

Timeline of Christ's Last Supper, Crucifixion and Resurrection Day

To be read in conjunction with the chart of the same name

There are *numerous* differing interpretations of the timeline of Jesus' last supper, crucifixion, and resurrection, and every one of them use Bible verses to support their point of view. *But obviously they can't all be right.* The following study is an attempt to put all the pertinent Scripture verses in their proper place (with primary emphasis on the original languages), stepping back to make sure the correct biblical framework is incorporated, while carefully considering outside historical sources for helpful commentary. The Scriptures present us with a calendar, terminology, and method of counting days that differs from our modern Western mindset, so without grasping the Jewish reckoning of time ("days" and "hours"), the meaning and use of "sabbath" and "high days," or the relationship between Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (scripturally and historically), we risk falling into the same trap of misinterpreting this timeline; a timeline that God Himself recorded and preserved for us in His Word.

What follows is an examination of the historical, linguistic, and scriptural foundations necessary to build an accurate, biblically sound timeline of the final days of Jesus' earthly ministry. By laying this groundwork and *staying within the confines of Scripture as much as possible*, we can confidently trace that Jesus Christ was resurrected *after* "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," AND "**after** three days," AND "on the third day." Every one of these phrases is true; Jesus fulfilled them without contradiction, and each moment in His sacred last "week" harmonizes perfectly with the Word of God.

PASSOVER AND THE JEWISH CALENDAR

Let's start with some background regarding the Jewish calendar and the placement of Passover. The following article is from Rabbi Menachem Posner, a managing editor at chabad.org, the world's largest Jewish informational website. I've chosen this piece because we need to see how Passover was dealt with from a *Jewish* historical perspective.

How Does the Spring Equinox Relate to the Timing of Passover?

www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/495531/jewish/How-Does-the-Spring-Equinox-Relate-to-the-Timing-of-Passover.htm

by Menachem Posner

The Jewish calendar normally consists of twelve lunar months. A lunar month—from the moment when the crescent new moon appears until it disappears once again—is roughly 29.5 days. Twelve lunar months equal 354 days, eleven days less than the solar year. Therefore, if we were to maintain a strictly twelve-month lunar calendar, we would lose eleven days each year. This would result in holidays which would constantly be fluctuating

in relation to the seasons, which are dictated by the solar cycle. We would have summer Chanukahs and snowy Shavuots.

Therefore the Torah commands us (Deut. 16:1) “Guard the month of spring, and make [then] the Passover offering.” This is a directive to the Sanhedrin (Rabbinical Supreme Court) to constantly adjust the calendar to ensure that Nissan [sic], the month of the holiday of Passover, always falls during the spring season. This is accomplished through thirteen-month “leap years” which were added to the calendar approximately once every three years. During these years, a second month of Adar was added to the calendar.

While the Sanhedrin presided in Jerusalem, there was no set calendar. They would evaluate every year to determine whether it should be declared a leap year.

Several factors were considered in the course of their deliberations. The primary factor, which overrode all others, was the spring equinox. If the spring equinox would fall later than the first half of Nissan (i.e., on the 16th or later), then the year was automatically declared to be a leap year.

However, it wasn’t enough for Passover to fall after the equinox, when it was “officially” spring; spring-like conditions needed to be evidenced. If in the land of Israel the barley had not yet ripened (barley was needed for the *Omer* sacrifice which was offered on the second day of Passover), and the trees were not yet blossoming with seasonal fruit—that, too, was sufficient reason to delay Nissan by adding a second month of Adar. Spring should be felt; it should be bright and green.

There were also several non-season-related factors which the Sanhedrin considered; for example, if the roads or bridges were in disrepair due to the winter rainy season, impeding the ability of the pilgrims to travel to Jerusalem for Passover.

In the 4th century CE, the sage Hillel II foresaw the disbandment of the Sanhedrin, and understood that we would no longer be able to follow a Sanhedrin-based calendar. So Hillel and his rabbinical court established the perpetual calendar which is followed today. This calendar is comprised of nineteen-year cycles, each cycle containing seven leap years. This calendar will remain in effect until Moshiach will come and reestablish the Sanhedrin.

Let’s address a few things mentioned by Rabbi Posner. First, we’ve kept his article in its original form so we’ve left in his commentary regarding his Jewish belief that Messiah [Hebrew

“Moshiach”] has not yet come. Clearly we do not agree with this viewpoint, but it’s necessary to leave it in print so as to keep the author’s article intact.

Second, let’s clarify this “second month of Adar.” The month of Adar was the Jewish 12th month, and when another month was needed (in order to satisfy the Passover occurring in spring after the barley harvest), they would add a *second* month of Adar, which would become the 13th month.

And third, the “Omer” sacrifice he mentions is the sheaf of barley (taken from the first harvest of barley season) that was waved on the Feast of Firstfruits when a lamb was offered to the Lord. The Hebrew word for “sheaf” is ‘omer,’ hence the phrase “Omer sacrifice.” The Feast of Firstfruits was a one-day annual feast to be observed *after* Passover, “on **the day after** the Sabbath” (Lev. 23:11); we [not the author, as we’ll explain] understand this “Sabbath” in Lev. 23:11 to be referencing *the first weekly seventh-day Sabbath that occurred after the annual Passover*. Therefore, the Feast of Firstfruits, with the “Omer sacrifice,” was to be observed on the first day of the week following Passover.

Referencing Exodus 12:6 where the first “Passover” took place, all subsequent Passover Feasts were to be observed annually on the 14th day of the first month¹ (Lev. 23:5, Num. 9:2-5), followed the next day by the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 15th of Nisan. The *first day* of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (a feast that lasted 7 days) was also called a “sabbath” – as was the seventh day of the Feast – because the Jews were commanded to *rest* and do no work on it (Lev. 23:6-8). Since the sheaf offering/Feast of Firstfruits wasn’t on a specifically numbered day of the month, *it’s date changed year to year*. For example, (using our vocabulary for ease of understanding), if Nisan 14/Passover fell on a Monday, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would fall on Tuesday (Nisan 15), and the sheaf offering/the Feast of Firstfruits would fall on the following Sunday, Nisan 20 (the day after Saturday, the weekly Sabbath/seventh day).² Again, if Nisan 14/Passover fell on a Wednesday, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would fall on a Thursday (Nisan 15), and the sheaf offering/the Feast of Firstfruits would fall on the day following the next seventh day Sabbath, which in this example would be Nisan 18.

The author sees this differently: he interprets the “sabbath” mentioned in Lev. 23:11 as referencing *the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, a sabbath day of rest (not the weekly seventh day Sabbath, but still a sabbath). Seen this way, the Feast of Firstfruits would be observed the day after that sabbath, therefore always following Passover by 2 days and always maintaining the same date of Nisan 16 year to year. We believe Scripture supports the former explanation, not the latter as given by the author.

¹ The first month was called Abib prior to the Babylonian captivity and Nisan afterwards.

² As we continue on, and in order to help our Western minds with the counting of days, we’ll incorporate our names of the days of the week - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc., though we will keep the Jewish night/day structure intact. This will help as we look at the chart to decipher how the 3 days and 3 nights are accounted. Keep in mind that “Saturday” is their Sabbath/7th day, and Sunday is the first day.

Thus begins our challenge of deciphering the truth of God's Word *by first staying true to the original Scriptures* but also judiciously bringing historical traditions in for interpretive purposes, all the while being careful not to insert our Western way of thinking into the Eastern mindset of the people God chose to record His Word. It is therefore necessary for us to draw from outside sources in order to gain an historical understanding of the times in which we're studying, but we can't let that supercede what the Scriptures say. We will continue to be cognisant of this careful balance as we go on.

