

NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI

THE DATE OF THE CRUCIFIXION
AND RESURRECTION INVESTIGATED:
DID IT REALLY HAPPEN?

A THESIS

Presented to the

MASTER DEGREES THESIS COMMITTEE
of St. Stephen's College
Edmonton, Alberta

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

by

James Seddon Bray

Kamloops, B.C.



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*

Our file *Notre référence*

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-55439-2

Canada

DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to my wife Lesley, who through most of its creative period was too busy to read it, but who talked me through it, acting as coach and sounding board as I articulated new ideas. Frequently she was required to make apologies for me when I was sequestered away reading and writing. Without her unwavering support this thesis would never have made it to the birthing table.

ABSTRACT

The arguments in the manuscript attempt to prove the historicity of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Largely an investigation of the time period of the Passion Week, this Master's Thesis project gathers information on coordinating dates from various calendar systems that impact on the choice of the day, month, and year of this crucial point in Christian history. It also considers historical data, both Christian and outside the Christian realm of influence, astronomical and meteorological data and calculations, folklore of various world religious groups, and the impact on the lives of those who were directly, or very closely, impacted by this event, as illustrated by the biblical record.

One is unlikely to discover such an eclectic range of material pertaining to the Crucifixion and Resurrection in one place. Underlying this study is the thought that there must be a reason why God has chosen to obscure this pivotal date in the relationship between Himself and humanity in the ashes of history. This study advances the search for that elusive date.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to the following:

Dr. Henry Hubert gave advice on the rhetoric adopted in formulating my arguments and sometimes challenged my theology.

Marg Hanna, word processor extraordinaire, who rescued the project when all seemed lost on a computer program that had died from old age. Marg had the good grace to be able to stick with the program when final deadlines loomed with apocalyptic fervor. Many, many hours were spent working out the intricacies of this project. To her I am eternally grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preliminary Pages	i-viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
A General Statement of the Problem	1
At the Base of the Problem	5
The Research Question	7
Personal Interest in the Subject.....	8
Identification of Methodology Used	9
Summary of Results	9
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	11
Relating to the Subject.....	11
--in Opposition.....	12
--in Support	21
Relating to the Methodology.	22
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	23
Methodology Outlined	23
Ethical Issues	24
CHAPTER 4: THE DAY PROBLEM.....	25
Fixing the Days Around The Death and Resurrection.....	25
Different Three Day Texts for the Same Period	26
Three Days Inclusive	27
Crucifixion on Friday.....	30
Wednesday Last Supper-Thursday Crucifixion Theory	32
The Wednesday Crucifixion Theory.....	35
Tuesday Last Supper-Friday Crucifixion Theory	52
Two Methods of Reckoning Days?.....	54
CHAPTER 5: THE YEAR PROBLEM.....	69
The Year of the Crucifixion.....	69
Possible Years for a Friday Crucifixion.....	74
C.E. 33: an Untenable Date.....	75
The Choice Between 30 and 31	76
The Argument for 30 C.E.: Its Problems	78

CHAPTER 6: THE MONTH PROBLEM: A PROBLEM OF CALENDARS.....	81
The Jewish Calendar: The Month Problem	82
Conclusion Impossible From Calendar Data Alone	84
CHAPTER 7: THE SABBATH PROBLEM.....	86
Prior to the Resurrection - the End of the Sabbath?.....	86
CHAPTER 8: EXTRABIBLICAL INFORMATION	89
CHAPTER 9: BIBLICAL SECRET: A TIME PROPHECY	99
CHAPTER 10: THE DATE THIS RESEARCH FAVORS	115
Additional Considerations	117
CHAPTER 11: THE CONCLUSION.....	125
Summary of the Results.....	125
Revisiting the Literature	126
Further Topics of Enquiry.....	126
The Disciples	127
The Contemporaries.....	128
Paul	130
Areas of Potential Application.....	132
Personal Statement.....	135
End Notes.....	138
Bibliography	149
APPENDICES	153
Chart 2: Harmonization Chart, 4 Fold Gospel.....	154
Map 1: Closing Ministry at Jerusalem	155
Map 2: Betrayal, Trial, and Crucifixion.....	156
Chart 3: Three Days by Jewish Reckoning.....	157
Chart 4: Passion Week.....	158
Chart 5: The Qumran/Jewish Calendar Comparison	159

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

General Statement of the Problem Area

Many biblical scholars, archeologists, and historians over the last century have expended a great deal of energy trying to "pin down" the time of the crucifixion. Trying to solve the date of the crucifixion after I had looked at all the theories, beliefs, and investigations became an intriguing study that produced more theories than facts, and in the end little understanding of why this hinge date of humanity's time on earth is buried in the dust of history! The study is made even more complex by the fact that deciphering the date involves co-ordinating at least six different calendar systems, (Jewish, Babylonian, Julian, Gregorian, Egyptian, and Qumranian), reviewing the actions and phases of the moon, considering whether or not the weather was good and the skies clear at that time, and also wondering where those who made, what are now considered historic comments, were at this momentous moment in history. Controversy over the date abounds because of the way we count days, question which day of the week certain events happened, and wonder at the uncertainty of the month and the year. Biblical information seems to be at odds between what the Synoptic writers and what John has to say. Historical considerations such as concurrent events, customs of the day, and period writings by non-Biblical writers also add to the mix of information that are factors in determining the specific date of the crucifixion. Even the term "sabbath" plays an interesting and uncertain role in the unfolding of events.

And now, in the late twentieth century, added to all this, some eminent scholars profess that the resurrection never happened at all. Henry N. Weiman writes

After the crucifixion came the resurrection. The resurrection was an experience the disciples had three days after the terrible shock of Jesus' death on the cross. It took that long for the numbness of the shock to wear away so that they could again respond to one another and to the past in a way that they had done in their living fellowship with Jesus. So vivid and so powerful was this recovery of the kind of interchange with one another that they had had when Jesus was alive with them that it produced a feeling of his actual presence with them in bodily form. Many have had this experience after the death of someone deeply involved with their lives. Either they had this psychological illusion, which would be very natural, or, what is more likely, when they tried to tell of their experience the only way they could tell it was in words that led others to think they were speaking of the bodily presence. This would most likely happen after the story had passed through many mouths in an age that believed bodies rose from the dead.¹

Another eminent scholar and theologian, Rudolf Bultman, didn't help faithful conservative Christian scholars when he wrote

The church had to surmount the scandal of the cross and did it in the Easter faith (i.e. the belief in Jesus' bodily resurrection). How this act of decision took place in detail, how the Easter faith arose in individual disciples, has been obscured in the tradition (i.e. the gospel accounts) by legend and **is not of basic importance.**²

Great as these two theologians may seem to be, they are not presenting anything new in their ideas. Some in the early Corinthian church were already faltering, embarrassed by this part of the Christian message because it ran counter to prevailing Greek philosophy that rejected the notion of bodily resurrection. Because they wanted to be accepted by their peers, they moved this truth from the "essential" to the "relatively unimportant" category.

As amazing as this may seem, we see history repeat itself in the twentieth century. Granted that the context of arguments against the possibility of a resurrection are different now than they were in the first century, the embarrassment that some apparently feel

regarding the miracle of the resurrection event still persists. Today, many, perhaps a majority of both Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians and clergy regard Jesus' bodily resurrection as an unimportant and embarrassing feature of Christianity to be explained away. They may publicly claim they believe it, but their writings reveal a very different view. A disapproving theologian, Marvin Moore writes, "These doubting scholars, if or when they might at least acknowledge the crucifixion, claim that the story of Jesus' resurrection was just a face-saving device that the disciples invented to cover up their embarrassment over this execution on the cross."³ Modern theologians, drawing heavily on and building on the scientific sophistication and arrogance of our generation, suggest the idea that everything can be explained, that miracles are not possible, and that the New Testament story is the fabrication of this man Jesus and his followers in the attempt to establish a new religion.

Second to this, religious scholars have long ago concluded that the narratives of the birth and death of Jesus are so loaded with typology and mystical symbolism that it is impossible to tell which of the events, except the birth itself, actually took place. One chapter in this research paper examines recent events and the quotes of some theologians denying the historicity of the resurrection. However, since my purpose is to confirm the resurrection, little credence is put in what these scholars say. Equally credible scholars, who are university professors, have research published and are respected for their views are quoted to support this text's position.

The gospel accounts of the crucifixion have a much different tone. They read like a narrative, and although some events are typologically interpreted, the events themselves are quite plausible. The star of Bethlehem may be meta-historical, but the crucifixion is

generally accepted as a historical datum. The date on which it occurred is thus important for a number of historical, theological and symbolic reasons.

Paul teaches a very different version of both the story and the results of not believing in this event. 1 Corinthians 15: 12-14 states that if Jesus wasn't raised, Christianity is empty/worthless (vain). Paul explains why in v.15, where he states that the whole New Testament would have to have been written by liars. Scholars can't say that the apostles were merely mistaken that they were false witnesses about this most important issue. Verse 16 and 17 basically states that a believer's faith is worthless if the resurrection is not a fact because their sins will not have been forgiven. Verse 18 goes on to say that if this is true, Christians who have died physically are permanently dead. The sole basis for a believer's hope in future resurrection is in Christ's resurrection.⁴ If Jesus didn't rise out of the grave, all are left with no evidential basis for an afterlife. And if there is no afterlife, living Christians have no reason to serve God. If that is really the case, society should shut down all the churches and send this illegitimate clergy out to look for real jobs, because they are taking their pay under false pretenses! And finally, in verse 19, if Jesus didn't rise from the grave, Christians are not to be admired for their faith. They are pathetic fools who engage in wishful thinking! According to Paul, if believers give this away, they give away the farm! If they compromise this truth for the sake of cultural relevance, they have lost anything to give their culture. Just as one's ability to make a bank withdrawal is dependent on the record of an actual deposit, the spiritual benefits of Christianity are dependent on something that actually took place in history. This project is about proving the historicity of this event.

At the Base of the Problem

Bible references do not make the problem easy. For instance, it is not easy to reconcile the statements given in the Bible regarding the crucifixion and the resurrection with our current twentieth century western traditions. And thus, we come to the very base of the problem:

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40).

These words of Jesus, spoken to some scribes and Pharisees, are the basis of a huge problem for students of Christianity. Biblical students who take the Bible literally see whatever the Bible teaches as truth, and attempt to formulate their understanding of events from the Biblical story. However, no matter how one adds it up, with our present understanding one cannot make "three days and three nights" pass in the span of Friday afternoon to early Sunday morning. Other scholars of the Biblical story suggest a variety of different things. Bishop John Spong suggests that the "three days and three nights" is an eschatological symbol that was well-known, marking the final things at the end of the world in Jewish mythology.⁵ Spong then suggests that as time passed this term was harmonized with the term "on the third day."⁶ This, as we shall see, is a weak argument for the crucifixion/resurrection time line for barely thirty-six hours pass between the crucifixion and the resurrection. Beyond this point, Spong's research withers away and his scholarship provides no helpful clues, for he digs no further in attempting to understand the actual happening of this event. John Dominic Crossan argues against both the crucifixion and the resurrection. His handling of the "three days," this time from Matthew's Gospel, is simply

an instrument to signify that "by that time Jesus will be securely dead."⁷ The guard was there for three days simply as witness that the body is really and irrevocably a corpse so that the disciples cannot resuscitate Jesus and remove him. Thereafter, the people, finding an empty tomb and already repentant because of the "exceeding great signs" at Jesus' death, might believe '*all by themselves*' that Jesus had risen from the dead. Their plan, in other words, is to prevent resuscitation by the disciples from becoming interpreted as resurrection by the people.⁸

The first task, as a literalist, is to find some supporting and corresponding documentation regarding the three days. That task is a small problem for the reference to "three days" (in the tomb) is common and found in many different places in the Bible.

Some examples are:

And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again (Mark 8:31).

The Son of man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and when he is killed, after three days he will rise (Mark 9:31).

Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise (Mark 10:33-34).

This sounds like Jesus was in the tomb for seventy-two hours. If we accept that Jesus was crucified on Friday afternoon, then that would have His resurrection on late Monday afternoon. This is not what most Christians believe, for they place their faith in a Sunday morning resurrection. So sure are they of this that they violate the fourth commandment and

establish as their day of worship the first day of the week (Sunday) in honor of Christ's resurrection, now calling it "The Day of the Lord." How is this possible?

There are also a few dissenters who have opted for Thursday⁹ or even Wednesday¹⁰ as the day of crucifixion, chiefly on the basis of Matt. 12:40. "The Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." A backward calculation from Saturday night through Friday night could lead to the conclusion that Jesus had to be in the tomb Thursday night to fulfill the prophecy (or even Wednesday night in light of Matt. 28:1, which has the women coming to the tomb just after Sabbath is over and Sunday is beginning, and thus before Saturday night time). But that prophetic word is based explicitly on Jonah (2:1) having been in the belly of the fish three days and three nights and is secondary to the prophecies of the Son of Man being raised on the third day which make resurrection by Sunday reconcilable with death and burial on Friday.¹¹

So before us is the very base of the problem. Equally intriguing is the search for the year of the crucifixion, with date theories ranging all the way from 21 C.E. to 36 C.E. Part of the confusion here rests on the fact that we are not even really sure what year Jesus was born, but that becomes a whole new topic. Just to add to the confusion we must also consider the month problem for some calendars had an "extra" month thrown in occasionally to bring the calendar in sync with the earth's orbital position.

The Research Question

The purpose of this study is to provide an analysis and exposition of the debate of the late twentieth century regarding the historicity of the crucifixion and the resurrection. Recent eminent theologians who disbelieve in the miraculous occurrence of the resurrection have,

through their writings, hijacked the cornerstone of the Christian faith. By examining a myriad of sources and evaluating the theories that are currently circulating, this research will harmonize Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection with the Bible story. I will attempt to push the envelope of current knowledge by suggesting a date for this momentous event that changed how God understands and instructs humanity to deal with Him. Perhaps, for the first time, this research will gather together information and theories that are presently scattered far and wide regarding the diverse beliefs concerning the crucifixion/resurrection event.

Personal Interest in the Subject

The resurrection, for me, is the reason that I am a Christian. Without establishing the fact of Jesus' resurrection, the precursor of my own possible resurrection to "heaven," there is no reason to believe in this religion called Christianity. The teachings previously mentioned regarding 1 Corinthians 15:14-19 have been seriously taken to heart. Also, Christianity, for me, is a life-style choice that has certain requirements that set my life somewhat apart from the social norm. (I am a Seventh Day Adventist, hence a Sabbath keeper.) Sometimes, living up to these life-style choices is not easy, and in many ways choosing the alternative would be easier. Why would I (and my family) continue to give tithes and offerings, and attend worship and praise services on a weekly basis when relaxing and the beach beckon? Why would we frequently adjust our agendas to attend seasonal rituals if all this is a lie? More importantly, since I ultimately believe that it is the hand of God that has guided the writers of the Bible, why would I want to dedicate my life to a liar? Why would **anyone** want to build a relationship with a God they can't trust? If one part of the Bible is proven to be untrue, then it is only a matter of time before something else will be accepted as an untruth also. Believing

in, and hence proving the historicity of the resurrection, is an integral part of defining who I am. So far, I am not willing to give up on the relationship with Christ and live with the alternative option.

Identification of the Methodology to be Used

The research for this thesis is being done by reviewing various forms of literature and perhaps for the first time collecting a synopsis of various theories in one place. Nowhere have I yet come across a collection of such a dialectic range of material and nowhere have I found any attempt to harmonize all of the material.

Summary of the Results

An interesting aspect of this research is that this writer has come away from the study with different conclusions than those suggested by many of the eminent scholars that I have referenced as resource material. One of the reasons for this different conclusion is that I believe that the Bible defines itself and gives supporting evidence. What appears to be controverting evidence needs to be examined carefully, for my faith believes that God's hand overrides the production of the Bible, and there is no way that He will present material that might in some way make something else untrue. Thus, wherever possible, harmonization will be used to give an explanation of the same event described by two or more different writers. Appended to this work is a chart harmonizing the Gospel accounts.

Secondly, while I am still very committed to sabbath observance, this research has uncovered the possibility that the way of determining the sabbath hours may have been in contention as early as the times of the synoptic gospel writers. Samuele Bacchiocchi presents

very valid arguments and draws interesting conclusions that pose significant points for thought regarding my own church's organization. For me, his arguments have led to questioning the validity of noting the differences between denominations and the importance of dwelling on the common focus of Christianity which ultimately is Jesus Christ.

And finally, different theories will be presented so that my reader feels some of the confusion that builds up around this study. In some respects though, it is an attempt to lay others' theories before the reader and then, hopefully, persuade them to the reasonableness of the conclusions that are reached in this work. Most of all, enjoy! Ultimately, the conclusions here, also, are only theories, laid out with the best possible reasoning and the broadest scope of sources, but still waiting for confirmation from the only source that is likely to ever sort this out. Hopefully, that is the event in our minds worth being concerned about!

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A brief discussion of the key literature relating to the subject matter of the study

Many books and articles have been read and researched for pertinent information regarding this topic. The literature falls into two categories: first the material that is the product of those who deny the historicity of the Bible and set out at every instance to reconstruct the historical Bible story. This group of writers acquire their theological ideas from the critical German traditions of the last one hundred years. The representative writers documented here include John Dominic Crossan - once a Catholic priest, Bishop John Shelby Spong - a bishop in the Episcopalian (Anglican) Church of the USA, others from the Jesus Seminar (world-wide) tradition, and still others who have participated in the "Jesus at 2000" symposium, Oregon State University, 1996, and the "Resurrection Summit" at the Seminary of the Catholic Archdiocese of New York, in April of 1996. These scholars are light years away from this writer's line of thought and acknowledgement of their work is only given as a signal that this writer is aware that many diverse views exist. It is natural then not to expect pertinent information regarding the crucifixion or the resurrection as a historical event from writers who are pretty forthright in denying the same.

