

Chronologies of the Crucifixion and Resurrection - Clayton G. Porter

There has been a lot of controversy over the years regarding the day of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and on the length of His entombment.

There have been many authors who have constructed very elaborate arguments supporting their opinion of the chronology of the crucifixion and resurrection. Some argue for a Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection with less than three full days and three full nights entombment. Others argue for a Wednesday crucifixion and Saturday resurrection with three full days and three full nights entombment.

There is no need to consult or construct any elaborate set of arguments. All that is necessary is to closely, very closely, examine scripture as a whole, not just cherry pick the part that supports what we want to believe, and pay close attention to what it says and to what it does not say. This, with the addition of one little known fact, makes the answer perfectly clear. Jesus prophesied that He would be in His tomb three full days and three full nights, that is exactly what happened, He expired and was entombed on the same day, Wednesday 14 Nisan, and was resurrected during the final dusk hours of Saturday 17 Nisan.

This is far more than a statement of faith, it can be conclusively proven by closely examining what the 4 gospels say about the final hours of His earthly life, but first a short personal introduction. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 to "prove all things and hold fast to that which is good". That is what I set out to do, examine these above statements, and prove them either true or false, from scripture. I am an electronics engineer with a lot of training in mathematics, and a proof to me is just that, a proof that is in agreement with all known facts to the exclusion of any other possibility. It is not a suggestion, a possibility, a probability, a wish or a desire. It is an iron clad proof, to the exclusion of any other possibility. With the guidance of God, and a lot of His help directed through my patient and loving church leadership at [United Church of God](#), and others, I was able to accomplish just that. This is pretty long and with excruciating detail, but endure to the end and it will all be tied together and you will have the iron clad proof that I promised. The meanings of all of the underlying Greek words that I offer here you can verify with any good Greek lexicon. Quite excellent Greek lexicons can be accessed on line at <http://biblehub.com/interlinear/> and <http://www.elijah.com/lexicon.html>. All scripture quoted here is from the King James Version.

When God first laid it on my heart to look into this question, I quickly became perplexed about why there was such division and strong differences of opinion over such a central anchor to our faith as the crucifixion and resurrection of our Savior. All of the books and commentaries that I was able to find left me even more perplexed. They all talked around the question and presented only the pieces of scripture and interpretations that supported their opinion and ignored the rest. That seemed strange to me, that no one addressed scripture as a whole. After all, we are only talking about a very few verses. So I decided that God must have wanted me to do it. I quickly found the reason for all the division and incomplete explanations. Upon casual reading and even on moderately deep study, the first three Synoptic Gospels seem to contradict John's Gospel and there is seemingly no way to reconcile them. This could not be. If the Gospels do not agree on such a fundamental issue as the crucifixion and resurrection, how can they be trusted on anything? I kept on looking and researching and soliciting help from wherever I could find it, and finally the surprising key that unlocked this mystery was given to me, but more on that later. What is contained in the following pages is an iron clad proof that all four Gospels tell the same

story, what that story is, why it is that way, and why it can not possibly be any other way, considering every single statement in the Gospels relating to the chronology of the crucifixion and resurrection, not just those that happen to be convenient or supportive.

Let us first look at all of the places where the four gospels are indisputably in agreement. They all agree that Jesus was the only begotten Son of God and was sent to this earth for the purpose of being the atoning sacrifice for all of mankind's sins; past, present, and future. He accomplished that. This is the most critical point. All the details are secondary, but still critically important. All four of the Gospels agree that Jesus was taken captive later the same night after the Last Supper. All four of the Gospels agree that Jesus expired on the cross the same day He was crucified and was placed in His tomb shortly before sundown that same day. All four of the Gospels agree that women were the first to discover that Jesus had been resurrected and that their discovery was made on the first day of the week (that we call Sunday).

Now a little background before we get into the hard things. You can skip right over this if it is already familiar to you. It is all readily verifiable in numerous places if you wish to verify it. I will leave this to you, the reader, to research these statements if you feel the need.

The Jews at this time measured the day from sunset to sunset. Sunset was the end of one day and the start of the next.

Daylight hours were divided into 12 hours, starting at sunrise. This makes the hour a somewhat imprecise measurement. The third hour was somewhere around our 9:00-9:30. The sixth hour was somewhere around noon. The ninth hour was somewhere around 3:00-4:00 in the afternoon.