"SABBATH"

Let's take a look at the English transliterated word "sabbath." We'll start with the Hebrew, where there are two similar but slightly different words translated "sabbath" in the Bible. The first is the Hebrew word 'shabbath,' Strong's #07676, meaning "rest," and the second is 'shabbathown,' Strong's #07677, which also means "rest," but somewhat amplified, as in "solemn rest." Their usage can be seen in the following verses—

Exodus 16:22-23

And so it was, on the sixth day, that they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. 23 Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest ['shabbathown,' 07677], a holy Sabbath ['shabbath,' 07676] to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'"

Leviticus 23:3

"Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath ['shabbath'] of solemn rest ['shabbathown'], a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath ['shabbath'] of the LORD in all your dwellings."

Leviticus 23:32

[referencing the Day of Atonement] "It shall be to you a sabbath ['shabbath'] of solemn rest ['shabbathown'], and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath ['shabbath']."

From just this sampling of verses we can see that the English word "sabbath" in Scripture isn't always referencing the weekly seventh day "sabbath"; it just means "rest," so *context always determines* whether the weekly seventh day Sabbath is in view, or some day or Feast wherein God has commanded it be observed by a day/time of "rest," in which no "customary" (meaning "servile") work was to be done.

Digging a bit deeper into the Hebrew words for "sabbath" and their grammatical structure is one of the ways that we determined that the Feast of Firstfruits was to occur one day after *the*

seventh day Sabbath that follows Passover, not one day after the sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as the previous author contended. Leviticus 23:11 states, “He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath.” In the original Hebrew there is the addition of a **definite article** in front of the word “Sabbath,” rendering its translation as literally, “the Sabbath.” The addition of a definite article makes the noun being referenced *specific*, not generic (*identity* of the noun vs. *class* of the noun), and every single use of the word ‘shabbath’/“sabbath” *with a definite article* in the Old Testament is referencing the weekly seventh day Sabbath.

One thing of importance to note is the etymology of the Hebrew word ‘shabbath’ (from which the Greek word for “sabbath,” ‘*sabbaton*,’ comes). We first see a form of it used in Genesis 2:2—

Genesis 2:2-3

And on the seventh [Hebrew ‘*sh@biy`iy*’ #7637] day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested [Hebrew ‘*shabath*’ #7673] on the seventh [Hebrew ‘*sh@biy`iy*’ #7637] day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day [Hebrew ‘*sh@biy`iy*’ #7637] and sanctified it, because in it He rested [Hebrew ‘*shabath*’ #7673] from all His work which God had created and made.

The Hebrew word ‘*sh@biy`iy*,’ meaning “seventh,” (an ordinal number that comes from the Hebrew word for “seven,” ‘*sheba*,’ #7657) and the Hebrew word ‘*shabath*,’ meaning “rest,” both share the same root word, ‘*shin-bet-tav*.’ And you can see why that connection is there: **God rested on the seventh day**. Then He blessed it and sanctified it, this **seventh day of rest**. And what’s even more interesting, the Hebrew word for “seven,” ‘*sheba*,’ comes from the word ‘*shaba*,’ which is translated as “swear,” it’s meaning conveying the idea of *completeness*, literally, “to seven oneself.” And the Hebrew word for “week” is ‘*shabuwa*,’ #7620, a passive participle of #7650 as a denominative of #7651, literally, “sevens.” Confused? Here’s the point:

The number *seven* is connected to “rest” which is connected to “sabbath” which is connected to “completeness.” It all ties it back *and brings your attention to* those beginning 7 days in Genesis. You may think this is unnecessary, but as we try to discern the meanings of words, knowing this type of thing is helpful.

Now the Greek word for “sabbath” is ‘*sabbaton*,’ a transliterated word from the Hebrew word ‘*shabbath*,’ carrying with it the same meaning as in the Hebrew, “rest.” It’s most often translated in the New Testament as “sabbath” or “sabbath day” (*a day of rest*), but we have to be mindful of this word because it is also translated as “week” in some places. This may seem odd to our Western minds, but if we’re aware of the connection about God’s rest on the seventh day and how the sabbath is a reference to it (and the Hebrew word’s etymology of rest/sabbath/seven/week), then the use of “sabbath” to denote the seven-day week is sensical.

Another aspect of ‘*sabbaton*’ in the Greek is that sometimes it’s *plural*, literally, “*sabbaths*.” Our Western minds usually think that the plural of something automatically denotes two or more; however, the Greek word ‘*sabbaton*’ in the plural doesn’t always. Sometimes it’s referencing

multiple sabbaths, sometimes it's used for the seventh day Sabbath (being idiomatic), and sometimes it means "week." How do we know which is which? We study each verse individually, consult some Greek textbooks, compare other scriptures, and see how it stacks up.

Keep all of this in mind as continue building a foundation of knowledge in which to draw from when we start counting Jesus' final week.

"DAYS"

Now let's look at the various biblical definitions of the word "day." Let's start with the Hebrew word for day, 'yowm.'

Note Genesis 1:5, "God called the light Day ['yowm'], and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day ['yowm']." This shows us that the Hebrew word "day" can mean *either* the daylight part of a "day," or a "day" that consists of both "evening" and "morning," essentially from one evening to the next (seen also in the continued count of days 2 through 6, Gen. 1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Based on this original account in Genesis, the Jews counted their "days" evening/nighttime *first*, daytime second. A "day" would start at sunset, just before nightfall, and would end just prior to the following sunset.³ Additionally they did not have names for the days, just *numbers*, except the final 7th day which was called "the Sabbath."⁴

The word "day" can also mean a specific numbered 24-hour period of the month and/or year. In Genesis 7:11 we read, "On the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." So the "day" being referenced is the 17th day of the second month. *It doesn't necessarily mean the entire 24 hours of that specific day*; the reference is for pinpointing the event on a calendar.

The word "day" can be non-specific relative to time. We read in Genesis 22:14, "And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided.'" "This day" is referencing the non-specific current "time" in which the author was writing, far removed from the events he'd written about. Also in 1 Samuel 8:18 we read, "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and

³ Though we have to be careful with this. The Bible records "evening and morning were the first day," "evening and morning were the second day," and so on, but subsequent Jewish traditions have tried to define *exactly* what marks the "evening." Some say sunset, some say nightfall, some say when 3 stars are visible in the night sky. For the purposes of this study we do not need this pinpointed; "evening" suffices to determine the timeline we're after.

⁴ Remember, the seventh day was the Sabbath/Day of Rest because it was based on God's work of restoration in the beginning pages of Genesis. God worked for 6 days to restore the heavens and the earth, then rested on the seventh day from the work that He had done (Gen. 2:1-3, Ex. 20:8-11). This seventh day Sabbath rest was to be a "memorial" to the Jews and *kept holy* because of what it signifies (Ex. 12:14, 20:8-11, Heb. 3:7-4:10).

the LORD will not hear you in that day.” In this instance Samuel is forewarning the people of Israel; he’s explaining to them the behavior to expect from the king they so desperately wanted to reign over them (1 Sam. 8:9), saying that *at some future time* they will cry out to the Lord because of the oppressiveness of the king, and *at that future time* the Lord will not hear them.

And of course the word “day” is also used in Scripture in reference to the coming Day of the Lord, that future time when God brings to pass the fulfillment of all His Scriptures as this age comes to a close and the next age (the kingdom age) begins. A period of time lasting very much longer than 24 hours (Is. 34:8, Joel 2:1-31, Mal. 4:1-6, 1 Thess. 5:1-2 to name a few).