Material Relating to the Subject -- in opposition

The Apostle Paul insisted the Risen Christ is the center of the Christian faith, the mystery without which there would be no church, no hope of eternal life, no living Christ to encounter in eucharistic bread and wine. By any measure, the resurrection of Jesus is the most radical of Christian doctrines. His teachings, His compassion for others, even His martyr's death all find parallels in other stories and religious tradition, but of no other historical figure has the claim been made persistently that God has raised him from the dead.

From the very beginning, the resurrection of Jesus was met by doubt and disbelief. To the Jews of Biblical Jerusalem, it was simply blasphemous for the renegade Christians to claim that a crucified criminal was the Messiah. To the cultivated Greeks, who believed in the soul's immortality, the very idea of a resurrected body was repugnant. Even among Gnostic Christians of the second century, the preferred view was that Jesus was an immortal spirit who merely discarded his mortal cloak. However, for New Testament believers, the appearance of the Resurrected Christ lit the flame of the Christian faith, and the power of the Holy Spirit fired a motley band of fearful disciples to proclaim the Risen Jesus throughout the Greco-Roman world.

Over the eons every generation has reinterpreted for itself the meaning of Jesus; it's one way to keep faith, and traditions, alive. Present day Easterers see believers head for church and even lapsed Christians acknowledge the season by preparing holiday lambs. Seasoned academics, most of them seeing themselves as committed Christians, do battle. Over the last one hundred fifty to two hundred years, scholars trained in the liberal German tradition have questioned the historicity of the resurrection as well as the possibility of miracles. Coming

out of that tradition over the past fifteen years, scholars, both participants in and influenced by the Jesus Seminar and aided and abetted by the media that thrives on sensationalism, have published more than two dozen books and scores of footnoted articles, initiating a fierce debate over the Risen Jesus. In their relentless search for "the historical Jesus," various Biblical scholars argue that the Gospel stories of the empty tomb and Jesus' post-resurrection appearances are fictions devised long after his death to justify claims of his divinity. To hear them tell it, the Resurrection is an embarrassment to the modern mind and a disservice to the itinerant Jewish preacher from rural Galilee.

Now, as before therefore, Jesus lives in controversy. The questioning could not be more basic, more subversive, or more relevant to believers and professional critics alike. What can be known about the real Jesus? Can the historical Jesus be separated from the Risen Christ of faith? Does Christianity owe its origins to the Resurrection? What do Christians mean when they claim that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven? Must a Christian believe in Jesus' bodily resurrection?

Most Christians still believe in the Risen Jesus. For fundamentalists, the Bible is as good as its word. Since the Scriptures say Jesus returned physically from the dead, then that's what happened. But very few Christians are literalists at this point, and among Christians there is a range of opinions on what the Resurrection means. For example, a Harris poll taken in 1994 found 87 percent of Americans believe that Jesus was raised from the dead. But a survey conducted in March 1996 by the Barnes Research Group, a conservative Christian organization in Glendale, California, finds that 30 percent of "born again" Christians do not believe that Jesus came back to physical life after he was crucified.¹²

It is probably a safe bet that it is the modern scholar that is influencing Christians in what they believe. German New Testament scholar Gerd Ludemann, a visiting professor at Vanderbilt Divinity school, thinks the Resurrection is "an empty formula" that must be rejected by anyone holding a "scientific world view." In his latest book, What Really Happened to Jesus: A Historical Approach (Westminster John Knox Press), Ludemann argues that Jesus' body "rotted away" in the tomb. The Risen Christ that appeared to the Apostle Peter, according to Ludemann, whose book evoked a roar of protest from German Christians, (as it was designed to do?) was a subjective "vision" produced by Peter's overwhelming grief and "guilt" for having denied Jesus when he was arrested. For the Apostle Paul, who had previously persecuted Christians, his vision of the Risen Jesus was the resolution of an unconscious "Christ complex." And what the New Testament describes as Jesus' appearance to "more than 500" followers was a "mass ecstasy." In short, this modern version of events reduces the Risen Christ to a series of interpsychic experiences that produced in the disciples a renewed sense of missionary zeal and spiritual self-confidence.¹³

For John Dominic Crossan, a prolific writer/Biblical scholar at DePaul University in Chicago and former Roman Catholic priest, the tomb of Jesus was indeed empty. The reason: his body had already been devoured by wild dogs--a fate, claims Crossan, typical of crucified Roman criminals. There were no post-Resurrection appearances either, not even visions or ecstasies; Crossan does not believe that any of these stories from the New Testament have historical roots. In a recent book, Who Killed Jesus? (Harper Collins, 1995), Crossan argues that "the Easter faith...did not begin on Easter Sunday." Rather, it began during Jesus' lifetime in rural Galilee. According to Crossan's historical

reconstruction, Jesus was a peasant philosopher preaching an inclusive kingdom of God among Israel's outcasts. Although Jesus' revolutionary agenda challenged the Jewish religious establishment of his day, Crossan insists that only the Romans were responsible for his death. Crossan notes that eventually, the original Jesus movement died too, a consequence of a developing Christian establishment that transformed the human Jesus into a divine Son of God.¹⁴

Does this sound familiar? In their basic conclusions, contemporary questers for the historical Jesus in many ways echo the findings of earlier generations of Biblical skeptics. More than 150 years ago, David Friedrich Strauss published The Life of Jesus Critically Examined, which argued that early Christians applied to Jesus all the myths that had accumulated about the expected Messiah.¹⁵ Today, scholars in search of the Jesus behind the "myths" have more exacting-critical tools for dissecting sacred texts. They also rely on recently discovered texts, such as Gnostic Gospels and the Dead Sea Scrolls. From these, critics fashion rather different biographies of Jesus than those found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

According to one best seller, Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Harper Collins, 1992), the historical Jesus was really "the wicked priest" mentioned in the scrolls of the Essene sect at Qumran. In this exposé Australian author Barbara Thiering uses the scrolls to unlock what she considers the secret story encoded in the canonical Christian Scriptures. What they reveal is that Jesus was actually crucified at Qumran and buried in a cave by the Dead Sea. But, she argues, He only appeared to be dead, thanks to a slow-acting poison administered to Him on the cross. Later, Simon Magus, a magician mentioned in the New

Testament, gave Jesus a purgative and some myrrh to sooth his mucous membranes. Thus revived, Jesus went on to marry Mary Magdalene, father three children, divorce her and marry Lydia, another minor New Testament figure. Eventually he died in Rome.¹⁶

However fanciful, all these efforts at recovering the historical Jesus share certain assumptions that even more traditional scholars readily accept. All agree that the New Testament was created by believers whose main concern was to preach the "good news" of Jesus Christ. All recognize that the Gospel narratives were composed from oral traditions at least 40 years after the death of Jesus, each with its own theological bent. All accept the fact that the Gospel stories--like the Epistles and Luke's Acts of the Apostles--reflect controversies within the early church. All acknowledge that the New Testament authors interpreted Jesus in light of various images and beliefs from the Hebrew Scriptures, and all are trained in the intricate historical--critical method of placing specific scriptural passages in their historical context.¹⁷

According to this elaborate academic protocol, the Resurrection is ruled "a priori" (valid independently of observation and experience) out of court because it transcends time and space. Historians then have to find another reason to explain the origins of Christianity. Thus the Gospel's narrative frame is discarded and the pieces of Scripture are reshuffled to reveal the scholar's own "historical" Jesus.¹⁸ In some ways, this is what the Gospels do themselves. Each of them is a written composition that brings together parables and stories, events and theological assertions that existed earlier only in oral form. Each offers different facets and insights into a figure who otherwise slips into the crevices of first-century Palestine. What holds these pieces together is the belief that the Risen Christ is living yet--a

belief that many contemporary reconstructors do not share.

Even the most orthodox Scripture scholars recognize that the brief, almost enigmatic accounts of Jesus' Resurrection and its aftermath are fraught with special problems for the historians. For one thing, there were no witnesses to the Resurrection. As Ignatius of Antioch aptly put it less than a century later, "Jesus rose in the silence of God, and no New Testament writer describes what happened." For another, the post-Resurrection stories contain a variety of factual discrepancies about the main characters, places, times and the messages attributed to the Risen Jesus. For example, the Gospel of Matthew has Jesus appearing first to Mary Magdalene and other women. Luke gives the first appearance to Peter, and (with the exception of a later addition to his Gospel) Mark contains no post-Resurrection appearances at all. Luke's Gospel says that Jesus appeared to the apostles in the Jerusalem area; Matthew says it was in Galilee. In short, the post-Resurrection narratives are ambiguous stories allowing ample room for historians to imagine what really took place.¹⁹

However, there is one point where scholars are unanimous: resurrection does not mean the resuscitation of a corpse. It is not as if "the soul of Jesus left his body and then returned to it like something going out of the house at night and coming back in the morning," says Father Gerald O'Collins, a specialist on the Resurrection at the Jesuits' Gregorian University in Rome. "We are talking about a glorified body, one that has been transformed by the power of God."²⁰ The Gospels themselves admit to various interpretations. On the one hand, they describe the Risen Jesus eating with his disciples. In John's Gospel, the apostle known as "doubting" Thomas refuses to believe that Jesus has

returned from the dead until Christ allows him to put his finger into the hole in his side, where a soldier's lance had pierced him during his slow death on the cross.

On the other hand, several Gospel stories clearly indicate that Jesus' resurrected body was not at all like normal human flesh. He mysteriously appears and disappears, passes through closed doors and, as in his appearance to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, often goes unrecognized by his own close companions. To some theologians, this suggests that only those of deep faith actually saw Jesus and then only in a God-given vision. Indeed, most scholars believe that in Paul's case, that is exactly what happened.²¹

After 150 years of scholarly search, there are signs that the quest for the "historical" Jesus has reached a dead end. There have been no new data on the person of Jesus since the Gospels were written. And though scholars continue to piece together information from archeology and other disciplines, these are valuable chiefly for fashioning a better understanding of Christian origins and how the Gospels, in particular, were composed. In the best of the recent flow of books, The Real Jesus (Harper Collins, 1997), Luke Timothy Johnson offers a devastating critique of these scholars who prefer their own reconstructed Jesuses to the one attested in the New Testament. As Johnson demonstrates, truth is not always historical, and what seems warranted by historical evidence does not always turn out to be true. Unfortunately, apart from what is found in Scripture, there is little one can say about the identity of Jesus. Like Socrates, Jesus is inscribed in the words of those who wrote about him, and all of them proclaimed his Resurrection from the dead.

The Resurrection is not all that they proclaimed. They also claimed "that after his death [Jesus] entered into an entirely new form of existence, one in which He shared power with God and in which He could share that power with others," Johnson writes. In the New Testament, Jesus' death and resurrection are united with his ascension and the apostles' Pentecost experience. As Johnson puts it, "The sharing in Jesus' new life through the power of the Holy Spirit is an essential dimension of the Resurrection." It's this writer's bet that not many of our present-day scholars can or will accept that belief. But without it, there is no Easter.

And finally, just to be clear, it is imperative to name some of the twentieth century's reconstructors of their own historical Jesus. Household names to the readers of the popular press, it is these writers who have not advanced the real story of God's plan and His historical Jesus. Little material in their writings ever engages the crucifixion or resurrection as an actual event planned from before the creation story. However, as a defense against current popular academic Jesus studies, it is essential that we are aware of these writers agendas.

Perhaps the first writer of this century needing consideration was Albert Schweitzer, whose book The Quest of the Historical Jesus (1906) attempted to instill a strong sense of theological irrelevance to historical Jesus research. Painted as a mistaken apocalypticist by Schweitzer, Jesus is seen as both proclaiming the imminent end of the world and deliberately seeking to bring it about by undergoing the suffering of the end-time in his own person.²²

Rudolf Bultmann followed with his writing of The History of the Synoptic Tradition (1921). His study of how the traditions about Jesus developed during the oral period

suggested that very little of the preaching and teaching of Jesus as reported in the gospels can be traced back to Jesus himself. The historical skepticism engendered by Bultmann's form-critical work was reinforced after World War II by redaction criticism, the study of how the evangelists modified and shaped traditions they received to adapt them to their own times and convictions. It became very clear that everything in the gospels--not just the doctrinal and supernatural elements, but also Jesus' teaching--was thoroughly shaped by the experiences, situations, and theological beliefs of the early Christian communities.²³

Burton Mack sketches a very different image of Jesus. His is an image of Jesus as a "Cynic sage" or "Cynic teacher," more Hellenistic than Jewish, in a thoroughly Hellenized Galilee. Mack's book Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins (1988), is a provocative study of Christian origins up to the time of Mark's gospel. It includes a history of Jesus movements and "Christ cults" in the first century as well as a detailed story of the primary forms in which the synoptic tradition took place. Thus most of the book is not about Jesus.²⁴

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's In Memory of Her (1983) presents a picture of Jesus simply as a wisdom prophet and founder of a Jewish renewal movement with a socially radical vision and praxis. Jesus and his movement were intrinsically sociopolitical, challenging both the ideology and praxis of the dominant ethos of the Jewish social world. Her angle of vision is feminist: she brings to her reading of the New Testament texts the awareness that these texts not only "see" from the male perspective, but to varying degrees reflect the patriarchal social world out of which they come. A critical feminist reading therefore does not see the texts themselves as normative (theologically or historically), but

seeks to reconstruct the social reality behind the texts.²⁵

Marcus Borg has two books where he develops his portrait of Jesus. The first, Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus (1984), and the second, Jesus, A New Vision (1987), concern themselves with four main aspects of Jesus: he was a charismatic healer or "holy person," a subversive sage who undermined conventional wisdom and taught an alternative wisdom, a social prophet, and an initiation of a movement the purpose of which was the revitalization of Israel.²⁶

Richard Horsley is the last of the reconstructors that I will mention. He made Jesus' engagement with his social world central to his portrait of Jesus. His four works include: Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs (1985), The Liberation of Christmas: The Infancy Narrative in Social Context (1989), Jesus and the Spiral of Violence (1987), and Sociology and the Jesus Movement (1989). In these works, Horsley portrays Jesus as a social prophet standing in the radical prophetic tradition of Israel.²⁷

In summary, these writers have little to offer the direction of this research which is to determine the factualness of the crucifixion and the resurrection and the time line surrounding it.

Material Relating to the Subject -- in support

The second group of writers are the apologists of the Christian faith who believe the Bible presentation is the word of God, is unerring, and is in fact a document of what happened accurately portrayed. This paper is going to rely heavily on the work that they have done. Samuele Bacchiocchi, from Andrews University (Seventh Day Adventist), studied

primarily at the Gregorian University in the Vatican, and was perhaps the only Protestant theologian to ever graduate from this university. His work was a great help in determining the day of the crucifixion. His study came at the request of members of the World Wide Church of God. Francis Nicol's work in editing The Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary was paramount in pointing me to others who were similarly interested in this topic. Raymond E. Brown's monumental study The Death of the Messiah graphically illustrated complicated relationships in calendars and time lines and was significant in supplying some personal clarity for this project. Wide-ranging magazine article searches have turned up extrabiblical information that have argued everything from astronomical calculations to reasonings that Christ wasn't crucified, but impaled because crosses were supposedly not in use at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. This is a theory now being widely proclaimed by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Electronic searches took place and a great many articles, some in the form of sermons, have been found. These, were appropriate, have been included in the research materials.

A brief discussion of key literature relating to the chosen methodology(ies)...demonstrating working knowledge of relevant resources

The formatting text that I have chosen to use is Diana Hacker's A Canadian Writer's Reference, seconded., (1996).

I see this work largely as a literature review with some leanings towards qualitative research. Thus, this work will be modelled from material gleaned from the works of Harris M. Cooper, Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, Nigel and Jane Fielding, Jerome Kirk and Marc Miller, Paul Leddy, and Susan Weller and Kimball Romney.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Outline of steps in researching the question

Research in this topic started quite informally about three and one half years ago. At that time I was attending a Christian Scriptures course and Bishop John Spong was a part of the proceedings. His rather overt statements about the fallacy of the resurrection sent me scurrying for information - articles, textbooks, Bible reference books, etc. It wasn't long before I discovered that Jesus' statement about being in the heart of the earth three days and three nights, just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale (Matt. 12:40) didn't add up to a Friday afternoon Crucifixion and a Sunday morning Resurrection. I was hooked! From there, the methodology follows as well-planned search of literature that has included the following:

I started with books that offered a general overview of the topic. These included Bible commentaries and biblical encyclopedias.

Next, I researched a number of specific books that gave me more information on specific areas, usually these being in depth examinations of specific theories. By examining first of all the University College of the Cariboo library's on-line catalogue I was able to find sub-headings or subdivisions within the books on file. I was then able to take those same headings and do a search of the material held in the St. Stephen's library.

The next endeavour was a search of the current (1970 onwards) periodicals. There were a number of articles that were of importance to my research, so many, many, hours were spent reading articles and photocopying pertinent information. Included in this type of information were a few historic sermons, but these yielded no "hard" evidence usable in research.