"even" is universally, in these scriptures, a translation of the Greek "opsias" (3798) and does not refer to evening the way we use that word today. It identified the time period from the ninth hour (about 3:00-4:00 in the afternoon) to sundown, or can mean simply "late".

The Jewish calendar of that time was a lunar calendar. Months always started and ended on the night of the first new moon. Nisan (originally Abib) was the first spring month, and coincided with the ripening and harvest of the first grain crop, Barley. It was the month that their ancestors were freed from bondage and left Egypt. It was the month in which they were commanded in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy to observe Passover and the 7 day Feast (solemn observance) of Unleavened Bread in remembrance of the tenth and final plague on Egypt that finally convinced the Pharaoh to let them go and the haste with which they left. Nisan corresponds roughly with the last half of our March and the first half of our April.

Let us start the controversial questions by examining the question that lies at the root of all the controversies. Was Jesus entombed for three full days and three full nights or for some lesser period of time? The length of time He prophesied that He would be in His tomb is recorded as a direct quote from Jesus 10 times in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) and once in John's gospel.

John, in 2:19, records Jesus as having answered the Jews who were asking Him for a sign "Destroy this temple (referring to His own body) and in three days I will raise it up". John uses the Greek preposition (ἐν εν) (1722). These short little words often cause the most difficulty when trying to pin down the exact meaning. Translators have translated this word quite accurately as "in" three days. The meaning of the Greek preposition is very similar to the meaning of the English preposition "in" so we are justified in looking

at that word just as we would our English word. If we tell someone we will be back in three days we mean that we will be gone for three full 24 hour days and then return, and this is also what Jesus would have meant by His statement.

Matthew records what Jesus prophesied about the length of His entombment four times in his gospel. The first time, in 12:40, he records Jesus as having responded to the Pharisees who were asking Him for a sign "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". That is a pretty clear statement. There is no need to look at the underlying Greek. Matthew records Jesus the second time in 16:4 as having referred to the sign of Jonah again "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas". This is a very clear reference to Jonah 1:17 "Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights". Those are again pretty clear statements. There is no need to look at the underlying Greek and Hebrew. The other two times Jesus' prophecy is recorded by Matthew, in 17:23 "... the third day he shall be raised again." and in 20:19 "... and the third day he shall rise again.", he uses exactly the same Greek word, the definite article (τῆ, hé) (3588) identifying one particular thing of a group. The Greek definite article is quite accurately translated as the English definite article "the". On casual inspection, this would seem to identify the third day (any time during that day) as Jesus' resurrection day. Taken in the context of the other accounts by Matthew himself, if this is what was meant, he would have preceded "the" with "in" making the statement "in the third day", but he did not. "The" third day is properly read, in context, as meaning the resurrection is tied to and linked to only the third day and to no other. It does not mean that the resurrection is contained within the third day.

Mark records Jesus' prophecy regarding His entombment three times, each time using exactly the same Greek word (μετά, meta) (3326) a preposition implying an after effect as a result of an activity or event. On two occasions, 9:31 "... he shall rise the third day." and 10:34 "... and the third day he shall rise again.", translators have nearly unanimously translated that word as "the" third day. On the other occasion, 8:31 "... and after three days rise again.", translators have translated this same word, used in the same context, as "after" three days. A thorough examination of the underlying Greek, the context of the sentence, and Strong's Greek/Hebrew lexicon reveals no justification for translating the word any differently in these three occurrences. Neither of these translations is particularly accurate. A far more accurate translation would be "because of three days". The Greek preposition means an after-effect or result of something, so the resurrection could not have occurred before three days were completed.

Luke records Jesus' prophecy regarding His entombment three times in his gospel. On two occasions He said, 9:22 "... and be raised the third day..." and 18:33 "... and the third day he shall rise again." On the other occasion in 11:29-30 he reports Jesus as having said "This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation". Luke reports Jesus as having said "the third day" twice, using the same simple definite article (τῆ, hé) (3588) used by Matthew, even in the underlying Greek. The other occasion ties the three days to the sign of Jonah. Considering everything

that has been presented from all four gospels, any reasonable, thoughtful, informed person would read this in context as meaning "at the end of the third day".