The Greek word for “day” is ‘hemera,’ Strong’s #2250. Other words translated as “day” in the New Testament use a compounded version of this word, like ‘semeron’ (#4594) and ‘epaurion’ (#1887). ‘Semeron’ is ‘hemera’ with a definite article, translated “today” or “this day” or “that day,” referencing a *specific* day/time. ‘Epaurion’ is the compound ‘epi’ (primary preposition denoting *superimposition*) + ‘aurion’ (“morrow”) + [implied] ‘hemera’ (“day”) = “the next day” or “on the morrow.” The usage of “day” in the New Testament doesn’t change from its origins in the Old Testament; its used for a specific day of the month (Matt. 26:17), a 24-hour period (Acts 27:33), a generalization of “time” (Matt. 7:22), and the “daylight” portion of a 24-hour day (Mark 5:5). Context dictates what is being referenced.

The last time-specific word we’ll need to look at is “hour/s,” and we’ll do that once we get into the timeline of Jesus’ last week.

THE TIMELINE

I’m sure we’re all aware of the chronology of events during Jesus’ “Passion Week,” a term coined from the Latin word ‘passio,’ meaning “suffering” or “enduring.” The Bible does not use this term, though it is an appropriate title to describe the last days of Jesus’ earthly ministry leading up to His resurrection. Jesus was “anointed for His burial” in Bethany by Mary, the sister of Lazarus whom He raised from the dead; the next day He entered Jerusalem. Some days later He ate the Passover meal with His disciples, then went out to pray; He was then arrested, tried, convicted and crucified. He rose again days later. And as we may have always thought these events took place within the span of a 7-day “week” (called “Passion Week” by some, “Holy Week” by others), *does the truth of Scripture bear this out?*

REFERENCE THE CHART PROVIDED AS YOU READ/STUDY WHAT FOLLOWS:

The specific verses we will start with are Matthew 12:40, Mark 8:31, and Acts 10:40. These verses appear to tell us slightly differing time periods concerning the length of time Jesus spent in the tomb—

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."

Mark 8:31

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.

Acts 10:40

"Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly..."

Was it 3 days and 3 nights in the earth? Or was it *after* 3 days that He rose again? Or did He rise on the third day? Does it matter? **Yes, because the Word of God is cohesive** and there are no contradictions.

PALM SUNDAY

Six days before the Passover, Jesus went to Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem (John 12:1, 11:18), and had supper at the house of Simon the leper (Matt. 26:6, Mark 14:3-8) with Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead, and his sisters Mary and Martha. He ate supper with them, and Mary anointed Jesus' feet (and head, Matt. 26:7) with costly oil of spikenard. Jesus specifically said Mary "kept this [oil] for the day of My burial" (John 12:7).

The next day Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey to the shouts of "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!" This is the day that is currently celebrated as "Palm Sunday" because of the palm branches that were spread on the road ahead of Jesus (Matt. 21:1-17, Mark 11:1-11, John 12:12-19, Luke 19:28-48). We know this event occurred *5 days* before the Passover because John tells us –

John 12:1, 12-13

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!"

Six days before Passover Jesus was in Bethany; the next day (5 days before Passover) Jesus entered Jerusalem.

THE PASSOVER

Since the next event of importance was the Passover meal, let's read where we see the first Passover take place and pick up some specific details—

Exodus 12:3-13

[The Lord speaking to Moses] "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. 4 And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

6 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. 7 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. 8 Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, **with unleavened bread** and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. 9 Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails. 10 You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. 11 And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD'S Passover.

12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. 13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.'"

The lamb that was to be the *substitutionary sacrifice* for the coming tenth plague of the death of the firstborn was to be taken on the 10th day of "this" month [which was the first month], kept until the 14th day of the same month, and then killed at "twilight" of that day. The word "twilight" is the Hebrew word 'ereb,' the same word translated at "evening" in the beginning of Genesis, as in 1:5, "So the evening and the morning were the first day." After the lamb was killed on the evening of the 14th day of the first month, its blood was to be appropriated on the two doorposts and lintels of the house and it was to be eaten in that house. *And none of it was to remain until the morning*. Clearly, because of the "haste" in which this first generation out of Egypt was to eat it (for they were about to be led by Moses **quickly during the night** out of Pharaoh's kingdom after all the firstborn of Egypt had been killed at midnight, Ex. 12:29-31, 42), we know this to mean that the time in which the passover meal was to be eaten was still the 14th day of the first month. The following morning was also still the 14th day of the first month.

The instructions were: take a lamb on the 10th of the first month, keep it until the 14th of the month (*to make sure it was unblemished*), kill it at evening time on the 14th, then eat it before morning of that same day (remember, evening *first*, then morning, make up the day of the 14th of the first month).

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Now, let's read about the first time we see the Feast of Unleavened Bread, picking up right where we left off in Exodus 12 –

Exodus 12:14-20

"So this day [Passover] 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.

15 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. 16 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. 17 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. 18 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. 19 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. 20 You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread."

The Lord told Moses (who was to tell Israel), *just prior to the events of that tenth plague of the death of the firstborn*, how the events of that first week were to transpire. Remember that the congregation of Israel killed the lamb, ate the lamb, and left Egypt during the nighttime of the 14th, leaving ALL LEAVEN behind them. So on the 14th day of the first month, at evening time (the very start of the 14th), began the 7 days of observance of not eating leavened bread. If we count one day from evening to evening, the 14th to 15th = day one, 15th to 16th = day two, 16th to 17th = day three, 17th to 18th = day four, 18th to 19th = day five, 19th to 20th = day six, 20th to 21st = day seven. SEVEN DAYS, beginning on the 14th and ending on the 21st (the very start of the 21st, evening).⁵

⁵ You may want to draw this out for yourself.

And then we get to Leviticus and additional details are given, with what appears to be a slight change –

Leviticus 23:4-8

“These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. 5 On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight [‘ereb,’ “evening”] is the LORD’S Passover. 6 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. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 8 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.”

The 14th of the first month is still the Lord’s Passover; but the Feast of Unleavened Bread – in which still there is 7 days in which no leaven is to be eaten – is to begin on the 15th day, not the 14th as in Exodus. Additionally, we find out that this 15th day is a “holy convocation,” meaning no work is to be done on it. This is a “sabbath,” a day of rest (remember that the seventh day is also a “sabbath” day of rest). Notice if you count out 7 days, starting with the 15th as the first day, 16th as the second day, etc., you’ll still end on the 21st. SEVEN DAYS.

Is Exodus contradicting Leviticus or vice-versa? Not at all. Exodus is the *historical event* God recorded for us in order to show us how He orchestrated things to transpire. Leviticus is God *instituting* the feasts, ceremonies, law, and practices that are to be observed by Israel’s generations in order to **memorialize** that which had occurred previously, as well as giving them a way to achieve and maintain the ritual and moral purity needed for a people within whom God would reside. They now have an official “Feast” to observe and commemorate the 7 days of unleavened bread they observed after leaving Egypt. And as we have seen, “the Feast of Unleavened Bread” beginning on the 15th does not change anything concerning the “seven days,” and is not a contradiction.

“PREPARATION DAY”

Another aspect of “sabbath” days was the need for a “preparation day” to precede it. Since no work was to be done on the sabbaths (and “work” meant any number of things – cooking, making a fire, carrying a load, working an animal, picking grain, cleaning, buying or selling, etc.—with fatal consequences for disobedience, reference Deut. 5:14, Ex. 35:2, Num. 15:32-36, Neh. 13:15-22, Jer. 17:21-25, and Matt. 12:10-13) **the day (or days) before would be the time to get everything readied and in order so that the sabbath could be observed.** In the case of the sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the preparation day would be *the day before*, which is Passover Day. This Passover Preparation Day – along with getting work done prior to the following sabbath, *and along with getting the passover meal prepared* – would also be the time when all leaven was removed from the household in order that the following day’s start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread could be observed *completely*.

