

Good Friday?

When the scribes and the Pharisees asked Jesus for a miraculous sign He told them that none would be given them except the sign of Jonah:

*“...An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. And there shall be no sign given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was **three days and three nights** in the belly of the huge fish, so the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”* (Matt. 12:38-39, my emphasis).

Several other passages in the Bible confirm the fact that Jesus said that He would spend three days and three nights in the grave (Luke 11:29-30, Mark 14:58, 15:29, John 2:19). Even the priests and the Pharisees took what Jesus said about His resurrection, seriously, for they asked Pilate to command that His grave should be guarded for three days and three nights (Matt. 27:62-64).

Traditionally it is accepted that Jesus was crucified on Good Friday and that He arose on Sunday, the first day of the week. If Jesus said that He would be in the grave for three days and three nights, how is possible to fit three days and three nights into the time period from Friday to Sunday? It cannot be done! When this question is asked to those who consider Good Friday as the day on which Jesus was crucified, to sidestep the issue, some try to explain that in Hebrew thinking half a day can sometimes be taken for a full day. Jesus Himself, however, defined His understanding of a day:

“Jesus answered, ‘Are there not twelve hours in the day?’” (John 11:9).

The most important issue is not on which day Jesus was crucified, but **the fact that He was crucified and that He rose from the dead!** But did Jesus literally mean what He said about the important sign that would be given, or was He playing with the meaning of words? When such a discrepancy exists between what Jesus said and what tradition tries to explain what He meant, it is important to investigate **what the Bible says.**

Two important facts that must be kept in mind when the events that led up to the crucifixion are studied:

Firstly, it is important to take into account that **two different Sabbaths are mentioned** in the passages that refer to the week and the events that led up to the crucifixion and secondly, it must be remembered that **a Jewish day is measured from six o’clock (sunset) in the evening to six o’clock (sunset) the next evening.**

The two Jewish Sabbaths that are implicated in the week of the crucifixion:

The first Sabbath that is mentioned is **the weekly Sabbath** that the Jews had to keep as a day of rest on every seventh day of every week (Ex.20:9-10) and the **second Sabbath** that plays a role in the week of the crucifixion, is **the yearly Passover Sabbath**, also called the High Sabbath (John 19:31 KJV), which commemorates the Jewish exodus from Egypt (Ex.12). Thus, **once a year, these two Sabbaths occur in the same week.** Traditionally, Good Friday

is erroneously accepted as the day on which Jesus was crucified, because the fact that the two Sabbaths occurred in the same week of the crucifixion is not taken into account.

The order of events during the Passover week (counting three days and three nights back from Sunday, the day of the resurrection).

Tuesday evening 6 o'clock, the beginning of Wednesday, the day before the Passover Sabbath (High Sabbath) – Jesus eating the Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus praying in Gethsemane, arrested, Peter denying Christ (Matt.26:75), brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin:

“That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath (High Sabbath) drew near” (Luke 23:54).

“And on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, Where do You desire that we prepare for You to eat the Passover?” (Matt.26:17),

Wednesday morning – before Pilate, on the cross by 9 a.m., dead by 3 p.m.

According to Jewish law (Deut. 21:23) bodies could not be left hanging on a pole during a Sabbath and because the High Sabbath, Thursday, started on Wednesday evening, 6 o'clock, the body of Jesus had to be removed before that time:

*“Since it was the Preparation Day, the Jews did not want to leave the bodies on the crosses during the Sabbath, **because that was a particularly important Sabbath**”* (ISV), *“... **for that Sabbath day was a great one**”* (LSV), *“...**For that sabbath was a high day**”* (John 19:31, ISV.)

“Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath” (The yearly High Passover Sabbath, Mark 15:42).

“...Joseph, ... from Arimathea...went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down and wrapped it in linen. And he laid it in a tomb... And that day was the Preparation, and the sabbath drew on” (MKJV), *“And it was [the] Day of Preparation, and Sabbath was approaching...”* (Luke 23:50,LSV).

Wednesday evening, 6 o'clock, High Sabbath begins, lasts until 6 o'clock on Thursday evening – Jesus in the tomb – the first day (John 19:38-42).

Thursday evening, 6 o'clock – 6 o'clock Friday evening, ordinary day after the High Sabbath (John 19:31, ISV.) – Jesus in the tomb – second night and day.

*“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome **bought spices** to go and anoint Jesus”* (Mark 16:1, my emphasis).

As result of the crucifixion of Jesus on Wednesday, the women were not prepared and therefore did not have the necessary spices and oils with which to anoint His body. They could not buy spices on the High Sabbath and had to wait for the next day, Friday, which would be an ordinary day again, to do so. The spices and ointments were bought and prepared on Friday, the 6th day, but because the next day, the seventh day, Saturday, was again a Sabbath, the weekly Sabbath, they had to wait for the next day, the first day of the week, Sunday, in order to anoint Jesus' body:

"And also women were following, who were accompanying Him out of Galilee, who watched the tomb, and how His body was placed. And they returned and they prepared spices and ointment. And they rested on the sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:55-56).

"Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56).

6 o'clock Friday evening – 6 o'clock Saturday evening – weekly Sabbath – Jesus in the tomb, the third day.

Saturday night after six, the weekly Sabbath ended and Jesus could have risen any time after that during the night.

Sunday morning early, the first day of the week :

"And when the sabbath (the weekly 7th day Sabbath) was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, had bought sweet spices so that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came upon the tomb, the sun having risen... they saw that the stone had been rolled back...they saw a young man sitting on the right... And he said to them, Do not be frightened. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen..." (Mark 16:1-6).

"Now after the Sabbath (weekly Sabbath), as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb" (Matt. 28:1).

Summary

Tuesday evening, after 6 o'clock, throughout Wednesday night – Passover meal, prayer in Gethsemane, Jesus arrested and brought before the Jews

Wednesday morning – Jesus before Pilate, on the cross by 9 a.m., dead by 3 p.m.

Before **Wednesday evening, 6 o'clock**, when High Sabbath begins – Jesus taken off the cross and placed in a tomb.

Wednesday evening, 6 o'clock to Thursday evening, 6 o'clock, the High Sabbath, first night.

Thursday evening, 6 o'clock – High Sabbath ends.

Thursday evening, 6 o'clock p.m. – Friday evening, 6 o'clock, ordinary week day, Jesus in the tomb, the second night.

Friday evening, 6 o'clock – Saturday evening, 6 o'clock, the weekly Sabbath, Jesus in the tomb, the third day.

Any time after the weekly Sabbath, which ended at 6 o'clock, Saturday evening, Jesus could have risen during the night.

Sunday morning early (first day of the week) – women at the empty grave

Passages that relate to the week of the crucifixion –

John 2:19-21: *Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body.*

John 11:9: *"Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day?'"*

John 19:14: *"Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour."*

Jonah 1:17: *"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."*

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."*

Conclusion

"...Because of your tradition, then, you have disregarded the authority of God's word" (Mat 15:6, ISV).

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