On all eleven occasions when Jesus prophesied about the length of His entombment he clearly prophesied that He would be entombed for three full days and three full nights. It is not any kind of an idiom. Idioms typically make no sense at all if you look at the individual words. This is quite clear, the meaning is quite clear, sensible and specific. Jesus prophesied that He would be entombed for three full days and three full nights. Now let us look at scripture and see if He fulfilled His own prophecy.

Let us start this investigation by examining what the gospels say about the Last Supper and the events leading up to it.

The three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) all agree on the chronology of the events leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. They start right off identifying the anchoring event in the Jewish calendar, Passover, the month and the day of the month. We have to wait until their account of the entombment of Jesus to identify the day of the week of His entombment and resurrection. John's gospel is not in conflict with this and adds some important clarifying details.

For several days before the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was also called the Passover festival, the Sanhedrin (Jewish high council) was searching for Jesus and plotting to kill Him (Matthew 26:1-5, Mark 14:1-2, Luke 22:1-6 John 45-57). Jesus was well aware that this would happen because He told His disciples so in earlier lessons to them and also hid himself from them until He could complete His Mission.

Matthew 26:17 "Now the first *day* of the *feast* of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?" In 26:20 Luke goes on to say "Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve". Notice in 26:17 that *day* and *feast* are in italics. Those are added words. The underlying Greek actually says "However the first the unleavened".

Mark 14:12 "And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the Passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the Passover?" In 14:17 Mark goes on to say "And in the evening he cometh with the twelve" The King James translators did not include any italics in 14:12, but they should have. The underlying Greek actually says "And the first morning the unleavened when the Passover was sacrificed".

Luke 22:7 "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, . . ." In 22:14 Luke goes on to say "And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him". In 22:15 Luke records Jesus Himself identifying the meal "And he said unto them, With desire (eagerness) I have desired (longed to) to eat this Passover with you before I suffer". The underlying Greek for 22:7 says nothing specifically about bread, that should have been in italics. The underling Greek says "However the day of unleavened came, on which it is necessary to sacrifice the Passover."

John 18:28 "Then led they (Caiaphas' henchmen) Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment (Pilate's residence): and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover." This was the day after Jesus' Last Supper which He identified in all 3 synoptic gospels as the Passover meal and after He had been taken prisoner, and the Jews in Jerusalem still had not eaten their Passover meal. Houston, we have a problem! Jesus and the apostles must have eaten their Passover meal one day before the Jews in Jerusalem ate their Passover meal. How can this be?

I wrestled with this dilemma literally for months, looking for how I might be misreading scripture, looking for a plausible reason to ignore one account over the other, looking for another plausible interpretation, looking at it from every angle I could think of, all to no avail. Then one day God dropped the key in my lap that unlocked this dilemma.

One of the churches that I had been consulting with, [Living Church of God](#), pointed me to a research article written by a very highly educated Doctor of Theology way back in 1961 and published in their monthly magazine. The magazine is The Good News International Magazine of the Church of God Vol. x Number 6, June 1961. The title of the article is The True Reason Why the Jews Rejected Christ. This magazine is downloadable from their [archives](#) if you want to verify what I am summarizing here. In this research article Dr. Hoeh goes into substantial, minute, and enlightening detail as to exactly when and how the Jews of the Galilean area came to observe the Passover one day earlier than the Jews of the Judean area. The details given in his presentation are quite unrecognized today yet extremely convincing and have the ring of truth to them.

The gospel accounts do not make it clear that Jesus and the apostles ate their Passover meal one day earlier than the Judean Jews, but they do allow for it. It is not in conflict with any Gospel account. I don't know why the Gospels don't make this more clear, but it is the only way the timelines of all four Gospels can possibly be reconciled. I can only suggest that since John 7:41-43 tells us that one of the reasons many of the Jews didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah was that he was from Galilee. They didn't understand that even though Jesus was a Galilean He was also of the line of David. Perhaps they didn't want to fuel that debate by emphasizing that Jesus was from the Galilean area. After all, He was born in Bethlehem, which is adjacent to Jerusalem, the City of David.