Additionally (as we'll see in the week of Jesus' crucifixion [reference the chart to see this]), if the Passover (the 14th) were to fall on a Thursday (their 5th day of the week), then the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would fall on the 15th, a Friday (their 6th day of the week). Since the seventh day of the week is a Sabbath in which no work was to be done (in our example the 16th, a Saturday), and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a sabbath, in which no work was to be done, then we'd find that the 14th, the Passover, because of the way it falls on the calendar, would be a Day of Preparation *for not only* the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but also a Day of Preparation for the Sabbath that follows it.

Another name they used for this first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a sabbath day of rest, was a "high day." A "high day" was sometimes used to reference any of the seven Jewish festival days that required a "sabbath rest" in order to make a distinction from their weekly seventh day Sabbath. We read it here—

John 19:30-31

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. 31 Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day [for the Feast of Unleavened Bread that started the next 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.

The bodies needed to be removed on that Passover day of the 14th *in preparation* because the next day, the 15th, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was a sabbath "high day" of rest in which no work can be done. Removing the bodies was considered a "work," so they needed to be removed prior to the 15th.

Let's see the other instances in Scripture where a "Preparation Day" is mentioned—

John 19:14-16

Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" 15 But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" 16 Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.

John 19:41-42

Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 42 So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.

We can see here in John's gospel that the 14th, the Passover, is also called "the Preparation Day of the Passover." As mentioned previously, the 14th was the day in which to kill the lambs and prepare them for the Passover meal. Thus, "the day of preparation of the passover." And just a bit later in that chapter "Preparation Day" is mentioned again, but this time in reference to that

day being a “Preparation Day” for the following sabbath day. The phrase appears also in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—

Matthew 27:59-62

When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. 61 And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb. 62 On the next day, **which followed the Day of Preparation**, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate...

Mark 15:40-43

There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, 41 who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. 42 Now when evening had come [still the 14th, Passover], because it was **the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath**, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Luke 23:52-54

This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 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. 54 **That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.**

Matthew 28:1

Now after the Sabbath [plural, “Sabbaths”], as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

The Day of Preparation is the Passover, the 14th of the first month. Not only to prepare the Passover meal, but also to prepare for the next day which was a sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 15th. *And not only that*, the Passover was a preparation day for the weekly seventh day Sabbath (on the 16th) that followed the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Two sabbaths in a row,⁶ each requiring no work to be done, each requiring a preparation day prior. (You can see why so many people get confused!)

⁶ The word ‘sabbaton’ is *plural* in Matthew 28:1, allowing us to interpret here that 2 *sabbaths* had passed (**not** referencing a week as he does in Matt. 28:2): the sabbath of the first day of feast of unleavened bread and the seventh day sabbath.

PASSOVER/UNLEAVENED BREAD

We've spent a bit of time laying out how very clear the Old Testament is about the date of the Passover –the 14th of the first month– and the date of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that follows – the 15th of the first month.

But now we need to address some more verses that *appear* to contradict what we just studied. First, the passage from Leviticus again—

Leviticus 23:5-8

"On the fourteenth day of the first month [known as Nisan after the Babylonian captivity, Abib before] at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. 6 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. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 8 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."

And now from the New Testament –

Matthew 26:17

Now on the first *day* of the *Feast of* the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

Mark 14:12

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?"

Luke 22:7-8

Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. 8 And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat."

See the "contradiction"? If the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to begin on the 15th of the first month (as Leviticus commands), then why are Matthew, Mark and Luke referencing it as being on the 14th which is Passover? Simple. *They're not.*

The Feast of Unleavened Bread – instituted in Leviticus – started the day after Passover, but *on the day of Passover the Jews were still commanded not to eat leavened bread, thus marking the beginning of eating no leaven* (Ex. 23:18). The day of Passover was the day that they were to remove all leaven from their homes in preparation of the seven day Feast that started the following day.

And in the above passages we'll notice the small details that support this. In the Matthew passage you can see that NKJV italicizes the words "day" and "feast of." Any time you see italicized words in the KJV or NKJV, this tells you that these words were not found in the original texts (in this case, the original Greek). Italicized words were added by translators either to clarify the English, or because they thought it necessary to aid the overall meaning. So a better translation of this verse is "Now [at] the first of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And in the Mark and Luke verses if we understand that capital letters were added by the translators, we'd see the same thing: "the first day of unleavened bread," NOT the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

As a result of having to eat unleavened bread with the Passover meal, many in that day had come to consider **Passover Day part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread**. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, tells us in his book "Antiquities of the Jews" that the eight-day spring festival period was commonly referred to as "the days of Unleavened Bread." Luke 22:1 supports this, showing that the 8 day "*Feast of Unleavened Bread*" was often interchanged with *the Passover*—

Luke 22:1

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.

It was not unusual for the Jewish people to slightly change their observances from the stated specific commands of Scripture. We'll see this again when it comes to the timing of the eating of the Passover meal.

HOURS

Now we come to a somewhat more precise way of time references in those days, what Scripture calls "hour/s." In its simplest term, an "hour" was the smallest measurement of a 24-hour day, likened to our "hour" (60 minutes). They did not, however, break it into smaller bits (minutes, seconds) as we do. Here in John we see Jesus mention "12 hours" in a day, which is quite familiar to us today –

John 11:9

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world."

We also read often in Scripture about a specific "hour" of time: third, sixth, seventh, ninth, tenth, and eleventh (first, second, fourth, fifth, and twelfth are never mentioned, though "noon" and "midnight" are and those are self-explanatory) –

Matthew 20:1-12

[Jesus speaking a parable] "For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. 2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, 4 and said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went.

5 Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.

6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day?' 7 They said to him, 'Because no one hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.' 8 So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.' 9 And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius. 10 But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius. 11 And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,

12 saying, 'These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.'

The beginning of the work day, "*early in the morning*," the landowner went out looking for workers for his vineyard. He hired some "for a denarius for a day" and sent them into his vineyard. Then about "the third hour" the landowner went out looking for more workers, offering the same pay for work, but clearly some time has passed since "early in the morning." The next to be mentioned are "the sixth hour" and "the ninth hour," marking the passage of the day but still yet "day." Then "the eleventh hour" is shown to be the very end of the work day, but *yet still part of the work day because workers were hired to work*. Then "evening had come" wherein ALL the workers – who had finished their work day – were called in to receive their pay. Then at the end we see that the whole day was 12 hours, since the last men who were hired at the eleventh hour only worked one hour before being paid for the day's work. (We won't get into what this parable symbolizes, since this is being used solely to get a picture of how Scripture defines "hours.")

We also see that John (and only John) mentions the "seventh" and "tenth" hour, both references to times of the day –

John 4:52

Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

John 1:39

He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

If we just looked at John, we might be tempted to say his use of numbers in reference to hours coincide with our own; but when we look at the passage from Matthew we'd see this can not be so: the "third hour" which comes after "early in the morning" isn't 3:00, nor is the "sixth hour" 6:00 or the "ninth hour" 9:00. This is important to figure out because when it comes to the timeline of Jesus' crucifixion and death, these particular "hours" are mentioned –

Mark 15:25, 33-34

25 Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. 33 Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Matthew 27:45-46

Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Luke 23:44-46

Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last.

John 19:14-16

Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" 15 But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!" 16 Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.