Scholarly journals were the next group of materials to be examined. Lots of material regarding the crucifixion/ resurrection is out there, but almost none of it pertains to dating this event.

The final area of search for information for this project was on the internet, though early on I felt I had sufficient material and also felt that I was unlikely to find much new material that hadn't already been examined. However, some new material, this time mostly in the form of sermons, surfaced.

Discussion of ethical issues involved and how I plan to manage these issues

This research, to my way of thinking, involves no ethical issues as far as the research is concerned.

CHAPTER 4

THE DAY PROBLEM

Fixing the Days Around the Death and Resurrection of Christ

Three questions present themselves in connection with the determining the day of the death of Christ: (1) On what day of the week did He die? (2) What was the connection between that day and the Feast of the Passover? (3) Does that day "fit" for the (known?) month or for any specific year?

Through the centuries Christendom has been quite agreed that Jesus died on the cross Friday afternoon and rose from the tomb early the next Sunday morning. However, in recent years some have contended that when Christ said He would be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40), He meant He would be in the grave 72 hours. On this assumption is built the Wednesday crucifixion theory, which places the resurrection Sabbath (Saturday) afternoon. As we shall learn later, this theory is also laden with reasonings that are not in keeping with Biblical statements. A more recent, less exact, Thursday proposal merely computes: "Thursday plus three days equals Sunday." Hence, we should examine Christ's statements on the matter.

When Jesus spoke beforehand of His death and resurrection, He used several phrases concerning "three days," and once "three days and three nights." Of course, by modern Western reckoning, if we speak of three days after an event, we mean three full days or more.

Now three full 24-hour days after Friday afternoon would, strictly speaking, extend to Monday afternoon. But our problem is not what those phrases may mean to Westerners, but what Jesus meant by them and what His Near Eastern hearers understood by them.

What was the meaning of "day"? There were various forms of speech used in Christ's day that do not have the same meaning to us. He once spoke of the day having 12 hours (John 11:9, 10), referring obviously to the daytime as opposed to the night. This was literally true as Jesus meant it, for when He lived among humanity the time between sunrise and sunset was divided into 12 equal parts, or "hours." These "hours" varied in length according to the season. The fact that today we use clock hours of uniform length, in which sunrise and sunset are more or less than 12 sixty-minute hours apart most of the time, does not make Jesus' statement incorrect. Similarly His phrase "three days" must be interpreted according to what those words meant then to those people, not what they mean to us today.

Although "day" was, and is, sometimes used to mean the daylight hours, nevertheless the word, when used in counting a series of days, meant in both ancient and modern usage a period including a day and a night. The Greek language, in which the New Testament was written, had a word for "night-day," (*nuchthemeron*)²⁸ (see 2 Cor. 11:25); and Genesis enumerated each successive day of creation as composed of "evening" and "morning." Jesus' "three days and three nights" are merely "three [calendar] days," as then understood.

Different Three Day Texts for the Same Period

This is clear from the fact that Jesus refers at different times to the same period - the interval between His death and His resurrection - as "in three days," "after three days," and

"on the third day." Once, because He is quoting from Jonah (ch. 1:17), He uses the phrase "three days and three nights." Unless we accuse Jesus of contradicting Himself, we must accept all these phrases as meaning the same period of time. Even the priests and Pharisees who quoted Jesus as predicting His resurrection "after three days," asked Pilate to have the tomb guarded "until the third day" (Matt.27:64), not "until after the third day"). Obviously, "after three days" meant "the third day".

The following texts mention this three-day period: (Chart 1)

"In three days"	"After three days"	"The third day"
Matt 26:61; 27:40	27:63; 12:40 (and three nights)	16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64
Mark 14:58	8:31	9:31; 10:34
Luke		9:22; 18:33; 24:7,21,46
John 2:19-21		

What, then, did these various three-day expressions mean? We can find out easily by comparing other passages in the Bible that refer to time periods in similar ways.

Three Days, Inclusive

The question of how long Jesus was in the tomb rose from a modern misunderstanding of inclusive reckoning, the common ancient method of counting. It included both the day (or year) on which any period of time began, and also that on which it ended, no matter how small a fraction of the beginning or ending day (or year) was involved. One example of this method is a period (when Shalmaneser besieged Samaria) beginning in the 4th year of Hezekiah and the 7th year of Hoshea, and ending in the 6th year Hezekiah

and the 9th year of Hoshea, "at the end of three years" (2 Kings 18:9,10). It was evidently counted thus: 4,5,6, (of Hezekiah's reign), three years, inclusive.

Take another example. We say that a child is not one year old until after she/he has lived 12 full months from the date of its birth. The child becomes one year old as she/he enters her/his second year of life, and becomes two years old after she/he completes her/his second year. Thus a child is called "10 years old" all through its 11th year, and becomes 11 only after she/he has reached the end of 11 full years. Not so in the Bible. Noah was, literally, a son of 600 years "in the six hundredth year" of his life (Gen. 7:6, 11); although his 600 years were not reckoned inclusively these verses show that in his 600th year his age was considered 600, not 599.²⁹ A Hebrew baby was circumcised when he was "eight days old" (Gen. 17:12), "the eighth day" (Lev. 12:3, Luke 1:59), or "when eight days were accomplished" (Luke 2:21). The Bible lists several periods of "three days" that ended during, not after, the third day, and thus covered less than three full 24-hour days (see Gen. 42:17-19); cf. 1 Kings 12:5, 12 with 2 Chron. 10:5, 12.³⁰

Not only among the Hebrews, but also among other ancient peoples, we have examples of inclusive reckoning. This was common in Egypt, Greece, and Rome. It is still found in the far east today. Even in some countries of Europe a week's interval is referred to as "eight days," and a three-day round trip ticket bought on Sunday, for instance, is expected to be used on Tuesday. In Japanese and Chinese reckoning a child born late last year is a year old for the remainder of the year and is two years old this year (the second calendar year of its life) and will be three years old as soon as the next year begins. Obviously, this is not a literal reckoning but is based on a concept of time that comes down from a long cultural

usage. Similarly, we must bear in mind the cultural concepts of time that were held in Jesus' time.

Since the common custom of inclusive reckoning is well attested for the Hebrews, for other nations, and in the East down to modern times, it seems wholly unreasonable to understand Jesus' words about a three-day period in terms of our modern Western mathematical method of reckoning. By common usage His hearers would count the three days successively as:

1. The day of the crucifixion.
2. The day after the event.
3. The "third" day after (by modern count, the second day after).

We cannot insist that when Jesus once said that He would rise after three days (Mark 8:31) he meant after the end of the third full day, or 72 hours. For that He would have said "on the fourth day."

But we are not left with merely an obvious deduction as to what Jesus meant by "third day." We have it from His own lips. In speaking of Herod on one occasion He said:

Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils,
and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day
I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk to day,
and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be
that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem (Luke 13:32, 33).

Thus he equated the third day with the day after tomorrow - the third day counted inclusively.

Crucifixion on Friday

What day, may we inquire, was the day on which this three-day prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled? The answer is, "the first day of the week" (Mark 16:9). Late "that same day" (Luke 24:1, 13), two disciples met Him on the road to Emmaus, and in talking of the crucifixion of their Master and their own deep disappointment, declared, "...to day is the third day since these things were done" (Luke 24:21). Jesus Himself said, when He appeared to the twelve in the upper room, "thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day" (Luke 24:46). As Paul later said, "He rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4). Sunday, obviously, was the third day.

What, then, was the day of crucifixion, seeing that Sunday was the third day, or the "day after tomorrow"? Obviously, the preceding Friday, the day before the Sabbath. This is in exact accord with Luke's statement that the women left the embalming unfinished on the day of preparation as the Sabbath drew on, and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment before returning the first day of the week (Luke 23:54 to 24:1).

The women would not have waited several days, as is supposed by those who put Jesus' death on Wednesday and make the Sabbath here mentioned merely a festival, or ceremonial, sabbath. The reason for this is because of the command given in Deut. 21:22-23, where bodies were not to remain upon a "tree" overnight, but were to be buried the same day. John (19:31) records precautions being taken lest the bodies remain on the cross for the oncoming Sabbath, so obviously the rules had not changed. The following day, being the Sabbath, which is about to dawn, (Luke 23:54) would make even more imperative the carrying out of the command. Finally, Peter (2:5) indicates that Jesus would die and be

buried before Sabbath dawned. It is not surprising, then, that the vast majority of scholars have accepted that the crucified Jesus died on Friday, and indeed have accepted the writings of Mark (15:34), Matthew (27:46), and Luke (23:44) as Jesus being on the verge of dying at 3 P.M. (by the ninth hour) in the afternoon.³¹

However, there is a problem with the term "high day" used in John 19:31. High days are generally considered sabbaths, or festival days when one was not expected to work, much like our statutory holidays. Here, the phrase "a high day" is taken by many to indicate that in that year the festival sabbath fell on the weekly Sabbath, and was the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Now, those who hold that Jesus was crucified on Nisan 15 (as opposed to Nisan 14) contend that that Sabbath was a high day because the weekly Sabbath coincided with the day of the waving of the first fruits (Lev. 23:9-14). However, Jesus rose on the day the first fruits were offered, in precise fulfillment of the types.

The problem continues from other points mentioned by John. There is an apparent contradiction between the Synoptics and John. The meal that Jesus ate on Thursday evening before He was arrested, according to the Synoptics, was the paschal (Passover) meal, whereas in John 18:28, on Friday morning when Jesus was being tried before Pilate, the Jewish authorities and people refused to "enter into the praetorian lest they be defiled and in order that they might eat the Passover (meal)"--a feast that according to John 19:14 was to begin the next day (i.e. Friday evening). Thus, the paschal meal for the synoptics was on Thursday evening and Jesus died in the daytime after it; for John it was on Friday evening and Jesus died in the daytime before it.³²

The Wednesday Last Supper/Thursday Crucifixion Theory³³

During Passion Week, prior to Wednesday, the events appear to be accounted for by the Gospel writers within the clear context of either Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday (see Chart 4, p160). The exact timing of what happens after those events, however, appears less certain. John touches only lightly upon the events between Jesus' triumphant entry and the "last supper" which Jesus shares with His disciples. Referring to various public reactions during that time, John notes that, despite Jesus' teaching and miraculous works, there are still many people who either disbelieve or are afraid to acknowledge their belief (John 12:37). Then John records what is apparently Jesus' last public appeal before his subsequent arrest (John 12:44-50). There is no evidence that these events occurred on any of the three prior days. In this theory they are set forth as occurring on Wednesday.³⁴

Of greater significance at this point is the chronology related to the last supper, Jesus' crucifixion, and subsequent resurrection. Traditionally the last supper is believed to have occurred on Thursday evening, followed by the crucifixion on Friday afternoon and the resurrection on Sunday morning. However, such reckoning raises at least on two questions. First, in an action-packed final week, what reason is there to believe that there would be a whole day of either actual inactivity or activity which is left unrecorded? (ie. Wednesday – see Chart 4) Second, this theory also asks, if Jesus is crucified on Friday afternoon and thereafter hurriedly put into the tomb, how can there be sufficient time to match Jesus' own prediction that he would remain in the tomb for three days and three nights before being resurrected? Even if one stretches imagination within the traditional time frame in order to find parts of three days, it is not possible to find three nights.³⁵

The resolution of both questions, this theory affirms, appears to be found in recognizing that the last supper took place on Wednesday evening, followed by the crucifixion and burial on Thursday. Acceptance of that assumption requires an understanding of the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the way in which the Jews reckon time. As for the reckoning of time, this theory agrees with the understanding that the Jewish day begins at sunset on the previous evening. This means, for example, that our Wednesday night is actually Thursday, and our Thursday night is actually Friday.³⁶

Passover is observed on the 14th day of the month of Nisan, corresponding to March-April. (It would be more correct to say that Nisan 14 was known as the "eve of the Passover," that is, the day on which the preparations were made for it, even as Friday was called the "eve of the Sabbath".) Passover is observed in commemoration of the deliverance of the ancient Israelites from their Egyptian bondage. The name derives from the "passing over" of the Israelites when death came to the firstborn of each Egyptian family. As part of that same commemoration, Passover is followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, which reminds the Jews of their forefathers' flight from Egypt, during which time the Israelites ate unleavened bread only. By God's direction (Leviticus 23), a lamb is to be slaughtered late on the 14th day (Passover) and the Passover meal eaten that evening, which would be the beginning of the 15th day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The entire 15th day is then to be observed as a special Sabbath, or high holy day (See John 19:31), regardless of the day of the week on which it might fall in any given year. (If the 15th day is a Friday, then both that Friday and the next day, Saturday, are observed as Sabbaths.) This is precisely what this theorist is suggesting, that in fact we have two Sabbaths, the first

of which was a high day, coming together.³⁷

With that background the picture begins to come clear. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record the disciples preparation for the Passover on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. That would place their preparations, then, at the beginning of the 14th day, which, of course, begins on the evening of the 13th day. Among the preparations common on the evening of the 13th day is the removal of all leaven from the house. Therefore it appears that the disciples assume they are preparing the upper room primarily for the special paschal meal which they expect to share with Jesus the following evening, and they apparently do not contemplate that the regular meal on the first night will in fact be their "last supper" with Jesus.³⁸

Although generally referring to the occasion as a part of the Passover celebration, Jesus seems to explain why it is important for Him to eat with them on the night before the actual Passover meal. As will be seen, Jesus' words are: "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." (Luke 22:15,16) In referring to His suffering, Jesus is obviously anticipating that His own sacrificial death will take place later that day, preventing Him from participating in the actual Passover supper.³⁹

John's account eliminates any doubt that this supper occurred prior to the actual Passover meal. When Jesus tells Judas during the supper to do what he is about to do, some of the other disciples "thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the feast." (John 13:29) Furthermore, the Jews who have obtained Jesus' arrest will not enter Caiaphas'

palace for fear that they will be ceremonially unclean, and therefore unable to eat the Passover. Most convincing is the fact that the day of Jesus' crucifixion is plainly stated to be "the day of Preparation of Passover week" - the day on which the Pascal lamb is slain for the Passover meal taken during the evening of that day.⁴⁰

The most meaningful result of moving away from the traditional time frame is seeing how Jesus' crucifixion becomes the perfect "type" of the Passover Lamb. Under Hebrew law, the paschal lamb is chosen on the tenth day and then "kept up" until the 14th day, when it is sacrificed for the sins of the people. If Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem is counted as the tenth day, Thursday would be the 14th day, and thus the day on which Jesus is crucified. Far more important than this possible parallel is the fact that Jesus, as the perfect Lamb of God, does not celebrate the Passover with some other ordinary sacrificial lamb, but rather becomes Himself the lamb who is slain -- precisely at the appropriate hour!⁴¹

There is strong evidence that the last supper takes place on the evening prior to the Day of Preparation, which by modern reckoning would be Wednesday night. Proceeding upon that assumption, the events associated with this final Wednesday include not only Jesus' last public teaching, but also the account of Peter and John finding the upper room and making preparation for the Passover celebration.⁴²

The Wednesday Crucifixion Theory

A. Davison argues for Wednesday on the grounds that the Sabbath mentioned in all the Gospels as following the daytime of the crucifixion was an "Annual Sabbath" rather than a weekly Sabbath. "Annual Sabbath" is used by him to designate those days within festal

periods on which there was rest from work and a sacred assembly. He finds "two annual Sabbaths" connected with Passover or Unleavened Bread, namely the first and the last of the seven-day period (Lev.23:7-8). The first Passover "annual Sabbath" in the year in which Jesus died was Wednesday night/Thursday, and it was in the Wednesday daytime immediately preceding the "Sabbath" that Jesus was tried and crucified--a Wednesday daytime that was the 14th of Nisan. Unfortunately, he offers little proof for this.⁴³ Academically, his work is also out of step with others as it does not conform to the Sabbath (weekly)/sabbath (festive) convention scholars use to help make distinctions between the two days.

In recent years several Christian Churches have advanced the view that Christ was entombed on the Wednesday afternoon and that He arose exactly seventy-two hours later on Saturday afternoon. The most well-known exponent of this view is Graham Scroggie, who presents it in his book A Guide to the Gospels.⁴⁴ Among the churches that have accepted this view as one of their fundamental beliefs are The Church of God (Seventh Day) and the Worldwide Church of God, The Church of God International, and The Assembly of Yahweh.

The primary support for the Wednesday crucifixion/Saturday resurrection is based on the interpretation of three major texts: (1) Matthew 12:40; (2) John 19:14, 31; (3) Matthew 28: 1-6.

Matthew 12:40 is the Jonah text, previously examined at the start of this chapter. To the proponents of this theory, this text specifies that the duration of Christ's entombment in the heart of the earth would be "a full three days and three nights which is equal to 72

hours."⁴⁵

This conclusion is drawn from the assumption that when "days" and "nights" are specifically mentioned, they represent not an idiomatic expression but a literal period of three whole days. Since between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning there are less than two whole days, it is argued that Christ must have been crucified on Wednesday afternoon and must have risen 72 hours later, namely on Saturday afternoon, in order to fulfill the three full days of prophecy.

The second text used to support the Wednesday dating of the crucifixion is John 19:14 which reads: "Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, 'Behold your King.'" This text is interpreted as teaching that the "preparation day" of Christ's crucifixion was not the day preceding the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, but rather the day preceding the annual Passover Sabbath which on that year supposedly occurred on a Thursday.