So here we have the start of the timeline. The three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) identify that Jesus sent some of the Apostles into Jerusalem to prepare their Passover during the daylight hours of 13 Nisan. Shortly after sunset (the start of 14 Nisan) they all went into Jerusalem and sat down to eat the Last Supper. John only tells us that this was some time before the Passover (referring to the Passover observance of the Judean Jews).

This also tells us is that being in Jerusalem for Passover was no accidental coincidence. Jesus intended to be there. He was there and held Passover with His apostles even though He knew that the Sanhedrin was searching for Him to put Him to death. Passover, not any particular day of the week, is the controlling event that anchors the

timing of the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ that God sent to us.

Now let us now proceed by examining what the four gospels say from this point up to the crucifixion and entombment.

All four gospels agree that **later that night** (which would have been the dark hours starting 14 Nisan) after the Last Supper they all went to the Mount of Olives and then on to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus was taken captive and taken to Caiaphas, the high priest that year, where Caiaphas conducted a mock trial. (Matthew 26:29-56, Mark 14:26-52, Luke 22:39-54, John 18:12-27)

The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) go on to tell us that **Early the next morning, as soon as it was light**, (which would have been around sunrise still on 14 Nisan) Caiaphas convened the entire Sanhedrin for a second mock trial, this time during daylight so that they could call it a legal trial. John omits this detail in his gospel. (Matthew 27:1-2, Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66-71)

All four gospels agree that **later that same morning** Caiaphas sent Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, to have Him executed (Matthew 27:1-2, Mark 15:1, Luke 22:66-71, John 18:28). John gives us an important additional detail here in 18:28 that the Jews from Caiaphas would not go into Pilate's home (poorly translated as the hall of judgment) "lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover". This confirms this day to be 14 Nisan, the day before the Judean Jews (and all Jews today) ate their Passover meal.

All four gospels agree that **still later that same morning** (14 Nisan, the day before the Judean Jews ate their Passover meal and the day when they finished all necessary preparations for that meal) Pontius Pilate interrogated Jesus, debated unsuccessfully that Jesus should be set free, scourged Jesus, and ultimately delivered Him to be crucified. Luke gives us the additional detail that after Pilate learned that Jesus was a Galilean he sent Him to Herod, who also interrogated Jesus before sending Him back to Pilate. (Matthew 27:11-26, Mark 15:2-15, Luke 23:1-25, John 18:29-19:13)

All four gospels agree that **still later that same day** Jesus was crucified. Mark gives us the additional detail that Jesus was crucified "in the third hour" which would have been somewhere around 9:30 in the morning. John tells us that He was crucified "at about the sixth hour" which would have been somewhere around noon. These minor differences are unimportant. Hours at that time were very imprecise, being determined by the height of the sun. It would have been difficult to know what hour it really was without looking for a sundial. (Matthew 27:27-50, Mark 15:22-36, Luke 23:26-49, John 19:14-16)

John, in 19:14-31, gives us some additional interesting and important details. He tells us twice, 19:14 and 19:31, that this was a "preparation day", which could be either Friday, the day before a regular weekly Sabbath, or the day of preparation before the start of an annual holy day, like 15 Nisan, the evening the Passover meal that was eaten and the high holy day that started and the 7 day Feast of Unleavened Bread (the next day in this case). John then goes on to tell us again in 19:31 that this Sabbath was a "high day", thus clarifying that this was the day of preparation preceding the high holy day of 15 Nisan

that started the 7 day Feast of Unleavened Bread and the evening when the Passover meal was eaten by the Judean Jews. John gives us even additional confirmation that the next day was a Sabbath in 19:31-37 that the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs of Jesus and the other 2 broken to hasten their death so that their bodies would not remain on their cross on a Sabbath. The soldiers broke the legs of the other 2, but only pierced Jesus with a spear.