But did you notice the "contradiction"? Compare Mark 15:25 and John 19:14. Mark says Jesus was crucified at "the third hour," and John says it was "about the sixth hour" when Jesus received His sentence of death and was taken away to be crucified. So what do we do with this? There are two schools of thought, each valid in their own right. For our purposes of creating a proper timeline, however, either or these explanations suffice. This first article by Justin Taylor explains

it in terms of *imprecision* (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/hour-jesus-crucified-resolving-apparent-bible-contradiction/>).⁷

What Hour was Jesus Crucified? Resolving an Apparent Bible Contradiction

By Justin Taylor

According to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus was crucified on the “third hour” (Mark 15:25). The Gospel of John, however, says Pilate sentenced Jesus to crucifixion on “about the sixth hour” (John 19:14). In a book I worked on with Andreas Köstenberger and Alexander Stewart, we addressed what is going on here and why this is not a contraction. To answer this, we have to review some basics about how “time” was thought of in the first-century Mediterranean world. If we don’t, it is easy to become anachronistic and to import or insist upon levels of precision that were not in operation in the original context.

How Jews Understood Time in the Day and Night

First, we should bear in mind that in the Western world we are extremely time conscious, keep tracking of time down to the second. But as Johnny V. Miller writes, “Time notations from the time of Christ and before were very inexact, bearing little or no resemblance to the modern concept of punctuality.” Sundials were not in common use in the first century, and there was no unit of time used smaller than the “hour.”

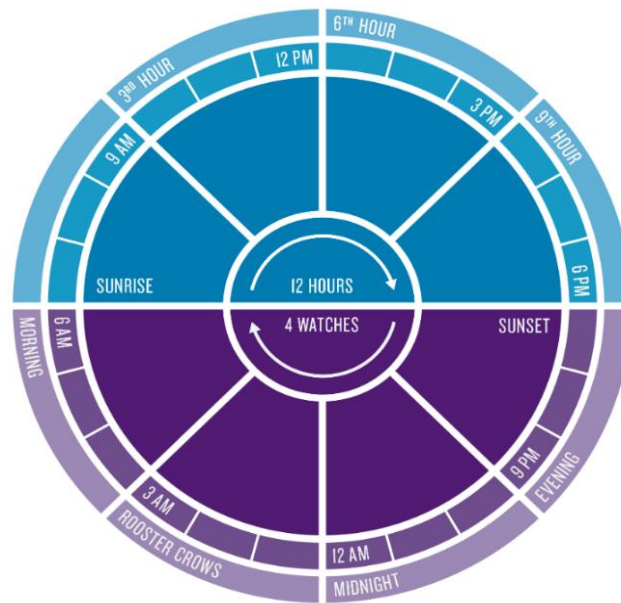
Second, Jews thought of a *day*—from sunrise to sunset—as represented by “12 hours.” As Jesus asks his disciples rhetorically, “Are there not twelve hours in the day?” (John 11:9).

Third, Jews usually divided the day with three reference points. In Jesus’s parable of the vineyard and the laborers he refers to “the third hour [from sunrise],” “the sixth hour [from sunrise],” and the “ninth hour [from sunrise]” (Matt. 20:1-9). These were general references for, respectively: mid-morning, mid-day, and mid-afternoon. These are the only time markers listed in the crucifixion accounts (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:25, 33; Luke 23:44; John 19:14).

Fourth, we see something analogous with how a first-century Roman or Jew would understand the night. When discussing his impending return, Jesus commands his disciples to stay awake, “for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning” (Mark 13:35). Here we see “night”—from sunset to sunrise—divided into four watches: evening, midnight, rooster-crow, and morning.

⁷ We do not endorse this website, nor the whole of the author’s teachings. This is simply the best way to present what we believe is accurate information concerning the historical understanding of how first-century Jews understood time.

Kevin Lipp produced for us this helpful visual aid:



What Is Going on in Mark 15:25 and John 19:14?

When we come to a passage like Mark 15:25, it is probably best to understand the expression “the third hour” not as a precise reference to 9 a.m., but as an approximate reference to midmorning—from 7:30 or 8 a.m. until 10 or 10:30 a.m. Likewise, the “sixth hour” could refer to any time from 10:30 a.m. or 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. or 1:30 p.m. (Remember that the “hours” were rough approximations of the sun’s position in a quadrant of the sky.)

If the sentencing was delivered, say, around 10:30 a.m., and two witnesses were to glance at the sun in the sky, one could round down to the “third hour” and one could round up to “about the sixth hour,” depending on other factors they might want to emphasize (for example, if John wants to highlight in particular the length of the proceedings and that the final verdict concerning the Lamb of God is not far off from the noontime slaughter of lambs for the Sabbath dinner of Passover week).

Ultimately, there is no final contradiction, especially given the fact that John gives an approximation (“about”) of something that was not meant to be precise in the first place.

And this second article explains it in terms of Roman timekeeping versus Jewish timekeeping – ([https://defendinginerrancy.com/bible-solutions/Mark_15.25_\(cf._John_19.14\).php#:~:text=Solution:%20Both%20Gospel%20writers%20are,out%20preaching%20than%204%20a.m.\)](https://defendinginerrancy.com/bible-solutions/Mark_15.25_(cf._John_19.14).php#:~:text=Solution:%20Both%20Gospel%20writers%20are,out%20preaching%20than%204%20a.m.)))⁸

MARK 15:25 (CF. JOHN 19:14)—WAS JESUS CRUCIFIED IN THE THIRD HOUR OR THE SIXTH HOUR?

PROBLEM: Mark's Gospel account says that it was the third hour (9 a.m. Jewish time) when Christ was crucified (15:25). John's Gospel says that it was about the sixth hour (12 noon Jewish time) when Jesus was still on trial (19:14). This would make His crucifixion much later than specified by Mark. Which Gospel is correct?

SOLUTION: Both Gospel writers are correct in their assertions. The difficulty is answered when we realize that each Gospel writer used a different time system. John follows the *Roman* time system while Mark follows the *Jewish* time system.

According to Roman time, the day ran from midnight to midnight. The Jewish 24 hour period began in the evening at 6 p.m. and the morning of that day began at 6 a.m. Therefore, when Mark asserts that at the third hour Christ was crucified, this was about 9 a.m. John stated that Christ's trial was about the sixth hour. This would place the trial *before* the crucifixion and this would not negate any testimony of the Gospel writers. This fits with John's other references to time. For example, he speaks about Jesus being weary from His journey from His trip from Judea to Samaria at the "sixth hour" and asking for water from the woman at the well. Considering the length of His trip, His weariness, and the normal evening time when people come to the well to drink and to water their animals, this fits better with 6 p.m., which is "the sixth hour" of the night by Roman time reckoning. The same is true of John's reference to the tenth hour in John 1:39, which would be 10 a.m., a more likely time to be out preaching than 4 a.m.

With all of this in mind, let's get to the timeline and start counting.

LET'S START COUNTING

(Remember to keep the chart in front of you as we study this.)

Matthew 12:38-40

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." 39 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. 40

⁸ We do not endorse this website, nor the whole of the author's teachings. This is simply the best way to present what we believe is accurate information concerning the historical understanding of Jewish time-keeping versus Roman time-keeping.

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.”

Clearly from this passage we can see that our contemporary “Christian” observance of Christ’s death and resurrection with our “Good Friday” and “Resurrection Sunday” being just 2 days apart can’t possibly be an accurate observance keeping in line with the Word of God. So let’s forget about *man’s traditions* and see what the Scriptures teach us.