To substantiate this conclusion, appeal is made to the fact that in the Old Testament, days other than the seventh day of the week are called sabbaths (Lev. 23: 24, 39). Thus the Sabbath mentioned in the Passion narratives was allegedly an annual ceremonial Passover Sabbath, which John calls "a high day" (John 19:31) to differentiate it from the seventh day Sabbath.

Some find further support for the Wednesday crucifixion in Daniel's prophecy of the "seventy weeks" (Dan. 9:24-27) which speaks of the Messiah being cut off "in the midst of the week." They point out that "while this prophecy has the application of a day for a year, so

that this 70th week became a literal seven years, Christ being 'cut off' after three-and-a-half years' ministry, as He was, yet it is significant that He was also 'cut off' on the middle of a literal week."⁴⁶

The third text, Matthew 28:1, 5-6 is regarded as the "final clinching proof," because it allegedly pinpoints the time of the resurrection as being Saturday afternoon. The text reads: "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher...And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt.28:1, 5-6,). To the proponents of the Wednesday crucifixion theory, this text teaches that Christ arose before "the end of the Sabbath, "because when the women arrived at the sepulcher "in the end of the Sabbath" they discovered that their Lord had already risen. Furthermore, they maintain that by counting backward from Saturday afternoon the prophetic three days and three nights of Christ's entombment, one arrives at Wednesday afternoon as the time of Christ's crucifixion.⁴⁷

Though not simply given, rebuttal of this theory is possible, and examination of those exact same scriptures is the way to do it.

The Matthew 12:40 text is known as the "sign of Jonah" text. What needs to be asked is what is the sign of Jonah that Christ gave to His unbelieving generation as proof of His Messiahship? Wednesday Crucifixionists firmly believe that the sign consisted not simply of the resurrection which Christ, like Jonah, would experience after a temporary burial, but

primarily of the exact period of 72-hour entombment in the heart of the earth.

This conviction is expressed in the book The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday, published by the Department of Theology of Ambassador College: "Jesus offered but one evidence [of His Messiahship]. That evidence was not the fact of the resurrection itself. It was the length of time He would repose in His grave, before being resurrected."⁴⁸

The implication of this contention is clearly stated in the next paragraph which reads: "Jesus staked His claim to being your Savior and mine upon remaining exactly three days and three nights in the tomb. If he remained just three days and three nights in the earth, He would prove Himself the Savior--if He failed in this sign, He must be rejected as an imposter."⁴⁹

Statements such as the ones just quoted clearly reveal the fundamental importance attached to a 72-hour duration of Christ's entombment. The argument is made that it includes three dark periods called 'night' and three light periods called 'day'--three days and three nights, and Jesus said they contained twelve hours for each period (John 11:9-10)--a total of 72 hours."⁵⁰

The interpretation which views the sign of Jonah as being primarily an exact 72-hour period of Christ's entombment is discredited by three major reasons. The sign of Jonah consisted not in a 72-hour entombment but in the miracle of the resurrection.

The first significant reason is the absence of any time reference in the other two passages mentioning the sign of Jonah (Matt.16:4; Luke 11:29-32). Note should be taken of

the fact that in Luke there is no reference to the length of time Jonah survived in the whale's belly. If the sign of Jonah consisted of a time factor, Luke could hardly have ignored it. The comparison in Luke between Jonah and Christ is not in terms of identical duration of entombment, but of similar miraculous resurrections: "as Jonah...so will the Son of man be."

The vast majority of commentaries consulted agree in viewing the sign of Jonah as being primarily the sign of Christ's resurrection. Norval Geldenhuys writes: "Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, because he appeared there as one sent by God after having been miraculously saved from the great fish (as it were raised from the dead) as a proof that he was really sent by God. So also Jesus will by His resurrection prove conclusively that He has been sent by God as the Christ, the promised Redeemer."⁵¹

The second significant reason is found in the similar passage of John 2:19 were in response to the same request by the Jews for a sign Jesus replied: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." In this statement Christ makes His resurrection the unmistakable sign of His Messiahship. By virtue of the parallelism between this text and Matthew 12:40, it seems legitimate to conclude that the sign of Jonah is essentially the same in both places, namely the sign of the resurrection, which is implicit in the first text and explicit in the second.

A third reason is provided by the early Christians' pictorial representation of the sign of Jonah. In numerous frescos of the catacombs, Christ's Resurrection is symbolically represented as Jonah being spewed out by the whale. In fact, the scene of Jonah (known as "Jonah's cycle" because it consists of different scenes) is perhaps the most common symbolic

representation of Christ's resurrection.⁵²

The catacombs indicate that the early Christians identified the sign of Jonah with the event of the resurrection and not with its time element. Paul himself indirectly confirms this view when he writes that Christ was "designated Son of God in power...by his resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:4)

In light of the above considerations we can conclude that the sign of Jonah given by Christ as a proof of His Messiahship consists primarily in His future resurrection and not in an exact 72-hour entombment.

There is also one further passage that discredits the literal interpretation of the "three days and three nights" and that is Luke's account of Christ's appearance on Sunday evening to the two disciples who were going to the village of Emmaus. Christ, whom they had not recognized caught up with them and asked them, "What is the conversation you are holding with each other as you walk?" (Luke 24:17).

The two men, surprised at Jesus' unawareness of what had happened in Jerusalem, recounted to Him "how our chief priests and rulers delivered him (Christ) to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is not the third day since this happened" (Luke 24:21).

To appreciate the significance of the last statement, notice must be taken of two facts. First, the statement was made on the "evening" of the first day when the day was "far spent" (Luke 24:29). Second, "the third day" refers specifically to the events mentioned in the

immediate context, namely, Christ's condemnation and crucifixion. It is obvious that if Christ had been crucified on a Wednesday afternoon, those two disciples could not have referred to that event on a Sunday night, saying: "It is now the third day since this happened." According to Jewish inclusive day-reckoning, it would have been the fifth day and not the third.

The second key text that Wednesday Crucifixionists appeal to is John 19:14, where the day of Christ's crucifixion is designated as "the day of Preparation of the Passover."

The conclusion drawn from John 19:14 is that Christ was crucified, not on Friday--the Preparation day for the Sabbath--but on Wednesday--the Preparation Day for the annual ceremonial Passover Sabbath, which that year supposedly fell on a Thursday. Thus, all the references to the "Preparation day" of Christ's crucifixion (Matt.27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31, 42) are interpreted in the light of John 19:14 as meaning Wednesday--the day preceding the Passover Sabbath (Thursday)--rather than Friday--the day preceding the regular seventh-day sabbath.

The three major reasons generally given in support of this conclusion are stated in the book The Time Element in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ published by the Church of God (Seventh Day): "Firstly, the day before the weekly sabbath was never called a 'preparation' in the Bible; secondly, the weekly Sabbath (as designated in the Ten Commandments) was never called or referred to as a 'high day'; and thirdly, the same writer (John) tells us...exactly which occasion this preparation day preceded. He said: 'And it was the preparation of the Passover' (John 19:14) ... Thus, after John states this 'was the

preparation of the Passover' (verse 14), we must understand...that 'the sabbath day' in verse 31 corresponds to 'the Passover' in verse 14."⁵³

An analysis of these three reasons needs to be made to determine what is meant by the "Preparation" day mentioned in all four of the Gospels.

The first reason given for interpreting "the day of Preparation" as meaning Wednesday rather than Friday is that "the day before the weekly Sabbath was never called a 'preparation' in the Bible. This reason is puzzling because it flies in the face of the irrefutable Biblical and historical usage of the term "Preparation-paraskeue" as a technical designation for "Friday." In addition to its occurrence in John 19:14, the term "Preparation-paraskeue" is used five times in the Gospels as a technical designation for "Friday" (Matt.27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31, 42).⁵⁴

Mark 15:42 provides what is perhaps the clearest definition of the expression "day of Preparation" by the statement: "It was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath." Note that in Greek the two phrases "day of Preparation" and "the day before the sabbath" are each given with a single technical term: "paraskewe-Preparation," and "pro-sabbaton-Sabbath-eve." Translated literally the text reads: "It was Preparation, that is, sabbath-eve." For the sake of clarity, Mark uses two technical terms, both of which unmistakably designate what we call "Friday."⁵⁵

Additional and conclusive evidence that "paraskeue-Preparation" is used in the Gospels to designate "Friday" and not "Wednesday" is provided by the sequence in which the days of the Passion weekend are given: "Preparation, Sabbath, first day" (Matt. 27:62; 28:1;

Mark 15:42; 16:1; Luke 24:54-55; 24:1). Both Mark and Matthew explicitly place the beginning of the first day at the end of the Sabbath (Mark 16:1; Matt. 28:1). The latter could hardly have been a Thursday Passover Sabbath, because Thursday is not followed by the first day of the week.⁵⁶

The failure to recognize the technical usage of the term "Preparation" as the name for "Friday," has caused some to misinterpret John's phrase "it was the day of Preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14) as meaning "the day of Preparation for the Passover." The latter is in fact the translation of the American Revised Standard Version. On the basis of this misunderstanding, Wednesday Crucifixionists argue that in John "the day of Preparation" means not Friday but the Wednesday preceding the Passover day, which supposedly fell on a Thursday.⁵⁷

This conclusion ignores the fact, stated by Norval Geldenhuys, "that at the time when John wrote, the Greek term Paraskeue ('preparation') was already for a long time the technical term used to indicate 'Friday,' the equivalent of the Hebrew 'erebh shabbath.'" ⁵⁸ The recognition of this fact is evident in the right translation which is found in the A.V., R.S.V., and N.I.V., namely "the day of Preparation of the Passover."

This means, as Geldenhuys explains, "that the day of the Lord's Crucifixion was the Friday of the Passover, the Friday that falls during Passover week, i.e., Passover Friday (Good Friday). It is a grammatically correct rendering and all the evidence is in favor of it."⁵⁹

The foregoing considerations make it abundantly clear that in the Gospels 'paraskeue' is a technical designation for Friday. Thus, the first reason, which claims that "the day before

the weekly Sabbath was never called a 'preparation' in the Bible" must be regarded as false, because the very opposite is true.

The second reason given for interpreting "the day of Preparation" as referring to Wednesday rather than Friday is based on John's definition of the Sabbath day which followed the Preparation day of Christ's crucifixion. John explains: "that sabbath was a high day" (John 19:31). It is argued since "the weekly Sabbath (as designated in the Ten Commandments) was never called or referred to as a 'high day,'"⁶⁰ then the latter must have been not the regular weekly Sabbath but the annual ceremonial Passover sabbath (Lev. 23:5-7).

In support of this conclusion, a third reason is given, namely, that John 19:14 "tells us exactly which occasion this preparation day preceded. He says: 'And it was the preparation of the Passover.'"⁶¹ Thus the "high day" sabbath of John 19:31 is interpreted as being the "Passover" day of John 19:14, and by the same token "the day of Preparation" of verse 31 is interpreted as being the Passover day of verse 14. Since in the year of Christ's crucifixion, Passover day supposedly fell on a Thursday, the day of preparation for the latter would obviously be a Wednesday.

The reasons given in support of this conclusion rest on three mistaken assumptions. First, it is assumed that since certain annual feasts such as the Day of Atonement are designated as "sabbaths" (Lev. 23:24), 32, 39), then all the references to the Sabbath found in the Passion narratives must refer not to the weekly Sabbath but to the annual ceremonial Passover sabbath.

This assumption is discredited by the fact that the day of atonement is designated by the compound expression 'shabbath shabbathon,' meaning "a sabbath of solemn rest" (Lev. 23:32; 16:31). But this phrase is rendered in the Septuagint by the compound Greek expression "sabbata sabbaton," which is different from the simple "sabbaton" used in the Passion narratives. It is therefore linguistically impossible to interpret the latter as a reference to the day of the Passover or to any other annual feast day, since these are never designated simply as "sabbaton."⁶²

The second mistaken assumption is that the term "high day- megale hemera," used in John 19:31, is employed in the Scripture to designate the annual Passover feast (a ceremonial sabbath), rather than a special weekly Sabbath. Unfortunately, no Biblical or extra-Biblical examples are cited to support this assumption--the reason being simply that no such examples exist.⁶³

Note should be taken of the fact that in later Rabbinical literature the seventh-day Sabbath is regarded as a "high day" if it fell on Nisan 15, since that was the first day of the Passover festival, or if it fell on Nisan 16, because on that day the omer or first sheaf of barley was offered according to Pharisaic tradition.⁶⁴

This information is important because it disproves the claim that "the weekly Sabbath was never called or referred to as a 'high day'" Rabbinical sources seem to indicate that the weekly Sabbath was called a 'high day' "when it coincided with Passover, because "Its inherent solemnity was greatly heightened by the celebration of the foremost feast of the year."⁶⁵

The third mistaken assumption is that the term "Preparation" found in John 19:14 is used as a technical designation for the day before the Passover. It is also assumed that this "Preparation" day fell on a Wednesday because Passover day allegedly fell on a Thursday.

These assumptions are false on several counts. Charles C. Torrey explains, "There is no evidence to show that that word [Preparation] was used in the time of the Gospel writers for the 'eve' of other festal days than the Sabbath."⁶⁶

An additional indication that John meant "Friday" by the phrase "Preparation of the Passover" (v.14) is provided by the usage of the same term "paraskeue" twice again in the same chapter. In verse 31 John explains that the Jews did not wish bodies to remain on the Cross "on the Sabbath, because it was Preparation" (literal translation). Here John not only mentions the Sabbath explicitly, but also refers to the preceding day by the technical term "paraskeue--Preparation" without the article, thus meaning: "because it was Friday."⁶⁷

Similarly, in verse 42, John reports that Jesus was placed in a garden tomb near the place of His crucifixion "because of the Preparation of the Jews." In this context the term "Preparation" is used again by itself, not in the generic sense, but in a temporal sense as a technical designation for Friday. What John is saying is that Jesus was buried in the garden tomb because it was near and because it was late Friday (Preparation) when the Sabbath was about to start.⁶⁸

In the light of the above considerations, the expression "the day of Preparation of the Passover" simply means "the Friday of the Passover week."

A final and equally important consideration is the fact that there is an absence of any early Christian polemic regarding the day of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. This, in itself, offers us some overwhelming proof of the trustworthiness of the traditional chronology of the crucifixion and resurrection. If indeed Christ had risen on a Saturday afternoon, seventh-day Sabbathkeepers would have capitalized on this fact to discredit the resurrection argument frequently used in early Christianity to defend Sunday-keeping. Such an argument, however, never appears in the polemic over the theological superiority of the two days.

The foregoing analysis of John 19:14, the second key text of the Wednesday crucifixion theory, has shown that such a theory is based on human fantasy and not on a Biblical fact. "The day of Preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14), simply means, "the Friday of the Passover week." Thus the Crucifixion took place on Friday and not on Wednesday.

The third key text that Wednesday Crucifixionists use for as "clinching proof" of a Saturday afternoon resurrection of Christ is supposedly found in Matthew 28:1, 5-6. The text reads:

In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher...And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Wednesday Crucifixionists believe that the Easter-Sunday resurrection is an ecclesiastical fable fabricated by "the so-called 'apostolic fathers'...to justify a pagan tradition of the Sunday resurrection of Nimrod, the pagan savior!"⁶⁹ In their view Christ's resurrection

occurred, not early Sunday morning, but late on Saturday afternoon.

The reasoning runs as follows: Since Matthew tells us that when the two Marys went to the sepulcher "in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week," they discovered that Christ had already risen; this means that His resurrection occurred in the last part of the Sabbath before the next day began.

To defend this conclusion, the dawning of the first day is interpreted as being the beginning of dusk (evening) rather than of dawn (morning). The reasoning runs as follows: "Since the Sabbath ended at sunset, it would be impossible for 'dawn' to mean morning here, for the sun would not rise until some 12 hours later. It could not be in the end of the Sabbath and morning at the same time."⁷⁰

The above interpretation cannot be accepted for two reasons. First, because the verb "to dawn" (epiphosko) literally means not "to become dusk" but "to grow light," "to dawn."⁷¹ Second, because a figurative interpretation (i.e. to become dusk) in this instance runs against the explicit statements of the other Gospels which tell us that the women came to the empty tomb at daybreak "when the sun had risen" (Mark 16:2, cf. Luke 24:1; John 20:1). Thus other solutions must be found to this apparent contradiction.

A first solution is suggested by the broader meaning of the adverb "opse" which is translated in the KJV as "in the end of" but in the RSV and most modern translations as "after." The two translations reflect the dual meanings of the term, namely "late" or "after."

In the New Testament the term 'opse' occurs only twice again, in Mark 11:19 and in

13:35. In Mark 11:19 it is hard to tell by the context whether 'opse' designated late afternoon of that day or the time after sunset, which, according to the Jewish sunset to sunset reckoning, would be the beginning of a new day.

In Mark 13:35, 'opse' (evening) clearly designates the first watch of the night, from sunset till about 9 p.m. The fact that 'opse' could mean not only the late hours of the day, but also the early hours of a new day, suggest the possibility that Matthew may have used the term as an approximate time reference simply to indicate the Sabbath was over when the women went to the sepulcher. The acceptance of approximate time references is not unreasonable in an age when watches were not the norm. Coincidentally, the crucifixion happens at the third hour (Mark 15:25) in Mark's Gospel and at the sixth hour (John 19:16) in John's. Similarly, the visit to the sepulcher occurred "while it was still dark" according to John (20:1) and "when the sun had risen" according to Mark (16:2).