All four gospels agree that **later that afternoon**, 14 Nisan, Jesus expired on the cross, His body was given to Joseph of Arimathea who placed it hurriedly into a nearby new rock tomb. The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) all tell us that Jesus expired on the cross between the ninth hour (about 3 pm) and sundown. John tells us only that it was before sundown. All 4 gospels tell us that Joseph of Arimathea was given the body of Jesus and that he placed it into a rock tomb. He necessarily would have been hurried because this would have been getting close to sundown when the high holy day of 15 Nisan would begin, and physical labor was prohibited. There are a few more details surrounding this entombment, but I will save those details until the next concluding section. (Matthew 27:45-61, Mark 15:33-47, Luke 23:44-55, John 19:30-42)

Before I do however, I want to point out one final fact. The afternoon of 14 Nisan is when the Judean Jews sacrificed the Paschal lamb in preparation for their Passover meal, that they would eat shortly after the coming sundown, that marked the start of 15 Nisan. Jesus, our Sacrificial Lamb, was being sacrificed at exactly the same time the Judean Jews were sacrificing the lamb for their Passover. What could be more clear?

Let us conclude by examining what the four gospels say about the remaining details of Jesus' entombment and the time to His resurrection.

All four gospels agree that it was late in the day, nearing sunset, when Joseph placed Jesus in the rock tomb. Matthew and Mark use the term "even" (meaning between about 3 pm to sundown), the other two say it in other ways, but all four clearly mean that it was nearing sunset, so Joseph must have been in a hurry since the next day, which started at sunset, was Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a high holy day when no physical work was to be done. John 19:42 even implies that this tomb was chosen because it was close. All four say directly that several women accompanied Joseph to the tomb. All four also say directly that this was a "preparation day", that is the day before either a weekly or annual Sabbath. Since we have already shown this to be Nisan 14, the preparation day for the annual Sabbath of Nisan 15, that is what is meant. We will see shortly why it could not have been both. (Matthew 27:57-66, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-55, John 19:38-42)

Now it is not explicitly stated that the women did nothing the following day, but we have already shown that day to be 15 Nisan, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was a high holy day when no work of any kind was to be done except the work of preparing and serving the Passover meal, and perhaps cleaning up afterward. There would have been no businesses or merchants open and severe penalties if anyone was seen working, even out walking around. (Exodus 12:15-16, Leviticus 23:6-7, Numbers 28:17-18) Sundown 15 Nisan marks one full day and one full night for Jesus' entombment.

Mark 16:1 tells us that three of the women had bought spices with which to anoint Jesus. This next day, 16 Nisan, would have been their first opportunity to buy these spices. Luke 23:56 tells us that the women prepared spices and ointments to anoint Jesus. It is unlikely that they would have had burial spices and ointments just laying around the house, they would have needed to buy them, which could not have been done until this day, 16 Nisan. Even if they did already have them the work of preparing them was forbidden on the prior day, a high holy day. Even though it was permitted for merchants to do business on this day, many would have remained closed so that the proprietors could participate in the festivities and ceremonies during this 7 day festival. The ones who were open would have been overwhelmed by the throng of pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem for this celebration, one of the most important of the year to the Jews. This shopping and preparing of the burial spices would have taken considerable time. Sundown of this day, 16 Nisan, marks 2 full days and 2 full nights for Jesus' entombment.

Luke 23:56 uses the phrase "and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment" for the women. Since "the commandment" is associated with "the Sabbath" this could only be referring to a regular weekly Sabbath, so the next day would need to have been a regular weekly Sabbath when again no work, not even out walking around, was permitted. Sundown of this day, 17 Nisan, marks 3 full days and 3 full nights for Jesus' entombment.

All four of the gospels say the women returned to Jesus' tomb near sunrise on the first day of the week, which would be our Sunday, and found the tomb empty. Jesus was not resurrected on Sunday morning, He had already risen and was gone. This would have been sunrise Sunday, 18 Nisan. (Matthew 28:1-6, Mark 16:1-6, Luke 24:1-6, John 20:1)

We have no direct evidence of precisely when Jesus was resurrected, but we have seen solid proof that He was in His tomb for 3 full days and 3 full nights, just as He said He would be, and was discovered already resurrected at dawn on the following day. The most reasonable thing to conclude from this is that He rose exactly as He said He would, in the very closing hours just barely before sunset on Saturday 17 Nisan (3 days after the day identified as the first day of Passover on most of our printed calendars today). If we count back the 3 days from Saturday we arrive at shortly before sunset Wednesday 14 Nisan (the day identified as the first day of Passover on most of our printed calendars today) for the day of His crucifixion and entombment. The recorded facts clearly show that it must have been this way, it could have been no other way unless you are willing to violate some of the recorded facts.