Jesus told His disciples to ready the Passover meal in order that He and they could observe it together. This occurred late in the day on Nisan 13 and into the start of Nisan 14, Passover Day. Jesus and His disciples ate the meal together in the evening of the 14th (the start of the 14th) in order to carefully observe what was recorded in the Law concerning Passover (Exodus 12:6-10; Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12, 14, 16; Luke 22:8, 11, 15).

Again, remember that the Jews counted their days as beginning with evening first, followed by the day (Gen. 1:5, Lev. 23:32), so this was the *start* of Nisan 14, the Feast of Passover.

Later that evening (still Nisan 14) Jesus went to Gethsemane to pray, along with Peter, James and John (Matt. 26:36-46). Judas came with the chief priests and the elders of the people; Judas betrayed Him and Jesus was arrested (Matt. 26:47-56). From there Jesus was brought first before Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest, then to Caiaphas himself and the Sanhedrin (John 18:12-14), where He was ultimately found “guilty” of blasphemy (Matt. 26:65-66).

In the morning (still Nisan 14), Jesus was sent to Pilate, the Roman governor (Matt. 27:1-2), in order to get a formal sentence against Him, which was needed to carry out the death sentence the chief priests and elders desired. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod (Luke 23:6-7), then Herod sent Him back to Pilate (Luke 23:11), where ultimately the decision to put Him to death was rendered (Luke 23:24). This was still the morning of Nisan 14.

Jesus was crucified at 9:00am (the third hour) on Nisan 14 (Mark 15:25). Jesus hanged on the cross for 6 hours and died at 3:00pm on Nisan 14 (Matt. 27:46), Passover Day, after there had been darkness all over the land for 3 hours (Matt. 27:45). This was happening at the same time the Jews were killing and preparing their passover lambs.⁹

1 Corinthians 5:7

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

⁹ We can extrapolate *why* there was darkness all over the land as Jesus died. Those first Passover lambs that served as the substitutionary sacrifice for Israel in Egypt were killed **in darkness, in the evening**. Jesus, The Passover Lamb, would be the anti-type of that type: He was killed/died in darkness.

Now the question is, Why was there such a difference in time between when Jesus ate the Passover meal and the rest of the Jews in Judea did? We'll get to that.

When "evening" had come (nearing the end of Nisan 14),¹⁰ Joseph of Arimathea asked for Jesus' body, and along with Nicodemus wrapped Him in a clean linen cloth along with spices, laid Him in Joseph's new tomb, and rolled a large stone against it (Matt. 27:57-60). This was done before sunset, *still on Passover Day*, which was also the Preparation Day for the following First Day of Unleavened Bread, a holy "high" day in which no work could be done (John 19:42).

- THIS MARKS THE START OF 3 DAYS AND 3 NIGHTS: 1 DAY, "daytime" of Nisan 14

The day (daylight) of Nisan 14, and into the evening of Nisan 15, the Jews across Judea observed the Passover by killing and eating the sacrificial lambs. *How is this consistent with the verses we just covered regarding Passover Day being Nisan 14 and Nisan 14 only?* Because of the following background information regarding the Jewish traditions of that time. (We've vetted this article regarding whether or not his claims are factual or not, and have inserted with footnotes the information we've found to back up his assertions.)

HOW PASSOVER CHANGED FROM EXODUS TO THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS

(<https://rbooker.com/?p=2018>)¹¹

Passover in Exodus

Exodus 12:6-8 (Num. 9:1-5; 28:16; Deut. 16:6)

- Kill the passover animals on the 14th
- Kill them at twilight (between the evenings) – between sundown and sunset¹²

¹⁰ Matthew 27:57-58, "Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him." The New Testament meaning of the word "evening" can be confusing. It's translated as such from the Greek words 'opsios' and 'hespera,' and both words can mean "late," "afternoon," "evening," or "nightfall." It is not possible to construe from the Greek word "evening" alone whether it is the end of one day or the beginning of the next. It must be understood in context. And our context here in Matthew 27 is using "evening" to mean afternoon, late in the day of Nisan 14 (cross-reference John 19:38-42 where we see "day of preparation").

¹¹ We do not endorse this website, nor the whole of the author's teachings. This is simply the best way to present what we believe is accurate information concerning the historical understanding of how the Jewish observance of Passover changed from Nisan 14 in Exodus to Nisan 15 in the Gospel accounts.

¹² Let's clarify this statement by the author, "Kill them at twilight (between the evenings) – between sunset and sundown." Remember our mention of how the Jews tried to pinpoint when exactly "evening" occurred? This author espouses one such interpretation: "at evening" should literally read "between the evenings," meaning between the time that the daylight starts to wane – sundown ("evening") – and the sun officially sets – sunset (also "evening"), thought to be about a 3-hour period. There are also those who interpret "between the evenings" to be *after the sun starts to lower in the sky* (after it's peak height of the day, usually noon), but before total darkness.

- Eat them that night as the 14th begins at evening
- The people were to kill the lamb in the evening and eat it that night, not leaving anything when day breaks.

But in Jesus' time they were sacrificing the Passover lamb late on the 14th (throughout the day) and eating the lamb that night on the 15th. Jesus kept the Passover according to God's instructions in Exodus, but the Jews had not eaten their Passover lamb by the next morning on the daytime of the 14th (John 18:28). By the time of Jesus, the Jews were sacrificing their Passover Lambs into the afternoon of the 14th and eating their Passover meal later that evening after sundown on the 15th. So they were eating the Passover a day later than God told them to in the Torah.

How It Changed From the 14th to the 15th

The Exodus Passover was like a home group meeting. This changed when Passover worship was centralized at the Temple and led by the priest and Levites who started sacrificing the Passover lambs at the Temple for the people instead of the head of the household sacrificing them at their home. Plus many of the people were ceremonially unclean so the priest and Levites took their place.

King Hezekiah – 2 Chronicles 29:20-36; 30:5,17

Called for the centralization of Passover at the Temple. This created a logistics problem because it was impossible for the priests and Levites to sacrifice so many Passover lambs between sundown and sunset on the 14th. As a result, killing the Passover lambs continued through the daytime of the 14th.

King Josiah – 2 Chronicles 35 – same issue

Ezra – Ezra 6:20 – same issue

Timing of Jesus

By the time of Jesus, in order to accommodate their centralized Passover celebration which extended throughout the 14th, they interpreted "at twilight or between the evenings," to mean between 3-6 pm. So they are killing the Passover lambs at that time on the 14th and eating the Passover meal later in the evening which would be on the 15th. Jesus did not do this. He ate the Passover meal with His disciples on the 14th when it began at evening time.

There was always a remnant who kept the Torah according to God's instructions. Jesus connected with one of His followers who killed his Passover lamb at twilight and provided it to Jesus for Him to eat with His disciples as the 14th begin in the evening. In God's amazing timing, Jesus kept the Passover according to God's instructions while, at the same time, was crucified at the time, still on the 14th, when the Passover lambs were killed in the centralized Passover celebration at the Temple. This is similar to what

happened in the 4th century when Constantine replaced house churches with centralized worship in large basilicas led by professional religious leaders who replaced the father as priest of the home.¹³

So we have Jesus eating the Passover meal as presented in Exodus on the beginning of the 14th, and we have the Jews in Judea led by their chief priests and elders observing the Passover *according to their adapted traditions* on the latter part of the 14th and into the evening of the 15th, almost a full day after Jesus and His disciples did.

Now let's go back to the chart. Jesus was put in Joseph's tomb before the end of Nisan 14, Passover. Then on the day *after* Passover, which is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15)— a holy day in which no work was to be done —the Pharisees gathered with Pilate to secure Jesus' tomb in order that no one would steal His body and thus declare Him as actually arising from the dead as He proclaimed. So they sealed the stone in front of the tomb and posted a guard (Matt. 27:62-66).