Edward Lohse finds that the phrase 'opse sabbaton' of Matthew 28:1, corresponds to the Rabbinic 'mosa'e shabbat' "and thus means the night from Sabbath to the first day of the week."⁷²

There are a few more reasons that seem to reinforce the belief of an early morning visit to the tomb. First, there is no hint in any of the Gospels that the women made two visits to the sepulcher, one on Saturday afternoon and one on Sunday morning. Second, there was a prevailing Jewish restriction on Sabbath travel (Acts 1:12), which would have precluded any visit to the tomb on Sabbath afternoon from a distance greater than 2/3 of a mile. Since Mary Magdalene lived in Bethany, a distance of 2 miles from Jerusalem (Matt. 21:1), and

since she presumably spent the Sabbath at home (Luke 23:56), she could hardly have traveled to the tomb before the end of the Sabbath.

The same must be said for the evening after the close of the Sabbath. In the East people in general, let alone women, do not travel in the darkness of night, particularly to a burial place "to see the sepulcher." It is far more true to life for the women to have traveled from Bethany to Calvary early on Sunday morning as indicated by the Gospels (Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, John 20:1).

At Passover time the astronomical morning twilight began in the latitude of Jerusalem about 4:00 a.m. and the sun rose at about 5:30 a.m. This means that if Mary Magdalene arose about the time it began to get light (John 20:1), and walked from Bethany to Christ's sepulcher, she would have arrived by sunrise.⁷³

Several other difficulties arise if the resurrection and the visit of the women to the tomb are placed "late on the Sabbath day." The many events which are described in Matthew 28:2-15 and attached to the time designated in verse 1 could hardly have taken place "late on a Sabbath day." For example, it is hard to believe that the Risen Christ would tell the women on a late Sabbath afternoon, "Go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee" (Matt. 28:10) It would have been against prevailing customs to start a trip late on Sabbath afternoon.

Furthermore, it is difficult to see how the following events could have taken place on a late Sabbath afternoon: the guards going to the city to inform the chief priests about what happened (v. 11); the chief priests assembling the Council to decide what action should be taken (v. 12); the Council paying the soldiers to fabricate the story of the stealing of Christ's

body by His disciples (vv. 12-13).

More decisive still is the instruction given the soldiers by the chief priests: "Tell people, His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep" (v.13). In view of the fact that the soldiers had been stationed at the sepulcher during the light hours of the Sabbath day (Matt. 27:62-66), they could hardly have told the people on Saturday evening that the disciples stole Christ's body by night, when no night had yet intervened between the beginning of their vigil and the resurrection.

In the light of the above considerations on the language and context of Matt. 28:1, this passage offers no support whatsoever to the view of a late Sabbath afternoon resurrection and a visit of the women to the sepulcher.

Thus, no support is given to the Wednesday Crucifixion and Saturday Resurrection theory.

The Tuesday Last Supper-Friday Crucifixion Theory

Both the Synoptics and John preserve memories of the chronology of the calendar of Qumran that Jesus (apparently) followed in His last days. Many have theorized that simultaneously there was adherence to different religious calendars by Jews in Palestine in the first century C.E. Our first concrete proof of that came with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran in 1947. Clearly those who produced the Scrolls (identified by most as Essenes) adhered to the solar calendar supposed in the Book of Jubilees, an ancient calendar that had been replaced in the Jerusalem Temple, probably in the second century B.C.E. by what we customarily think of as the standard Jewish lunar calendar. The calendar

of Qumran, based on a rough solar year of 364 days with intercalculated additions, was ingeniously permanent so that feasts fell on the same weekday every year. For example, on the presumption that days are reckoned as beginning in the evening, the 15th of Nisan (the date of the paschal meal) would always begin Tuesday night and continue through Wednesday daytime. Using this adaptation, a harmonizing arrangement of Gospel details was proposed to show how Jesus might have followed the Qumran (Essene) solar calendar. In this theory the solar calendar is reflected in the time references of the Synoptics, while Johannine indications were governed by the corresponding dates of the official calendar followed by the Jerusalem authorities.⁷⁴ (see Chart 5, page 161)

Arguments advanced in defense of this theory are:

1. It allows more time for events that seem impossibly crowded in the Gospels.
2. It meets the mishnaic demands requiring trials over more than one day for a capital offense with an interstice before sentencing.
3. It enables the anointing of Jesus by the women at Bethany to be both "six days before the Passover" (John 12:1) and only two or three days before Passover (Mark 14:1,3).
4. There is a Christian tradition that supports a memory of the Last Supper on Tuesday evening, especially in Didascalia Apostolorum 21.⁷⁵

However, many books and articles have been written that dismiss this theory, and today it is not widely accepted.

Two Methods of Reckoning Days

What has become apparent over the course of this study is that there may well be two ways of reckoning a "day." This discovery on my part is not an original thought, but it definitely is a thought relegated to the background of common knowledge. In my own church we have never been given the liberty to suppose that a day, and hence a Sabbath, might be calculated in any other way. Therefore, the impact of this part of this study not only has a significant importance in trying to harmonise the apparent contradiction of Matthew 28:1, but it also will be a surprise for many Sabbath-keeping Adventists. It is a surprise that is likely to be treated as an antagonism rather than an aspect of our faith that might unify us with other Christians.

The question that needs to be asked now is: How was the day reckoned in Biblical times. Was it from sunset to sunset, from sunrise to sunrise, or both? Three major views have been discovered.

The first view, expressed by P.J.Heawood⁷⁶ and U. Cassuto⁷⁷ maintains that the sunrise reckoning was the standard method from creation until the beginning of Christianity. However, U Cassuto contends that "in regard to the festivals and appointed times, the Torah ordains that they shall be observed also on the night of the preceding day."⁷⁸

The second view, upheld by S. Zeitlin⁷⁹ and R. de Vaux⁸⁰ holds that the sunrise reckoning was used in conjunction with the solar calendar. Jacob Z. Lauterbach differs slightly by placing the introduction of the sunset reckoning later on at the beginning of the Greek period.⁸¹

A variation of both theories has been presented by G. Barrois,⁸² G. von Rad,⁸³ and Roger Beckwith,⁸⁴ who maintain that both methods of day reckoning coexisted side by side in Biblical times.

The Biblical evidence for the day beginning and ending at sunset is abundant and explicit. The outstanding examples are:

Leviticus 23:32. The instruction given regarding the observance of the Day of Atonement: "It shall be to you a sabbath of solumne rest, and you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your sabbath."

Two important points should be noted regarding this text. First, the law in this text regards not the observance of the seventh day Sabbath as such, but the Day of Atonement. While both festivals were undoubtedly observed "from evening to evening," the manner of their observance was radically different. The Day of Atonement was a day of penance and fasting ("you shall afflict yourselves"), whereas the Sabbath was a day of delight and celebration (Is. 58:13-14). Second, Leviticus 23:32 is the concluding statement of instructions given from verses 27 to 32 on how the Day of Atonement was to be observed "on the tenth day of the seventh month" (v.27). Verse 32, however, explains that this day is to be observed as "a sabbath of solemn rest...on the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening."

This last verse poses a problem because it changes the Day of Atonement from "the tenth day" (v.27) to "the ninth day." This change has led Solomon Zeitlin to conclude that

the fasting of the Day of Atonement lasted two days, the 9th and 10th of Tishri.⁸⁵ This explanation is unacceptable, however, because several texts speak of the Day of Atonement as being exclusively "one day," namely the 10th of Tishri (Ex.30:10; Lev. 16:29; 25:9; Num. 29:7-11).

The plausible explanation is that verse 32 does not intend to change the date of the Day of Atonement from the 10th to the 9th day of the month, but rather, as Jack Finegan explains, to "simply define what the tenth day of the month was at a time when the day had come to be reckoned as beginning in the evening: the tenth day of the month is the day which begins on the evening of the ninth and continues to the following evening."⁸⁶

This clarification was apparently needed because, as Finegan points out, "in making the shift from a morning reckoning to an evening reckoning, the 'day' was in fact moved back so that it began a half day earlier than had been the case previously."⁸⁷ To avoid any misunderstanding, the verse explains with utmost precision that the tenth day, according to the sunset reckoning, began "on the ninth day of the month beginning at evening" and it was to be kept "from evening to evening."

The conclusion, then, is that Leviticus 23:32 does provide explicit evidence for the sunset reckoning, but it also suggests--by anticipating the beginning of the 10th day to the evening of the 9th--that the sunrise reckoning was also apparently in use.

Another noteworthy example of sunset reckoning is:

Nehemiah 13:19. "When it began to be dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be

opened until after the Sabbath."

This verse contains a significant emphasis in that Nehemiah commanded the doors to be shut "when it began to be dark." What this presumably means is that Nehemiah ordered the gates to be closed on Friday earlier than usual.

The gates were generally closed when it was completely dark. This is evidenced by the story of the two spies who entered Jericho in the evening and who, according to Rahab's response to the king's guards, left "when the gate was to be closed at dark" (Joshua 2:5). Contrary to prevailing custom of closing the gates when it was completely dark, Nehemiah ordered the gates to be closed "when it began to be dark (salal)," that is, at the beginning of dusk.

The obvious reason for anticipating the shutting of the gates is the fact that, as noted by H.R. Stroes, "the Sabbath was drawing near (with the evening!). This text seems to me an almost conclusive indication that the Sabbath, at least post-exile, began in the evening."⁸⁸

The sunset reckoning is suggested by two texts where the evening is mentioned before the morning. In the Bible the morning is generally mentioned before the evening, because this is the order in which they came in the waking and working day. In the law of the continual burnt offering, for example, the morning sacrifice is mentioned before the evening sacrifice (Ex. 29:39-41), obviously because the former marked the beginning of the daily priestly ministrations at the tabernacle.

An exception to morning-evening sequence is found in Daniel 8:14, 26, where the

interruption of the continual burnt offering is said to extend to "2300 evenings and mornings." Another exception is found in Psalm 55:17, where the psalmist says that he will utter his prayer "evening and morning and at noon." In both instances the order is irregular and seems to suggest the hour of the evening sacrifice and prayer, that is, sunset time when the new day began.

Another indication of sunset reckoning can be seen in those passages where the "night" is mentioned before the "day." The sequence is less frequent in the Old Testament than the sequence in which the "day" is mentioned before the "night."

Esther, for example, sent word to Mordicai, to tell the Jews to "neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day" (Esther 4:16). Similarly Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple that God's "eyes may be open night and day toward this house" (1 Kings 8:29).⁸⁹

In the New Testament examples such as these are more numerous and more widely distributed.⁹⁰ Since in most instances there is no contextual reason why the night should be mentioned before the day, it seems fair to assume that the order suggests a reckoning where the day begins and ends at nightfall.

The sunset reckoning is implied also in many passages of the Mosaic Law where the ceremonial uncleanness terminates at evening. For example, Leviticus 22:4-7 states that "whoever touches anything unclean through contact with the dead...shall be unclean until the evening...when the sun is down he shall be clean."

The reasoning for terminating the period of uncleanness at the sunset could hardly

have been because of reluctance to exclude anyone from the camp at night, since in some cases uncleanness lasted seven or more days (Num. 19:19). The fact that even in the latter cases the uncleanness ends at sunset, suggests that the day terminated at sunset.

Perhaps the most explicit evidence of the widespread use of the sunset reckoning at the time of Christ is provided by the fact that the people of Capernaum waited on the Sabbath until sunset to bring their sick persons to Jesus. Luke writes: "Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them (Luke 4:40; cf. Mark 1:32).

The fact that people would wait for the end of the Sabbath at the setting of the sun to bring their sick persons to Christ provides unmistakable evidence that the common people reckoned the Sabbath from sunset to sunset.

John corroborates the use of the sunset reckoning when he writes, "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, when it was still dark" (John 20:1). The fact that John speaks of the first day when referring to the dark hours before sunrise, clearly indicates that he is reckoning the day from sunset, or less probably, from mid-night, according to the official Roman reckoning. In either case, the sunrise reckoning is to be excluded.

Josephus offers explicit evidence of the prevailing sunset reckoning in New Testament times when he describes how one of the priests stood on an elevated place in Jerusalem, called Pastophoria, and "gave a signal beforehand, with a trumpet, at the beginning of every seventh day, in the evening twilight, and also at the evening when they

were to leave off work, and when they were to work again."⁹¹ In this statement, Josephus explains with remarkable clarity how the Sabbath began and ended in the evening with the priest's blowing of the trumpet.

The evidence for a sunrise reckoning in Bible times is not as explicit and abundant as that found for sunset reckoning, yet it cannot be ignored. The evidence can be grouped in four different categories.

One type of evidence for the sunrise reckoning is found in the laws regarding the thanksgiving and votive offerings. The former law prescribes that "the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering; he shall not leave any of it until the morning" (Lev. 7:15).

The same law is repeated more explicitly in Leviticus 22:29-30: "When you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord...it shall be eaten on the same day, you shall leave none of it until morning." The insistence of the eating of the sacrifice "on the same day" before the arrival of the "morning," implies that the next morning marked the beginning of the next day. This suggests that the day began in the morning, because as Roland de Vaux points out, "had the day begun in the evening the wording would have ordered the meat to be eaten before the evening."⁹²

This conclusion seems supported also by the legislation regarding the votive offering given immediately after that of the thanksgiving offering. The law says: "But if the sacrifice of his offering is a votive offering or a freewill offering it shall be eaten on the day he offers sacrifice, and on the morrow what remains of it shall be eaten" (Lev. 7:16). In this case the

flesh of the sacrifice could be eaten both on the day of the sacrifice and "on the morrow." By virtue of the parallelism with the preceding law, the "morrow" must begin in the morning.

What the two laws are saying is that while the flesh of the thanksgiving offering was to be eaten only on the same day the sacrifice was made, that is, until the morning when the new day began, the flesh of the votive sacrifice could be eaten also "on the morrow," that is, after the morning which marked the end of the day in which the sacrifice was made. Both laws, then, suggest that the morning marked the end of a day and the beginning of a new day.

A second type of evidence supporting the sunrise reckoning seems implied also in the Passover legislation of Exodus 12. The law prescribes that the Paschal lamb must be slaughtered on the "fourteenth day of this month...in the evening" (v. 6) and must be eaten "that night" (v. 8) with "unleavened bread and bitter herbs" (v. 8), leaving none of it "until the morning" (v. 10). Later in the same chapter the night during which the Passover lamb was eaten with the unleavened bread is explicitly designated as "the fourteenth day of the month" (v. 18).

What this means is that in Exodus 12 both the slaying of the Passover lamb, which took place "between the two evenings" (Ex. 12:6--that is to say, as Josephus explains, between three and five o'clock in the afternoon),⁹³ and the eating of the lamb with unleavened bread, which took place on the following night, are placed on the same fourteenth day of the month.

This time reference can not be harmonized with the sunset reckoning, according to which the night following the sacrifice of the passover was not the 14th but the 15th day of

Nisan. In fact, in several passages which reflect the sunset reckoning, the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is explicitly placed "on the fifteenth day" (Lev. 23:5; Num. 28:16).

According to the sunrise reckoning, however, both the slaying of the lamb and the eating of it with unleavened bread would take place on the 14th day, because the night following the slaying of the lamb would still be the 14th day until sunrise. This method, then, seems to be implied in Exodus 12, because, speaking of "the 14th day of the month" it explicitly says: "And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt" (v. 17; cf. vv. 18, 42, 51).

Jacob Z. Lautebach observes that "if they came out at night, that is the night following the fourteenth day, and it is said on the very same day, that is on the 14th day, they were brought out, it clearly indicates that the night following the fourteenth day is still part of that day."⁹⁴

These considerations suggest that in Exodus 12 the sunrise reckoning is used, since the events of the night following the slaying of the Passover lamb, namely, the eating of the lamb with unleavened bread and the departure from Egypt, are both placed on the 14th day. Elsewhere these events are explicitly placed "on the fifteenth day of the first month" (Num. 33:3; cf 28:17; Lev. 23:5), thus indicating the use of the sunset reckoning.

The sunrise reckoning of the Passover in Exodus 12 seems reflected also in Mark 14:12 (cf. Matt 26:16) where the slaying of the Passover lamb and the feast of Unleavened Bread are both placed on the same day: "On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they

sacrifice the Passover lamb" (v. 12). This statement suggests a sunrise reckoning, according to which, as Jack Finegan explains, "the day when the Passover lamb was slain and the day when the unleavened bread was eaten were indeed the same day, as Mark 14:12 states."⁹⁵

Some commentators explain Mark's identification of "the first day of Unleavened Bread" with the day "when they sacrificed the Passover lamb" as a loose temporal designation, because technically, according to the sunset reckoning, the two events occurred on two consecutive days.

To support this explanation, appeal is made to the statement of Josephus which says: "We keep a feast for eight days, which is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread."⁹⁶ The reasoning is that Mark, like Josephus, reckoned the two feasts together as beginning on the 14th day of Nisan, presumably because the 14th day was seen as the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because on that day all the leaven was removed from the house in preparation for the feast itself.

While it is true that Josephus speaks loosely of the feast of Unleavened bread as lasting eight days, presumably because he includes the search and removal of leaven which took place on the 14th day, he clearly differentiates between the two feasts when he describes the time of their celebration. He writes: "On the fourteenth day of the lunar month ...the law ordained that we should every year slay that sacrifice which...was called Passover.... The Feast of Unleavened Bread succeeds that of the Passover, and falls on the 15th day of the month, and continues seven days."⁹⁷

In view of the existing distinction between the two days on which the two feasts

began, the dating of them on the same day found in Mark 14:12 suggests the possible use of the sunrise reckoning.

