, points out that we in the Western world speak of three days without meaning three full days of time. He says:

In the same way, people today speak of visiting a certain place for three days, without necessarily meaning three full twenty-four hour periods. To arrive on a Monday morning, for example, and leave on the following Wednesday afternoon is generally considered a three-day visit. That Jesus had in mind only a part of the first and third days is made clear by the numerous references to His rising on the third day (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19). It is also clear that the Jewish religious leaders themselves took Jesus to mean on the third day. Although they used the phrase **after three days** in giving Pilate the reason for their request, they asked Him to post a guard over the tomb **until the third day**, indicating that they used those two phrases synonymously. (MacArthur, *Matthew*, Vol. 4, p. 299; para 6,7).

D. THE FOURTH REASON WHY THE MAJORITY VIEW REJECTS THE MINORITY VIEW IS THAT THE MINORITY VIEW DOES NOT ALLOW AN ADEQUATE PERIOD OF TIME FOR ALL THE EVENTS TO OCCUR WHICH THE BIBLE DESCRIBES AS OCCURRING FROM THE DAY JESUS ENTERED JERUSALEM AND WEDNESDAY MORNING WHEN JESUS WAS SUPPOSEDLY PUT ON THE CROSS.

1. NOTE: The following chart shows the events occurring during the Passion Week in chronological order.

EVENT	TIME	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
The Final Week:					
Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey	Sunday?	21:1-17	11:1-11	19:29-44	
Jesus curses the fig tree	Monday	21:18-19	11:12-14		
Jesus cleanses the temple	Monday	21:12-13	11:15-18	19:45-46	
Jesus' authority is questioned	Tuesday	21:23-22:14	11:27-12:12	20:1-19	
Jesus teaches in the temple	Tuesday	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44	
Mary anoints Jesus	Tuesday	26:6-13	14:3-9		12:2-8
There is a plot to betray Jesus	Wednesday?	26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
Jesus & disciples eat Last Supper	Thursday	26:17-25	14:12-21	22:7-30	13:1-30
Jesus gives His farewell discourse	Thursday				14-16
Jesus prays in Gethsemane	Thursday	26:30-46	14:26-42	22:39-46	18:1
Jesus arrested & Sanhedrin Trial	Friday	26:47-27:1	14:43-15:1	22:47-71	18:2-27
Jesus is tried by Pilate	Friday	27:2-26	15:1-15	23:1-25	18:28-19:16
Jesus is crucified	Friday	27:31-56	15:20-46	23:26-49	19:16-30
Jesus is buried	Friday-Sun.	27:57-66	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:31-42

2. The Minority View has Jesus being crucified on a Wednesday with the Passover Sabbath starting at 6:00. By counting backward, this means the Passover Supper which Jesus spent with His disciples, occurred on Tuesday evening. If the Passion week began on Sunday, in which He entered Jerusalem, (see chart), this only gives Him one day (Monday) in which to carry out the events which occurred between Sunday and Tuesday night. If one considers that most of Tuesday would be consumed with preparing for the Supper, how does

Jesus then squeeze in the cursing of the fig tree, the cleansing of the temple, have His authority questioned by the Jewish leaders, teach extensively in the temple, allow Mary to anoint Him at a supper, and make two trips back and forth from Bethany to Jerusalem (covering eight miles)? It cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be done when you plot the days and hours necessary for it to be done.

3. I regret that time will not permit us to cover the Biblical data by which this chronological order is based upon. It would require at least one full lesson plus a portion of another to accomplish this.

4. NOTE: I have not been able to find one advocate of the Minority View which addresses this problem. How interesting it is that this view which attempts to expand the time spent in the tomb to a literal full period of seventy-two hours at the end of the week, fails to see what it does to the first part of the Passover Week in reducing the hours needed to cover all the events which transpire.

E. A WORD STUDY OF THE WORDS, "PREPARATION" AND "HIGH DAY."

1. In order for the Minority View to exist, the proponents of this view must have a literal period of seventy-two hours for Jesus to be in the tomb. This requires that all references referring to the Sabbath apply not to the Jewish weekly Sabbath of Saturday, but to the first day of the Passover Sabbath which began the seven-day "Feast of Unleavened Bread." Thus Jesus would eat the Passover meal on Tuesday, be crucified and buried on Wednesday and resurrected on Sunday, the fourth day. This view appeals to the usage of two words to separate their premise that the preparation day was not on the seventy day Sabbath, but was on Thursday, two days earlier. They confirm that the usage of the term "high day" is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. I wish to now show the error in this thinking by examining these words.

2. I begin by saying that since we have already four solid reasons why the Minority View is untrue, the Gospel writers are using these two words to refer to the seventh-day Sabbath, and not some other Sabbath on another day of the week. In essence, they knew nothing of the existence of what I am calling the Minority View!

3. The meaning of the Greek word translated "preparation." The word is "*paraskeue*." In secular Greek it is used in a general sense meaning "to prepare or equip oneself." However the New Testament uses the word to denote the day of preparation for the Jewish Sabbath, which was on the seventh day of the week. Hence the day of preparation would be the sixth day of the week which we would call Friday. It is used in this

sense eight times, all by the Gospel writers. In his scholarly work on the "*Harmony of the Gospels*" A. T. Robertson makes this clarification.

This phrase "Preparation" was really the name of a day in the week, the day before the Sabbath, our Friday. We are not left to conjecture about this question. The Evangelists all use it in this sense alone. Matthew uses it for Friday (27:62), Mark expressly says that the Preparation was the day before the Sabbath (15:42), Luke says that it was the day of the Preparation and the Sabbath drew on (23:54), and John himself so uses the word in two other passages (19:31, 42), in both of which haste is exercised on the Preparation, because the Sabbath was at hand. The New Testament usage is conclusive, therefore, on this point. This, then, was the Friday of Passover week. And this agrees with the Synoptists. Besides, the term "Preparation" has long been the regular name for Friday in the Greek language, caused by the New Testament usage. It is so in the Modern Greek to-day. It was the Sabbath eve, just as the Germans have Sonnabend for Sunday eve, *i.e.*, Saturday afternoon. (Robertson, *Harmony of the Gospels*, pp. 282, 283).

4. The meaning of the Greek word translated "High Day." The word is "*megale*." It can mean a great day; a special or important day." The Amplified Version translates it "**for that Sabbath was a very solemn and important one.**" The NIV renders it "**and the next day was to be a special Sabbath.**" Now in what sense was the weekly Sabbath a special or high Sabbath the year Christ was crucified? Because it fell within the Passover Feast of Unleavened Bread which covered a full seven days! On one week out of the year the Jewish Sabbath became a special Sabbath because it was the Sabbath Day of the Passover week. When the Sabbath occurred during the festival week, it would be considered a high day of festivity in celebrating the Passover week of deliverance from Egyptian captivity. In contrast, the last seven days of Jesus' life on earth is referred in the Christian tradition as the "Passion Week" of Christ. Thus the Majority View best harmonizes the Biblical data relating to the time of Christ's crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

5. We conclude with a closing summary by John MacArthur, an advocate of the Majority View.

The crucifixion is specifically said to have been on Friday, "the day before the Sabbath" (Mark 15:42), and the resurrection to have been sometime before dawn on Sunday, "the first day of the week" (Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). To argue for a full three-day burial is to presume serious, and very obvious, scriptural error. (*Ibid.* P. 300, para. 1).

We can now see why the Majority View has been the main view held throughout the two thousand years of church history.