COUNTING: 2 DAYS (Nisan 14 and 15) & 1 NIGHT (Nisan 15)

The next night and day is Nisan 16, the weekly seventh day Sabbath in which no work was to be done. We have nothing recorded in the Scriptures that occurs on this day, but Jesus is still in the tomb.

COUNTING: 3 DAYS (Nisan 14, 15, and 16) & 2 NIGHTS (Nisan 16)

After the seventh day (Saturday on our chart, Nisan 16), on the first day of the new week (Nisan 17), *during the night*, Jesus is resurrected. This day is also the Feast of Firstfruits, which we mentioned at the start of this study. It was on this Feast Day that Jesus arose —

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

We know from the following verses that Jesus came out of the tomb while it was still *dark*, because when the women came to the tomb very early in the morning (still dark though the sun had risen) the stone had already been rolled away and the tomb was empty—

¹³ Consider another plausible reason why the Jews of Jesus' day may have thought it lawful to kill and eat the Passover lambs on the 14th and 15th of the first month. Perhaps the phrase "to be killed at twilight"/"between the evenings" was seen to be referencing between the evening of the 14th and the evening of the 15th; if this was the case, they'd be justified in themselves to kill the lamb at any time on Nisan 14 and consume the flesh of it before the evening of Nisan 15 ended.

John 20:1-2

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Mark 16:1-8

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. 3 And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"

4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large. 5 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. 7 But go, tell His disciples--and Peter--that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you." 8 So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Now take a look back at the chart at the close of Friday, Nisan 15. Because of what's mentioned here in Mark 16:1-2, we'd know that this is not saying the women "bought" spices on this first day of the week; they couldn't have because it was still dark when they arrived at the tomb. And since the verb tense of the Greek word for "bought" is in the aorist tense, we'd have to understand this as saying the women had at some point previously bought the spices and brought those purchased spices with them that dark, early morning of Nisan 17. We'd also have to see that they couldn't have purchased the spices either of the two days before, because Nisan 15 was a sabbath and Nisan 16 was the Sabbath, and no work of selling and buying would have taken place.¹⁴ This is in keeping with Luke 23:55-24:1—

Luke 23:50-24:3

Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. 51 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. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 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. 54 That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.

¹⁴ Though yes, it was possible that there were Jews in Judea who didn't keep to the Sabbath rules strictly (as we've already demonstrated, actually). And of course there's a chance that these women disregarded the rules as well. But in keeping with Luke 23:56 that they "rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment," it seems most likely that the spices were purchased at some point previously. We're just not told when.

55 And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. 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. 2 But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3 Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

COUNTING: 3 DAYS (Nisan 14, 15, and 16) & 3 NIGHTS (Nisan 15, 16, and 17)

So we can see that Matthew 12:40 is accurate, “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” See the following chart:

THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
PASSOVER “PREPARATION DAY” for Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, and weekly Sabbath		First Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread, a “sabbath,” a “high day.” NO WORK DONE.		Weekly Sabbath Rest NO WORK DONE		First Day of the Week Feast of <u>Firstfruits</u>	
NIGHT	1 DAY	1 NIGHT	2 DAY	2 NIGHT	3 DAY	3 NIGHT	DAY
Jesus eats last Passover meal with disciples. Matthew 26:26-28 Exodus 12:6-10	Jesus is brought before Pilate, then Herod, then Pilate again, and is condemned to death. Luke 23:1-11, 22-24 Crucifixion begins around 9:00 am. Mark 15:25	Having killed the Passover lambs in the afternoon of Nisan 14, Jews in Judea now eat the meat before night ends. John 18:28	The chief priests and Pharisees have Jesus’ tomb guarded. Matthew 27:62- 66 Women who had been at the tomb the day before prepare spices and fragrant oils for Jesus’ body, but wait so as to rest the following day for their Sabbath. These are they that arrive to the tomb early on the first day of the			“3 days (light) and 3 nights (darkness) in the heart of the earth.” “after 3 days” (after Nisan 14, 15, and 16) “On the 3 rd day” (14- 15=1 day, etc.) See Notes Jesus, “the firstfruits,” resurrected. 1 Cor. 15:20-23 Mark 16:9	Early morning Jesus reveals Himself to Mary Magdalene. Mark 16:9 John 20:1-18 Jesus appears to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Luke 24:13-27 In the evening Jesus appears to His disciples. John 20:19 Luke 24:36-45
Jesus goes to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. Matthew 26:36-46	Jesus hangs on the cross for 6 hours and dies at 3:00 pm. Matthew 27:46-50						
Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested. Mark 14:43-46	PASSOVER LAMBS KILLED AT TEMPLE						
Jesus is brought before <u>Annas</u> and Caiaphas and found guilty of blasphemy. John 18:12-14 Matthew 26:63-66	Joseph of Arimathea asks for Jesus’ body. He and Nicodemus prepare His body with spices, bind Him in linen and						
	ONE DAY	ONE NIGHT	TWO DAYS	TWO NIGHTS	THREE DAYS	THREE NIGHTS	
	Abib/Nisan 14	Abib/Nisan 15		Abib/Nisan 16		Abib/Nisan 17	

What about Mark 8:31, “after three days [He will] rise again”? Count the “three days” as Nisan 14, 15, and 16; then you have Him risen on Nisan 17, *after* those three days. So Mark 8:31 is accurate. See the following chart:

THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY	
PASSOVER "PREPARATION DAY" for Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, and weekly Sabbath		First Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread, a "sabbath," a "high day." NO WORK DONE.		Weekly Sabbath Rest NO WORK DONE		First Day of the Week Feast of <u>Firstfruits</u> .	
NIGHT	1 DAY	1 NIGHT	2 DAY	2 NIGHT	3 DAY	3 NIGHT	DAY
<p>Jesus eats last Passover meal with disciples. Matthew 26:26-28 Exodus 12:6-10</p> <p>Jesus goes to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. Matthew 26:36-46</p> <p>Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested. Mark 14:43-46</p> <p>Jesus is brought before <u>Annas</u> and Caiaphas and found guilty of blasphemy. John 18:19-24 Matthew 26:63-68</p>	<p>Jesus is brought before Pilate, then Herod, then Pilate again, and is condemned to death. Luke 23:1-11, 22-24</p> <p>Crucifixion begins around 9:00 am. Mark 15:25</p> <p>Jesus hangs on the cross for 6 hours and dies at 3:00 pm. Matthew 27:46-50</p> <p>PASSOVER LAMBS KILLED AT TEMPLE</p> <p>Joseph of Arimathea asks for Jesus' body. He and Nicodemus prepare His body with spices, and Joseph wraps it in a new shroud. John 19:38-42</p>	<p>Having killed the Passover lambs in the afternoon of Nisan 14, Jews in Judea now eat the meat before night ends. John 18:28</p>	<p>The chief priests and Pharisees have Jesus' tomb guarded. Matthew 27:62-66</p> <p>Women who had been at the tomb the day before prepare spices and fragrant oils for Jesus' body, but wait so as to rest the following day for their Sabbath. These are they that arrive to the tomb early on the first day of the week. Mark 16:1-8</p>			<p>"3 days (light) and 3 nights (darkness) in the heart of the earth." 1 Cor. 15:4</p> <p>"after 3 days" (after Nisan 14, 15, and 16) Mark 16:9</p> <p>"On the 3rd day" (14-15-16 day, etc.) See Notes</p> <p>Jesus, "the firstfruits," resurrected. 1 Cor. 15:20-23 Mark 16:9</p> <p>Very early on the 1st of the week, Mary Magdalene and others go to the tomb and find it empty. John 20:1 Mark 16:1-8</p>	<p>Early morning Jesus reveals Himself to Mary Magdalene. Mark 16:9 John 20:1-18</p> <p>Jesus appears to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Luke 24:13-27</p> <p>In the evening Jesus appears to His disciples. John 20:19 Luke 24:36-45</p>
DAY ONE		DAY TWO		DAY THREE			
Abib/Nisan 14		Abib/Nisan 15		Abib/Nisan 16		Abib/Nisan 17	

What about Acts 10:40, "on the third day" God raised Him up and "showed Him openly"? The phrase "and showed Him openly" would point to Nisan 17 as the "third day" He was raised up, the first day of the week, the Feast of Firstfruits, because that was when He revealed Himself to others –

Mark 16:9

Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

Luke 24:13-27

Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

17 And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" 18 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?" 19 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, 20 "and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. 21 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. 22 Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. 23 When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. 24 And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see."