A third type of evidence for the sunrise reckoning is suggested by the mention of "day" before "night" which occurs in approximately 50 references. For example, speaking of the Jews who were plotting to kill Paul, Acts 9:24 says: "They were watching the gates day and night, to kill him." Similarly, Luke 18:7 says: "And will not God vindicate His elect, who cry to Him day and night?" The same order occurs in Revelation 12:10 where it speaks of Satan "who accuses them [the saints] day and night before our God."

Obviously the order in which "day and night" are given is not necessarily indicative of sunrise reckoning, because the context may supply a reason why the day is mentioned before the night. No contextual reason, however, can be detected in examples such as those given above. It would thus seem plausible to conclude that this order is suggested by the fact that the day was seen as beginning with sunrise. It must be added that the reverse order occurs also, though less frequently. This may suggest the possible coexistence of two methods of day reckoning: sunrise to sunrise and sunset to sunset.

A fourth type of evidence suggests a sunrise reckoning is provided by those passages in which the night is reckoned with the previous day. In 1 Samuel 19:11, for example, Michal warns her husband David, after Saul's messengers surrounded their house, saying: "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed" (cf. 1 Sam. 28:8, 9, 25). The fact that at night Michal referred to the next morning as "tomorrow" clearly suggests that the new day began in the morning.

In Genesis 19:34, the older daughter of Lot, after sleeping with her father during the night, says to her sister "on the next day...'Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him'...." Here too, the new day seems to begin with the next morning because the night is reckoned with the preceding day.

In the story of the Levite of Ephriam we are told that he stayed four days with his father-in-law. On the fifth day the father-in-law says to him: "Behold, now the day has waned toward evening; pray tarry all night...and tomorrow you shall arise early in the morning for your journey, and go home" (Judges 19:9). The fact that the morning following the night is referred to as "tomorrow" suggests that the new day here begins at sunrise.

Another example is provided by the story of the gathering of the quails. Numbers 11:32, says: "And the people rose all that day, and all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quails. "This passage is less decisive because the expression "the next day" could simply mean "the next daytime," since in Hebrew the term "day--yom" is used also to designate daytime as distinct from nighttime (Gen. 1:5).

Other examples occur in the New Testament. Mark 11:11, for example, states that Jesus "entered Jerusalem and went to the temple; and when he had looked round at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve." Verse 12 continues the narrative by telling "on the following day" Jesus returned from Bethany to Jerusalem. It would seem that here the new day has begun with the morning following the preceding evening.

Acts 4:3 speaks of Peter and John being arrested and put "in custody until the

morrow, for it was already evening." In Acts 23:32 the soldiers who marched through the night to bring Paul to Antipatris "on the morrow they returned to the barracks, leaving the horsemen to go on with him." In both instances, the night belongs to the preceding day, suggesting that the day began and ended at daybreak.

The day appears to begin at sunrise also in Mark 16:2 which says: "And very early on the first day of the week they [the two Marys] went to the tomb when the sun had risen." According to the sunset reckoning the "very early" part of the first day of the week would be the hours immediately following the end of the Sabbath at sunset--what we would call Saturday night. Mark, however, takes pains to explain what he means by "very early on the first day of the week," namely, not the early hours of the night immediately following the close of the Sabbath at sunset, but "when the sun had risen."

Mark repeatedly throughout his Gospel defines his time references by a qualifying clause (see 1:32, 35; 4:35; 13:24; 14:30; 15:42) to be sure to be understood by his Gentile readers. In this instance he must have felt that a clarification was needed because among his Gentile readers there were different systems of day reckoning.

Pliny sums up the different methods of day reckoning existing in New Testament times, saying, "the Babylonians count the period between two sunrises, the Athenians that between two sunsets, the Umbrians from midday to midday, the common people everywhere from dawn to dark, the Roman priests and the authorities who fixed the official day, and also the Egyptians and Hipparchus, the period from midnight to midnight."⁹⁸

In light of the various ways of reckoning the day among different people, Mark saw

the need to clarify what he meant by "very early on the first day of the week," namely, "when the sun had risen." This time reference presupposes a sunrise reckoning because according to the sunset reckoning, by the time the sun had risen it was the middle and not the early part of the first day.

The foregoing evidence for the sunrise reckoning provides a plausible explanation for the apparent contradiction present in the time references of Matthew 28:1. If Matthew, like Josephus, sometimes used the sunrise to sunrise reckoning, then his statement that the two Marys came to see the sepulchre "in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week" (Matt. 28:1; KJV), makes perfect sense, because the end of the Sabbath would indeed mark the dawning of the first day of the week.

A number of scholars have argued in favor of this explanation. Julian Morgenstern writes regarding Matthew 28:1: "There it is explicitly stated that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb of Jesus late on the Sabbath day, just as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week. Inasmuch as these last moments of the night, just preceding the dawn are called 'late on the Sabbath day,' and the first day of the week does not begin until dawn, it is manifest that the day is still reckoned here from dawn to dawn."⁹⁹

Roger T. Beckwith also concludes that Matthew 28:1 may provide "an explicit endorsement" of the sunrise reckoning. He writes: "According to one interpretation, the verse states that the women came to the Lord's tomb 'late on the Sabbath day, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week.' If this is right (and opse with the genitive certainly can mean 'late on'), what Josephus says implicitly of the Passover is here said explicitly of the

Sabbath, that it ends at daybreak.¹⁰⁰

Beckwith, however, also finds indications in Matthew for the sunset reckoning, and thus he concludes by suggesting the possibility that "the two reckonings were not in rivalry with each other, but could co-exist harmoniously within the mind of a single writer."¹⁰¹ Thus, determining an exact day is not easy.

CHAPTER 5

THE YEAR PROBLEM

The Year of the Crucifixion/Resurrection

In ordinary dating the Romans used the formula "in the consulship of ----- and -----," naming each year after the two consuls, the joint chief magistrates of the republic, who were elected yearly. Under the empire the consuls still held office annually, from January 1. Surviving consular lists enable us to locate each consular year in the B.C.E. and C.E. scale. Until 23 B.C.E. Augustus legalized his control of the state by holding the consulship every year with various "colleagues" who actually had no power. At first he reckoned his years by the number of times he had been consul. Then he relinquished the consulship and changed to what became the official method of designating the years of the emperor--by the number of years he had held the tribunician power, that is, the power (though not the office) of tribune. Such years were reckoned as beginning on the anniversary of the first bestowal of the tribunician power.¹⁰²

In the Eastern provinces and dependent kingdoms of the Roman empire the customs of dating by the numbered calendar years of each reign had so long prevailed that the peoples of the east continued to apply this method, in their respective local calendars, to Roman emperors.

The local differences can best be explained by going back to Augustus. The setting

up of his rule over the empire was not a single event accomplished in a day. Generally his reign is dated from 27 B.C.E. because in January of that year he was given the honorific name of Augustus and his chief constitutional powers were voted to him by the Senate. But in the East his rule was dated from his conquests there. In Syria and neighboring provinces it was regarded as beginning in 31 B.C.E. with the Battle of Actium on September 2, the decisive point at which he won control of the empire by his defeat of Anthony. In Egypt his reign was counted from the death of Cleopatra in 30 B.C.E., for he was regarded as her successor, by right of conquest, as King of Egypt. There his reign was reckoned by Egyptian calendar years from Thoth 1, 30 B.C.E.¹⁰³

A regnal-year dating formula, such as that used by Luke, "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius" was apparently never used by Tiberius himself in Rome and would depend for its meaning on the particular local calendar used by the writer: that is, on whether he was counting the year from the Egyptian Thoth 1 (always, after the time of Augustus, in August), or from the Jewish Nisan or Tishri. During and after the Hellenistic period local Syrian calendars varied even from city to city.¹⁰⁴

For the New Testament, the Jewish reckoning of years is important, but nothing is known of Jewish dating from contemporary first-century dated documents. Palestinian coins carrying regnal-year numbers of Roman emperors are known, but there is no double dating or other synchronism by which the B.C.E. or C.E. Julian year can be located. However, the only available indications, from Jewish literature, imply that in the time of Christ the regnal years of the local Jewish kings were reckoned from the spring. We can also find that Josephus, writing in the first century, reckoning the years of Herod the Great from the spring, and also

by the "non-accession-year" method. (By this reckoning the calendar year that had begun as the last year of the old reign ended as the year 1 of the new king, and thus carried two numbers.)¹⁰⁵ This tradition of the same year method is also preserved in the Talmud, which states that Nisan 1 was the New Year for the Israelite kings (but Tishri 1, in the autumn, for foreign kings as reckoned by the Jews).¹⁰⁶

The same chapter that contains the phrase "about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23), contains the only definite regnal-year date in the New Testament: John the Baptist came from the wilderness "into all the country of Jordan, preaching," just preceding the baptism of Jesus, in "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (Luke 3:1). Luke also places this event during the administration of Pontius Pilate (C.E. 26-36), of Herod (Antipas) (4 B.C.E.-C.E.39), of Philip (4 B.C.E. - 33/34 C.E.), and Lysanias (exact dates unknown, but about this time), and the priesthood of Annas (c. C.E. 6-14) and Caiaphas, (c. C.E. 18-36).¹⁰⁷ This combination of dates assigns the date of Luke's event to C.E. 26-34. But only the 15th year of Tiberius can limit to a specific year.

The identification of this regnal year depends on Luke's method of dating, since the years of an emperor's reign were counted by various subject peoples in their own differing local calendars, not by a uniform official reckoning. Officially, Tiberius, like Augustus, was "princeps" and imperator, never king, and "the fifteenth year of the reign" was not a Roman dating formula at all. The Roman date would likely have been expressed as the 29th (or 30th) year of Tiberius' tribunician power, or a consular year. Luke's phrase was an Eastern one, current in the provinces that had formerly reckoned their dates by the regnal years of their own kings and overlords, each in its own calendar. What calendar year did

Luke use? Did he count Tiberius' year 1 the year in which the king came to the throne, or the first full calendar year beginning at the next New Year's day? Did he count the beginning of the reign from Augustus' death or from a coregency beginning earlier? We must know all this in order to answer the question: What did Luke mean when he said "fifteenth year"? Unfortunately we do not know all this. From the source evidence available the answer can have, at best, only a high probability of accuracy.

Now, since we have so little success in determining the year of the start of Christ's ministry, one other way of reckoning seems left open to us, and that is to look at Christ's ministry, crucifixion and resurrection and see if we can harmonize some of the known activities, especially on particular days, with the years that will provide a fit. But before we get too excited, one more wee disagreement needs to be paid homage. Along with everything else, there is no agreement as to the length of Christ's ministry. No one of the various harmonies of the Gospels can claim complete proof for its chronology. Some assign one year, others two and over, others three and a half, some even seven years to the period. Specifically because of the information presented in Chapter 9 and the Bible narratives of John's three Passovers (John 2:13; 6:4; 12:1;) and one other feast unnamed (John 5:1) but interpreted to be likewise a Passover, this investigator is a proponent of a 3 1/2 year time-line for the ministry of Christ, beginning it in the autumn of C.E. 27 and ending it in the spring of C.E. 31.

I have attempted to confirm that Jesus died on Friday and rose on the following Sunday. The day of the month most generally held by scholars for that Friday is what is called the 14th of Nisan by the Jewish leaders who accused Jesus to Pilate. The topic still to

be discussed is the year of the crucifixion/resurrection, to which the New Testament gives no clue except what can be derived from the statement about the 15th year of Tiberius and from the length of Jesus' ministry. Contemporary non-Biblical history furnishes no independent evidence. The nearest approach to a date is the bare statement of Tacitus that "Christus, founder of the hated Christians, was put to death in the reign of Tiberius by Pontius Pilate" (Annals xv.44). The early church generally agreed that Jesus was crucified on Nisan 14 (a few said the 15th), but most soon lost track of computing the Jewish-calendar date. There was, from the earliest writings, a wide disagreement on the year. According to one tradition the date was March 25 in the consulship of the Gemini (C.E.29); another identified the darkness of the cross with a solar eclipse mentioned by a pagan annalist, Phlegon, as occurring in Ol.202.4 (the 4th year of the 202d Olympiad, C.E.32/33); there was also a tradition in some quarters that C.E. 31 was the year of the Crucifixion.¹⁰⁸

Of approximately one hundred scholars examined regarding their theories on the year of Jesus' death, and thus the year of the resurrection, the dates range from C.E. 21 to C.E. 36.

They break down approximately as follows:

C.E. 21 = 1	C.E. 29 = 13	C.E. 33 = 24
C.E. 24 = 1	C.E. 30 = 53	C.E. 34 = 1
C.E. 26 = 1 - 3	C.E. 31 = 1 - 3	C.E. 35 = 0
C.E. 27 = 1 - 3	C.E. 32 = 1 - 3	C.E. 36 = 1 - 3
C.E. 28 = 1 - 3		

End Note¹⁰⁹

The A.D. 29 date, generally connected to the theory of a one-year ministry, offers no possibility of a Friday, Nisan 14 crucifixion; the 14th would fall on Saturday, Sunday, or beyond. A solar eclipse always occurring at new moon could not have occurred at a Passover

(which is a full-moon feast), nor can an eclipse last so long. The modern tendency has been to attempt to settle the crucifixion date by computing the lunar date backward from modern astronomical tables for the most likely year between 30 and 33 that would allow a Friday 14th of Nisan. The date is limited to a time within Pilate's term of office (A.D. 26-36) and somewhat after Tiberius' 15th year, and to a Jewish year in which the day for slaying the Passover lamb fell on a Friday. Consequently, the problem has come to be regarded as a search for a Friday 14th of the Jewish month Nisan, the lunar month beginning with the crescent moon of either March or April. Since astronomical evidence has been claimed for different dates, its validity must be discussed here, though the variation in methods and results indicates that extreme caution is to be observed in basing a conclusion on astronomical and calendrical calculations alone. Such computation can fix dates on specific eclipse records or other exact data, but new-moon computations can merely exclude a date completely if it places a month in an obviously impossible relationship to the moon's phases. A lunar date computed as possible is not thereby proved to be the actual date; there are too many uncertainties.

Possible Years for a Friday Crucifixion:

By modern methods of calculating the astronomical new moon and estimating the interval between that and the first day of the lunar month, it may be concluded that a Friday 14th could have occurred in three possible lunar months between C.E. 28 and 33.

- a. The month beginning one day and about 22 hours after the new moon of March, C.E. 30 (approximately March 25), if reckoned from the visibility of the of the crescent (the 14th being Friday, April 7).

- b. The month beginning three days and about 4 hours after the new moon of April, C.E. 31 (approximately April 14), if reckoned by a somewhat longer but possible interval after the astronomical new moon (the 14th being Friday, April 27).
- c. The month beginning one day and about five hours after the new moon of March, C.E. 33 (approximately March 21, with the 14th on April 3) if this unusually early date could introduce Nisan, rather than Adar II.¹¹⁰

No other years in this period offer a possible Friday Passover day.

C.E. 33: an Untenable Date

In the past the long-accepted date of the crucifixion was C.E. 33 (set forth as early as the 13th century by Roger Bacon). This has appeared in the Ussher-Lloyd marginal dates in many KJV Bibles. However, the date is seldom advocated today. It was originally based on the assumption that the Jewish calendar of the first century C.E. was computed exactly the same as the revised form of that calendar that was introduced several centuries after Christ and has come down through the Middle Ages to modern times. This later Jewish calendar allows the Passover to come much earlier (at times as early as March 15). (See chapt. 6 on the Jewish calendar.) The possible Friday 14th in C.E. 33 would require Nisan to begin March 21, four days ahead of the earliest Nisan 1 of the Babylonian cycle in that period, and earlier than Elephantine papyri (5th century B.C.E.) would indicate for older Jewish practice. Hence the month beginning on March 21, C.E. 33, would be expected to be an Adar II.¹¹¹

If that month was Nisan, one of two alternatives is true: either the whole Jewish cycle was then running earlier than the Babylonian, or that was an exceptionally early Nisan, out of

line with the usual cycle. Such an unusual cycle would begin Nisan in March most of the time, and in some years not merely four days ahead of the expected limit, but much earlier than that; therefore such a cycle would be out of harmony with the offering of the wave sheaf, which was part of the Nisan festivals as long as the temple stood. If the Nisan of C.E. 33 was an irregular month, earlier than normal for the fixed cycle, then in the absence of positive documentary evidence this date for the crucifixion becomes mere conjecture. Since there is no evidence, to support either premise, C.E. 33 should not be considered unless it offers the only possible Friday 14th in the whole period, and such is not the case. The lunar month beginning in March, C.E. 33 should, from all the evidence, be an Adar II. In that case Nisan came a month later, in which the 14th was not on a Friday. This evidence is so strong against C.E. 33 as to rule it out of serious consideration. This reduces the choices to C.E. 30 or 31.

The Choice Between 30 and 31

The most popular choice by far, in this century, has been C.E. 30. Though some who reckon two or even three years as the duration of Christ's ministry have held this date, a 3½-year duration cannot be reckoned as ending in C.E. 30 without supposing a co-regency reckoning for the 15th year of Tiberius. Therefore the more recent exponents of this date have tended to advocate a duration of a one year ministry or a little more. The basis has generally been the lunar computation of Friday, April 7, as the 14th of Nisan. Further, the fact that this date harmonizes with the Babylonian 19-year cycle (as developed in the 4th century B.C.E.), whereas 33 does not, has been taken in some quarters as decisive evidence in favor of 30.

A modern New Testament scholar points out this uncertainty, citing the most confident modern exponent of that date: "A.T. Olmstead identified the day of Jesus' crucifixion as Friday, April 7, 30 C.E. - probably correctly *if the Jerusalem Jews followed the Babylonian calendar in reckoning Passover*"¹¹² However, the year 30 rests on two assumptions: (1) that Nisan in that year was the lunar month beginning in March, not in April; and (2) that the month began with the observation of the crescent on the evening of March 24. Neither of these assumptions can be proved.

Not all scholars accept the two basic assumptions on which the date C.E. 30 depends. Some of them, employing different but equally valid premises and marshalling evidence that seems to them equally, if not more reasonable, reach the conclusion that C.E. 31, rather than C.E. 30, is the more probable year. In the absence of actual documentary evidence as to the Jewish method of computing the calendar in the early 1st century, it seems unsafe to assume that the Jewish Nisan in C.E. 30 was necessarily the lunar month beginning in March. It is pointed out later in the discussion of months that in C.E. 30 the Jewish calendar in all probability did not follow the Babylonian cycle, which would begin Nisan with the March moon, but that there is equal if not greater probability that the Jews began that Nisan in April. This April Nisan would not have had a Friday Passover. It is further pointed out that C.E. 31 is astronomically possible if Nisan in that year began after more than a minimum interval from the astronomical new moon--a day or two later than some have calculated. Likewise it is noted that an intentional delay of one day for partisan reasons may be implied in the difference between the Thursday night observance of the Passover supper by Christ and His disciples and the Friday evening observance by the Jewish leaders who took Jesus

before Pilate--a difference ascribed by critics to a discrepancy between the accounts of the Synoptic Gospels and John.

Those who present evidence that may point to C.E. 31 frankly admit that, in the present state of knowledge, the case for that year cannot be established by astronomical and calendrical proof. But they consider it proper to call attention to facts that indicate a equal lack of certainty for C.E.30, and the advisability of refraining from any dogmatic assertion in behalf of either year. The conclusion may be reached that 31, or some other year, can be considered astronomically possible or probable if certain conditions are assumed. But in the absence of source data establishing the now unknown conditions, calendar computation must be subordinated to other factors in making a decision as to the more probable year. The advocates of 31 have generally reckoned a 3 1/2-year ministry from late C.E. 27, and have taken into account the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of "the midst of the week" (Dan. 9:27).

The Argument for 30 C.E. - Its Problems

In C.E. 30 the lunar month began presumably on March 25, possibly late enough for Nisan. On the other hand it was possibly early enough to have been designated Adar II, the 13th month. March 25th may have been considered too near the borderline to allow a definite decision on this point without specific evidence.

Those who believe that the Jewish calendar of that time coincided with the Babylonian are sure that C.E. 30 was the year of the crucifixion because of their certainty that in that year the Babylonian Nisan, the first month (corresponding to the Jewish Nisan),

was the lunar month beginning in March--one of the three possible lunar months in which the 14th could be on Friday. Nisan would not have begun in April that year; C.E. 30/31 was a 13-month year in the Babylonian calendar, according to the fixed cycle that was developed in the 4th century B.C.E. and still used in astronomical texts through Jesus' day, and a 13th month year always began in March. If the Jews likewise began Nisan with that same March new moon, then Friday, April 7, C.E. 30 could have been the 14th of Nisan, the Passover day. If, on the other hand, the Jews repeated Adar in C.E. 30, then Friday, April 7, would have been the 14th of Adar II, not of Nisan. If so, the Passover day of C.E. 30 would have come a month later, and so not on Friday. In that case C.E. 30 could not have been the year of the crucifixion; this would leave 31 as the best possibility.

Accordingly, the alternative conditions for determining the year of the death of Jesus by the lunar calendar may be stated as follows:

If the Jews had an Adar II in C.E. 30, the crucifixion could not have occurred in that year.

If the Jews had an Adar II in C.E. 31, then the crucifixion might have occurred in either 30 or 31, according to one of two differing interpretations of the reckoning of the month of the new moon.

The date generally accepted in the scholarly world today is C.E. 30. This date is based on the assumption that the Jewish calendar of Christ's time, like the Babylonian calendar, was based on the observation of the crescent moon each month, and that both calendars inserted the 13th month in the same years, according to the Babylonian 19-year cycle as fixed in the 4th century B.C.E. The big question is how valid is that assumption?

Most modern tables of the Babylonian calendar give a statement to the effect of the element of uncertainty involved in attempts to fix a Babylonian or Jewish date to the exact day and is made clear in the authors' statement of their method of reckoning.¹¹³ Adopting such a date as Friday, April 7, C.E. 30, for the day of crucifixion, after reading this warning, should be offered, at most, as only a high probability, not an established fact.

CHAPTER 6

THE MONTH PROBLEM: A PROBLEM OF MANY CALENDARS

This chapter is probably the most convoluted, and other than being very interesting and helpful in illustrating the complexity of attempts to date the resurrection, does little to make it easier to secure an absolute date.

All the events, except the nativity, recorded in the New Testament occurred in the first century of our era - a period for which the chronology of the Roman empire is well-established - yet their dates cannot be settled beyond dispute because the writers did not give enough information. The only New Testament mention of a specific year (the 15th of Tiberius) has been subject to varying interpretations. The epistles carry no date lines, and the writers of the Gospels were more interested in the naming of events than in their dating.

The world in which Jesus lived was the Roman Empire of Augustus and Tiberius. In this empire many peoples and nations from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, from the mouth of the Rhine to the cataracts of the Nile, were united under Roman dominion and enjoyed Roman peace. But in this area, especially in the East, where the civilizations were much older than the civilizations of Rome, the local languages, customs, and religions still persisted. Also existing were the various methods of reckoning time. Even in official matters dates were expressed in terms of the regnal and calendar reckoning of the local area.

The Roman calendar had been changed under the authority of Julius Caesar from the lunar to solar at the beginning of the year 45 B.C.E. That is, the Roman months, formerly lunar, had been adjusted by Sosigenes, an astronomer from Egypt, to the Egyptian 365-day solar year, with the addition of an extra day every four years, thus making the year average $365\frac{1}{4}$ days. However, this Julian calendar, which eventually became the heritage of all Europe, was not imposed uniformly throughout the whole Roman Empire.¹¹⁴

In Egypt itself Augustus introduced the leap-year system, with the result that the Egyptian New Year's Day, Thoth 1, ceased to slip backward through the seasons as it had always done and became fixed to August 29 (or 30 in some years). Otherwise the Egyptian calendar remained the same, with its twelve 30-day months under the old names, and five extra days at the end (thenceforth six every fourth year).¹¹⁵

The provinces east of Egypt kept their lunar calendars of 12 and 13 months, but during the early centuries of Roman occupation most of them adopted from Rome the year of 365 (366) days, and adapted their own Macedonian and Semitic lunar-month names to the Julian months of 31, 30, or 28 (29) days. In Syria, for example, the Semitic calendar year began with the equivalent of Tishri, which was changed from a lunar month to one of 31 days, coinciding with the Julian October. It is not known to what extent this change had taken place in the first century of the Christian Era.¹¹⁶

The Jewish Calendar - a Month Problem

The Jews kept a lunar calendar with its months of 30 and 29 days, its year of 12 or 13 months, and its two beginnings of the year: the religious year, from Nisan to Nisan, in the

spring, and the civil year from Tishri to Tishri, in the autumn. In Christ's time, however, the ecclesiastical year, beginning in the spring, seems also to have been the regnal year, that is, the year by which the reigns of the local Jewish (quasi-Jewish) Herodian kings were numbered.¹¹⁷

The Jews had a lunisolar calendar, that is, lunar months with a periodical adjustment to keep the calendar year in step with the seasons. Twelve lunar months total about 11 days less than the true solar year, which governs the seasons. Therefore an extra month was added every two or three years--Adar, the 12th month, was followed by the 13th month, Adar II. This was necessary to keep Nisan, the 1st month, in line with the barley harvest season, (early April) to permit the offering of the wave sheaf (the omer) just after Passover, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.¹¹⁸

The Babylonians had developed a calendar cycle in the 4th century B.C.E. that employed a different method of inserting extra months; they doubled their 12th month, "Addaru," six times in every 19-year cycle; in one year (now numbered their 17th) they doubled "Ululu" (Jewish Elul), the 6th month.¹¹⁹

The Jews, so far as is known, never at any time inserted an Elul II after the 6th month. Such a procedure would have produced an irregular interval between the festivals that the Levitical law prescribed in the 1st and 7th months. Further, the fact that the need for the extra month was governed by the relation of the mid-Nisan barley harvest indicates that originally when the calendar presumably depended solely on observation, the 13th month would necessarily be inserted in the spring, just preceding Nisan, and there is no reason to

suppose a change to doubling the 6th month. Nothing is known of a regularly recurring Jewish 19-year cycle, like that of the Babylonian calendar, in Jesus' day.¹²⁰

A regnal-year dating formula, such as that used by Luke, "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius," would depend for its meaning on the particular local calendar used by the writer, that is, on whether he was counting the year from the Egyptian Thoth 1 (always after the time of Augustus, in August), or from the Jewish Nisan, or Tishri, etc. During and after the Hellenic period local Syrian calendars varied even from city to city. To add confusion to the attempt to secure a date are additional factors such as the Julian Calendar, adopted in 45 B.C.E. by the Romans who were the occupying force in this region, some influences carrying forth from the Babylonian calendar, and a multitude of different methods of designating years that related to the change of Roman rulers, the celebration of the new year, and in some cases, under the Hasmonaeans, related to the ecclesiastic year. Confusion reigns!

Conclusion Impossible From Calendar Data Alone

The fact remains that at the present time we cannot be sure of the lunar-calendar system of the Jews in the 1st century. Therefore we cannot say with certainty, "This, according to lunar astronomy, was the year of the crucifixion." With our knowledge of general principles revived from Babylonian records, from earlier Jewish papyri, and from later Jewish tradition, we can say that only three times during the period allowable for the crucifixion can a possible Friday 14th of Nisan be computed from lunar data. Since one of these, C.E. 33 seems untenable, the alternatives are C.E. 30 or 31. I favor, after all this research, C.E. 31, when including consideration of the "midst" of the 70th week, 3½ years after the baptism of Jesus. But so far as lunar calendar evidence goes, the field remains open

for those who by one system arrive at C.E. 31 (in the mathematically exact "midst" of the "week"), and those who by another method arrive at C.E. 30 (which some accept as the approximate midst of the week. Other considerations than lunar calculation must decide the choice.

CHAPTER 7

THE SABBATH PROBLEM

Prior to the Resurrection - the End of the Sabbath?

The problem here is the word "opse," here translated "end," but it may mean either "late" or "after." Opse is used but three times in the NT, in Matt. 28:1, which we are now concerned with, and in Mark 11:19 and 13:35, where it is translated "even." In Mark 11:19 it is not clear whether "opse" designates the late afternoon of the day mentioned earlier in the narrative, or time after sunset, which would be according to the Hebrew method of reckoning time, the day following. In Mark 13:35, "opse" means "even," and designates the first watch of the night, from about sunset till about 9:00 p.m. Usage of "opse" in the NT is thus comparatively indefinite so far as determining whether the phrase "opse de sabbaton" of Matt. 28:1 means late Sabbath afternoon, before sunset, or after Sabbath, on the first day of the week.¹²¹

"Opsia," a related form, appears more frequently in the NT. "Opsia" is always translated "even," "evening," or "eventide." In Matt. 8:16 and Mark 1:32 it is specifically used of time following sunset. In Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:47; and John 6:16 it also designates time after sunset.¹²² In Matt. 26:20 and Mark 14:17 it is used of the Passover meal, which was supposed to be eaten in the early hours of Nisan 15, after sunset that brought Nisan 14 to a close. In John 20:19 it also refers to time after sunset, probably after darkness had set in.¹²³

Indefinite as the word "opse" itself is, parallel passages in the other Gospels seem to make clear that Matthew here means "after the Sabbath," not "late on the Sabbath." According to Mark 16:1, 2, "when the Sabbath was past," the women "brought sweet spices," apparently after sundown Saturday night, and went to the tomb "very early in the morning of the first day of the week...at the rising of the sun." Mark's words are clear and definite, and there seems to be no substantial reason for doubting that he refers to the same visit mentioned in Matt:28:1. It may also be observed that Jewish regulations on Sabbath travel (from Exodus 16:29) would have precluded any visit to the tomb from a distance greater than 2/3 of a mile. The home of Mary Magdalene was Bethany, a distance of 2 miles from Jerusalem. If she spent the Sabbath in Bethany (Luke 23:56), she would not have travelled to the tomb until the Sabbath had closed.

If, as some hold, the women's visit to the sepulcher (Matt. 28:1) took place late Sabbath afternoon, the narrative of vs. 2-15 thereby becomes detached from the time statement in v.1. But vs. 2-15 appear to give an account of what took place at the time designated in v.1. It seems improbable that the detailed time statement of v. 1 should be given for the supposed Sabbath afternoon visit to the sepulcher, and no time be indicated for the momentous events of vs. 2-15. There is nothing to indicate a transition in time from Sabbath afternoon to Sunday morning.

In the second place, if, as some have tried to show, the resurrection itself took place Sabbath afternoon, other difficulties appear. The Roman guard had been stationed at the sepulcher during the light hours of Sabbath day (Matt. 27:62-66), yet one night intervened between the beginning of their vigil and the resurrection (Matt. 28:13). When both language

and context permit interpreting Matt. 28:1 in harmony with the unanimous statements of the other gospel writers, there is no valid reason for doing otherwise.

Interestingly, at this season of the year, "it began to dawn," the astronomical morning twilight, began about 4:00 a.m. in the latitude of Jerusalem, and the sun rose about 5:30. If Mary Magdalene arose about the time it began to get light, and walked from Bethany to Calvary, she would have arrived there about sunrise.

And finally, the word "sabbaton" means either "Sabbath," the seventh day of the week, or "week." Examples of its use in the latter sense are Luke 18:12; and 1 Cor. 16:2. Some (whose zeal to promote their personal ideas greatly exceeds their knowledge of Greek) have interpreted "mia sabbaton" as "the first of the Sabbaths," and concluded that Matthew here designates the resurrection Sunday as the first occasion on which Sabbath sacredness was transferred to the first day of the week. No Greek scholar has ever attempted to make an argument in favor of Sunday sacredness on the basis of this grammatically impossible translation of Matt. 28:1.¹²⁴ Novices who have made such an attempt have been rebuked by their more scholarly Sunday-keeping brethren who categorically deny the possibility of such a translation.¹²⁵

CHAPTER 8

EXTRA-BIBLICAL INFORMATION

There are a number of interesting conjectures circulating that also require consideration if we are to thoroughly examine possible dates for the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. Some have ties to religious theologies, while still others are outside the realm of religious thought.

The Jehovah Witness tradition has, and is still presently, asking the question "Does it (the cross) accurately portray the way Christ died?"¹²⁶

Their argument is that the cross first came into use during the time of Constantine, hence after 321 C.E. Apparently, so the story goes, Constantine had a vision of a cross on which were inscribed the words "Hoc vince", meaning, "By this conquer." Constantine then made the cross the standard of his armies and eventually introduced Christianity as the state religion. It was at this time it (the cross) became a symbol of the church.¹²⁷

Their argument continues by saying that it is highly unlikely that Christ actually died on a cross. Using a definition from The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1979), under the heading "cross," they point out the original Greek word "staurós," designating a pointed, vertical, wooden stake firmly fixed in the ground... and were set up as instruments of torture on which serious offenders of the law were publicly suspended to die.¹²⁸

The Latin word "crux," from which we get cross, was used as a rendering of "staurós." The argument continues that we mistakenly assume that a "crux" was necessarily a stake with a cross beam. The Imperial Bible Dictionary says, "Even amongst Romans the crux appears to have been originally an upright pole, and thus always remained the more prominent part."¹²⁹

The book The Non-Christian Cross adds: "There is not a single sentence in any of the numerous writings forming the New Testament, which in the original Greek, bears even indirect evidence to the effect that the staurós used in the case of Jesus was other than an ordinary staurós [pole or stake]; much less to the effect that it consisted, not of one piece of timber, but of two pieces nailed together in the form of a cross." Christ could well have been impaled on a form of crux (staurós) known as the "crux simplex." That was how such a stake was illustrated by the Roman Catholic scholar Justus Lipsius of the 16th century.¹³⁰

The Jehovah Witness scholars then ask about the other Greek word "xy'lon." It was used in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Bible at Ezra 6:11. In the New World Translation this reads, "And by me an order has been put through that, as for anybody that violates this decree, a timber will be pulled out of his house and he will be impaled upon it, and his house will be turned into a public privy on this account." Clearly, a single beam, or "timber," was involved here.¹³¹

Numerous translators of the Christian Greek Scriptures (New Testament) therefore translate Peter's words at Acts 5:30 to read: "The God of our forefathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew, hanging him upon a stake [or, "tree" according to the King James Version,

New International Version, The Jerusalem Bible, and the Revised Standard Version]."¹³²

From this argument, the Jehovah's Witnesses state their position of Jesus dying upon the cross as being an untruth, and they have found solace by discovering others with whom they can agree. A church paper of the Evangelical-Lutheran State church of Schleswig-Holstein, 'Die kirche der Heimat' (The Church of the Homeland), remarked in its issue of August 2, 1951: "Whether the cross on Golgotha had a crossbar or not or whether it was just a plain stake, whether it had the T-form or whether it had a crossbar placed across the upright stake is impossible to determine now."¹³³

However, Bible scholars need to be quick to respond to misleading and an argument like this. While many of the things mentioned in the Watch Tower article may be true, their arguments draw on various nuances of the whole story to make their case and abandons some of the factual evidence.