25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

John 20:19-20

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

How do we get "on the third day"? And the "third day since these things happened"? Jesus was crucified and put in the tomb towards the end of the day of Nisan 14. From Nisan 14 to Nisan 15 is one day. From Nisan 15 to Nisan 16 is the second day. From Nisan 16 to Nisan 17 is the third day. On Nisan 17, **the third day** since the events of Nisan 14, Jesus had risen and showed Himself to many. Acts 10:40 and Luke 24:21 are accurate, as the following chart shows:



THE PASSEOVER LAMB “TAKEN ON THE 10th AND KILLED ON THE 14th”

Now let’s take a look back at what we read concerning the Passover lambs in Exodus, and what’s recorded in John about Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem on His final days –

Exodus 12:3-5

[The Lord speaking to Moses] "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. 4 And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

6 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight [‘ereb’].

John 12:1

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

John 12:12-13

The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!"

John 12:1 tells us that “6 days” before Passover Jesus was with Lazarus, Mary and Martha in Bethany. The first thing we would think is that this day would be Nisan 8 (14th as Passover as stated in Exodus minus 6 days = 8th Nisan [14-6=8]), but it can’t be because the “next day” – John 12:12-13 –would be the weekly sabbath, and Jesus entered into Jerusalem that day, *riding on a donkey*, which would be in strict violation of Exodus 23:12 (and Deuteronomy 5:14) –

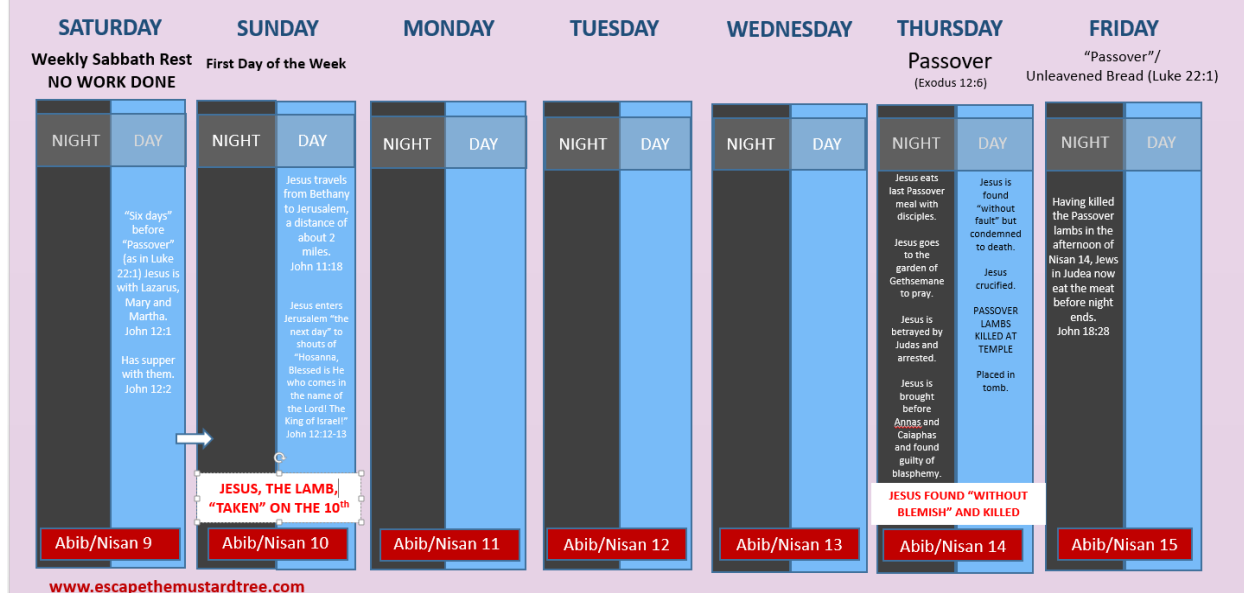
Exodus 23:12

Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

So how do we see the timeline? Well as we’ve already seen, Jesus is THE Passover Lamb and was crucified on Passover, Nisan 14, in direct accord with the commandment in Exodus 12:6-10. And also in keeping with the same passage, Jesus would need to have been “taken” (held in the household and observed) on Nisan 10. *Which he was*. See the chart:

TIMELINE OF THE PASSOVER LAMB, 10TH TO THE 14TH OF THE FIRST MONTH

EXODUS 12:3-6



The "next day" after supper with Lazarus, Martha, and Mary (John 12:12-13) Jesus entered Jerusalem. Jesus would have arrived during the day, as Bethany is about 2 miles from Jerusalem (John 11:18), and His journey would have commenced the morning Nisan 10, after having "supper" (John 12:2, Greek word 'deipnon,' the chief meal of the day, *dinner*) the night before.

But "six days before Passover" (Nisan 14) isn't Nisan 9, because $14 - 6 = 8$, not 9. What do we do with that? We need to remember this verse, and the information we covered regarding the traditions of the day –

Luke 22:1

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.

The Jews in Judea at that time would have celebrated part of Passover on Nisan 15 due to the change from household sacrificing to Temple sacrificing, which would be in complete keeping with their traditions of the time as seeing Passover and the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as the same thing. So we could see "six days before Passover" as Nisan 15 – $6 = 9$, Nisan 9, as the chart shows.

Following His entrance, *on the 10th day*, Jesus THE PASSOVER LAMB was taken into the "household" (of Israel) for observation to make sure He was without blemish. And He was indeed found to be *without fault* –

John 18:37-38

Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." 38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all."

John 19:4-6

Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him." 5 Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!" 6 Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him."

And then, following this time period, THE PASSOVER LAMB was killed, on Passover, Nisan 14. In perfect keeping with God's record in Exodus.

In the end, when the biblical record is allowed to speak for itself—free from traditions and assumptions—the timeline of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection stands in perfect harmony with every detail God has given. The Scriptures consistently reveal a Messiah who fulfilled each prophecy with exactness, demonstrating again that God is not the author of confusion but of order and truth. This study, therefore, is not merely an exercise in chronology but a reaffirmation of the reliability of God's Word. As we trace the footsteps of our Lord through His final days, we are reminded that every moment was sovereignly ordered, every detail intentionally placed, and every promise fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures are cohesive and God is *clear*, declaring the end from the beginning (Is. 46:10). There are no contradictions. If we find errors or inconsistencies or contradictions, then **we** are in error somewhere. We most likely are reading inaccurate translations and/or experiencing muddled understanding due to our upbringing and influences and traditions. That's why we have to just keep studying the Word, and let the Spirit of God guide us into all truth (John 16:13).