Primary in the evidence perhaps is the discovery of abandoned crypts and ossuaries from the time of Christ. From a pile of bones in an abandoned crypt emerges the tragic story of Jehohanan ben Hagqol, a Jew in his mid-twenties, height 5'6", from a wealthy Jerusalem family, and put to death by crucifixion sometime during the third or fourth decade C.E.

The five to six inch nail that spiked his heels to the cross has been found. Traces of nail were also found between the radius and the cubitis of the left forearm, indicating that his arms as well as his feet had been nailed to the cross. This evidence was discovered by the Israeli Ministry of Housing in June, 1968, at a Jewish burial ground in the northern sector of Jerusalem.¹³⁴

Obviously, impaling through the rectum was not the technique used here, and provides much nearer to the correct time evidence against the Jehovah's Witness theory than the material they present. This discovery adds credence to the other story of another young Jew who suffered the same fate, in the same city, at the same time, a young man named Jesus. This is powerful evidence for the traditional Bible story, and verifies that a crucifixion in the appropriate time period is possible.

In another instance, Israeli Professor Sukenik, famed for his work on the Dead Sea scrolls, discovered a sealed tomb just outside of Jerusalem in 1945. It was never broken into by grave robbers. In it were five ossuaries or bone caskets. It was a tomb that was closed (determined by the finding of coins of that date) around C.E.50. It was the tomb of some early pious persons. On two of these ossuaries the name of Jesus appears clearly. That, in itself, is apparently not too out of the ordinary, for Jesus was a relatively common name. However, both have inscriptions of prayers to Jesus. One says, "Jesus help." The other says, "Jesus, let him arise." Significantly, they are both clearly marked with charcoal crosses.

Think about this! This is written within twenty years after Christ's resurrection. These people were believers, who probably knew Jesus, knew He was the Lord of Life, knew Him as a historical person, believed Him to be the Son of God, and were convinced of the resurrection. However, for this specific purpose, the hard evidence puts to rest the Jehovah's Witness theory about a fourth century introduction of the cross and gives strong period conformation to the factuality of resurrection and the power that it held.

Other extra-biblical information comes from the writings of Flavius Josephus, a Jewish guerilla commander who lead contingents against Rome between C.E. 66 and 70. Subsequent to that he turned to being a historian and writes of many names we find in the Gospels. He writes of the Herods, Caiaphas, John the Baptist, even James, "the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ." But most significant of all is his extended reference to Jesus himself. The reference gives us history, called Jesus "Messiah" and a wise man, who performed astonishing deeds, had a large following, and was condemned to death by Pilate. It also confirms the resurrection and ties all of those happenings to the prophesies of old. The continuance of the movement is attested to also. What is amazing is that this text still remains a solid, textually reliable statement by Josephus, a late contemporary of Jesus, who was obviously outside the influence of Christianity. While this period evidence does not give us an exact date, it does confirm the resurrection as a historical fact.

THE IMPACT OF RECENT ASTRONOMICAL DATA

A far more recent conjecture is more precise in naming an exact date. Two astronomers, Colin J. Humphreys and W.G. Waddington of Oxford University in England, say that previously unconsidered astronomical evidence leads them to consider that Friday, April 3, 33 C.E. is the only possible date.¹³⁵

The process of their argument started by looking at the dates of the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate in Judea, under whom Jesus was crucified. That period was from C.E. 26 to 36. The next step in the determination was to find out in which of those years Nisan 14 or 15 fell on a Friday. Jewish months begin at the new moon, and the new moon is by definition invisible. In those days they couldn't calculate the lunar cycle as easily as they can now. They

had to determine the first of the month by observing the first tiny sliver of the crescent and count from there.¹³⁶

The modern investigator has to calculate the hour and the minute at which the first bit of the waxing moon of Nisan would have been visible in Jerusalem for each of the years, taking into account the time of the moonrise and the atmospheric conditions likely at different hours. Matters are further complicated by the possibility that an extra month may have been inserted in some of those years. This leap month was thrown in now and then to shift the lunar months back to the proper solar seasons after they had drifted out of synchrony. However, taking all this into account, Nisan 14 could have been a Friday on April 11, C.E. 27, April 7, C.E. 30, and April 3, C.E. 33. Nisan 15 could have fallen on Fridays April 11, C.E. 27 and April 23, C.E. 34. The confusion over whether April 11, C.E. 27 was Nisan 14 or 15 is a typical uncertainty of Jewish dating.¹³⁷ Missing from Humphreys and Waddington's assessment of possible Nisan 14 dates was any mention of C.E. 31, but otherwise their research coincides with other, previously considered, astronomical data.

In any case C.E. 27 seems too early for the crucifixion. Luke (3:1,2) dates the start of the ministry of John the Baptist in the 15th year of Tiberias Caesar. This could have been no earlier than autumn C.E. 28-29. Jesus' own ministry started after his baptism by John and lasted at least two and more likely three years. C.E. 34 is too late due to a conflict with the conversion of St. Paul. Paul had necessarily to be converted at some date after the crucifixion. The later events of Paul's life can be dated externally. Intervals of time he quotes himself - and nobody supposes he couldn't count - would put his conversion before C.E.

Their argument states we are now left with two possibilities: April 7, C.E. 30 and April 3, C.E. 33. Humphreys and Waddington point out this means, not so incidentally, that the crucifixion took place on Nisan 14. "We remark that by this means, a scientific argument has been used to distinguish between different theological interpretations of the Last Supper." they say. This is, whether or not that Last Supper was a Seder. If it was held on the evening before the crucifixion, and the crucifixion took place on Nisan 14, it could not have been a Seder. Humphreys and Waddington also point out that this dating puts Jesus' death at the hour when the Passover lambs were being slaughtered, another point of theological and symbolic significance.¹³⁹

But in which of the two years, C.E. 30 or 33, did it take place? Here is where the new evidence comes in. In a speech given seven weeks after the crucifixion (on the first Christian Pentecost), Peter referred to a blood-red moon (Acts 2:20). The context can be read to indicate that he was referring to a recent event, one that in fact took place in the night after the crucifixion. Humphreys and Waddington cite the New Testament scholar F.F. Bruce in defense of this interpretation.¹⁴⁰

An eclipsed moon often looks red. Sunlight refracted through the earth's atmosphere enters the shadow and illuminates the moon slightly. This light is red, as the refraction separates away the blue and green. Humphreys and Waddington calculated all the lunar eclipses visible from Jerusalem between C.E. 26 and 36. There were in fact 12. One happened on the night of April 3, C.E. 33. On that night an already partially eclipsed moon rose above the horizon in Jerusalem, geometrically and atmospherically very favorable conditions for it to look red. On that basis Humphreys and Waddington opt for April 3, C.E.

33.¹⁴¹

To those of us untrained as astronomers, this argument seems pretty slick. Humphreys and Waddington don't tell the whole story. The picture is clouded by a number of uncertainties about ancient Jewish calendric practices. One is whether an entire extra month was inserted into a given year's calendar, to bring it into step with the growth of crops following unusual cold so the first fruits of the harvest could be offered at Passover.

Another uncertainty is how the equinox was calculated, because this also affects the insertion, or "intercalation," of extra months into the calendar. Still another worry is whether seven days of the week really continue in a never-broken cycle earlier than about C.E. 200. Finally, we do not know what the ancient Jews did when the supposed first day of the lunar month was cloudy and the Moon could not be seen.

Another astronomer, Bradley E. Schaefer, writing in "Sky and Telescope" about five years later than the Humphreys and Waddington article stated that "...modern calculations rule out a role for this eclipse because it could not have been seen from Jerusalem - certainly not during any phase when it could redden the Moon."¹⁴²

In a bit of highly technical jarganese he continues:

The last bit of the umbra left the lunar disk when the Moon was still only 2° to 5° above the eastern horizon. (The uncertainty stems primarily from uncertainties about the uniformity of the earth's rotation and the Moon's orbital acceleration during the last 2,000 years.) When the Moon was 2° to 5° up, twilight was still so bright that the Moon itself would have been invisible or nearly so. This is based on physiological data and my own observations.¹⁴³

By the time the Moon rose high enough to escape extinction and twilight effects, even the penumbral phase of the eclipse would have been too subtle to

notice. In any event only a deep lunar eclipse looks red, and that phase ended long before the Moon rose. Perhaps Peter was referring to the ordinary atmospheric reddening of the Moon whenever it is near the horizon.¹⁴⁴

So there you have it! Two recent astronomers have not done any better at forming a convergence of thought than the theologians that have gone before them. Schaefer does agree with Humphreys and Waddington that both April 7, C.E. 30 and April 3, C.E. 33 are the most likely dates. However, since I don't agree with either of them, it was important to show that solidarity does not exist in this camp either.

The reason that I have some trouble with this line of reasoning is because accepting it would have some significant ramifications. As stated previously, both groups accept the possibility of April 7, C.E. 30 and April 3, C.E. 33. Both of these dates would be Nisan 14, in agreement with John. This means the last supper was not a Jewish "Seder" as stated in Mark, Matthew, and Luke and this would have to be considered erroneous information, contradicting three sources of information and our understanding of the inerrancy of the Bible. Instead, as stated in John, the crucifixion would fall on the traditional date when the Passover lamb was killed, suggesting the symbolism of Jesus dying for humanity's sins. It leaves us feeling that astronomy has decided for us between alternative interpretations of the Bible, and that causes me some concern.

One final thought with respect to astronomical data is that Bible theologians have contemplated Matthew 27:45 numerous times attempting to put some meaning to the term "darkness fell upon the land" and attaching it specifically to the three hour period from noon to 3 p.m. Their question always has been, "What caused the darkness"?

One writer states, "It was evidently not a solar eclipse, because they don't last more than a few minutes. Furthermore, Passover occurred during a full moon, when the moon was at its farthest from the sun. It is therefore, probably a supernaturally caused darkness."¹⁴⁵

Matthew says it fell "upon the land" --evidently referring to the area including and even beyond Palestine. It is striking that Diogenes, a contemporary writing from Egypt, noted the unique darkness with these words: "Either the Deity Himself suffers at this moment, or sympathizes with one who does." The Christian apologist Tertullian, writing in the second century, challenged his non-Christian adversaries with these words: "At the moment of Christ's death, the light departed from the sun, and the land darkened at noonday, which wonder is related in your own annals, and is preserved in your archives to this day."¹⁴⁶ And finally, early church leader Origen alludes to a statement by the Roman historian Phlegon, who supposedly mentioned this darkness and the earthquake that accompanied it.¹⁴⁷

While none of these events give us absolute, concrete proof, they certainly indicate that there is sufficient evidence to assume that the event of the crucifixion took place.

CHAPTER 9

THE BIBLICAL SECRET: A TIME PROPHECY

One other source of information deserves consideration. Crucifixion was often chosen as a humiliating, long-drawn out process of putting people to death. Often, depending when a crucifixion took place, the victim hung on the cross for a period days. Death eventually came by suffocation as the wearied head slumped, along with the tired body, cutting off the air supply. In the Bible story, the crucifixion was on the preparation day for the Sabbath, and it was against the law to leave criminals hanging over the Sabbath. In the Jesus story, the criminals with whom Christ was crucified had their legs broken, supposedly so they couldn't prop themselves up to catch a breath, and were thus forced to suffocate quicker so they could be dismounted from their respective crosses. The Bible story is pretty clear to point out that this didn't happen in Jesus' case. He was already dead. The point here is that this is a fulfillment of prophecy that dates back to the time of David (Psalm 34:20). It is also a biblical prophecy, although it is a different one, that will help us zero in on the date of the crucifixion.

The lack of conclusive proof for the exact date of the beginning of the ministry of Christ, and hence the crucifixion/resurrection, has not only led to differences of opinion as to the events involved, but has also caused critics to assert contradictions between the Synoptic Gospels and John, and to attach the historical application of the prophecy of the 70 weeks

(Dan. 9:24-27) to the life of Christ. The great prophetic period that was to "seal up the vision and the prophecy" by pointing out the time of "Messiah the Prince" has, through the centuries, been interpreted by most theological writers as pointing to Christ's first advent, with the crucifixion occurring either in the midst of or at the end of the 70th week. The standard historicist interpretation since the Reformation has been that the 70th week follows immediately the 69th week, with no time gap, and that events prophesied to take place in the 70th week find their fulfillment in connection with the life of Christ. The timing for this prophesy suggests that the 70 weeks begin with the 7th year of Artaxerxes (see on Dan. 9:25). By placing the baptism of Christ as the beginning of the 70th week, and crucifixion in the "midst of the week," the available evidence for the dating of the ministry of Christ can be harmonized with that interpretation.¹⁴⁸

This chapter undoubtedly will provide modern scholars who can find no truth in prophecy with heartburn. Recent criticism of prophecy has debunked its relevance by simply stating that prophecies are often created by simply working backwards from a certain event and filling in known occurrences to meet the prophetic criteria for that prophecy's predicted outcomes. In some respects we are going to do exactly that in this chapter, but we do it in the search for relevant historic events. Thus, I am not so quick to dismiss the relevance of prophecy. My reason for this is that in this particular prophecy, the words of Jesus Himself confirms the fulfillment of the time prophesied.

This prophecy comes from Daniel 9:24 - 27. It is an extremely technical prophecy that in itself is a part of a much longer prophetic period. Much is made of the prophecy of the 2300 days from Daniel 8, but, unfortunately, delving into it is far beyond the scope of this

particular investigation. The prophecy I am referring to has been commonly known by scholars who study these sorts of things as the "Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks." For this writer, one of those scholars with absolute faith in the veracity of the Bible, these are words from God pointing directly to three things: the time of Christ's birth, the date of the start of His ministry, and lastly the date of Christ's crucifixion/resurrection. The words of the prophecy are as follows:

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

The first task in studying this prophecy is to make clear its connection to the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14.

The words of Daniel 9:24 are the first words the angel uttered to Daniel in giving to him that instruction which he came to give. The question needs to be asked, why did the angel abruptly introduce a period of time? If we refer to the vision of Daniel 8, we see that Daniel, at the close of this chapter, says that he did not understand the vision (v.27). Some

parts of that vision were at the time clearly explained. It would not have been these parts which he did not understand. What was it then that Daniel did not understand, or what part of the vision was left unexplained?

In that vision four prominent things are mentioned: the ram, the he-goat, the little horn, and the period of 2300 days. The symbols of the ram, the he-goat, and the little horn were explained, but nothing is said respecting the period of time. This must therefore have been the point that he did not understand. The other parts of the vision were of no avail while the application of this period of 2300 days was left in obscurity. However, the last words of v.23 of Daniel 9 say, "therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." This is a reference to the vision given Daniel in 8:26. In the last words to Daniel at the time of his previous visit, Gabriel stated that the vision of the 2300 evening mornings was "true." Thus in 9:24 the divine instructor begins where he left off in 8:26.

Dr. William Hales concurs with this assumption. In commenting upon the seventy weeks he writes, "This chronological prophecy...was evidently designed to explain the foregoing vision, especially in its chronological part of the 2300 days."¹⁴⁹

If this view is correct, we should expect the angel to begin with the point which had been omitted, namely, the time. In fact, this is true. After drawing Daniel's attention to the former vision in direct and emphatic manner, and assuring him that he had come to give him understanding, he begins with the very point omitted: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city."

How does this language show any connection with the 2300 days, or throw any light

upon that period? The word here rendered "determined" signifies "cut off," and no other period is given in the vision here referred to from which seventy weeks could be cut off, except the 2300 days.

The Hebrew word used here, "chathak" (also appears as nechtak)¹⁵⁰ occurs only here in the Bible. It occurs in post-Biblical Hebrew with the meaning "to cut," "to cut off," "to determine," "to decree." The Vulgate's reading is "abbreviare."¹⁵¹

While the Authorized Version uses the remoter definition by implication, "determine," as in the text before us, the Revised Version uses the second definition, and it reads, "seventy weeks are decreed (ie. allotted) upon thy people." Taking the basic and simple definition, we have "seventy weeks are cut off from thy people."

Why, then, did translators render the word "determined," when it obviously means "cut off"? I would suggest that they overlooked the connection between Daniel 8 and 9, and considering it improper to render it "cut off," when nothing was given from which the seventy weeks could be cut off, they gave the word its figurative instead of its literal meaning.

Seventy weeks, then, or 490 days of the 2300, were allotted to Jerusalem and God's chosen people, the Jews. Verse 24 lists the events which were to be consummated within that period. The transgression was to be finished, that is, the Jewish people were to fill up their cup of iniquity, which they did in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. An end of sins, or of sin offerings, was to be made. This took place when the great offering was made on Calvary.

From that time forward, sin offerings were no longer required as a part of the rigors of a believer. Reconciliation for iniquity was to be provided. This was accomplished by the sacrificial death of the Son of God. Everlasting righteousness was to be brought in, the righteousness which Jesus manifested in His sinless life. The vision and the prophecy were to be sealed, or made sure.

By the events which were to occur in the seventy weeks, the prophecy is tested. By this the application of the whole vision is determined. If the events of this period are accurately fulfilled, the prophecy is of God, and will all be accomplished. If these seventy weeks are fulfilled as weeks of years, then the 2300 days, of which these are a part, are so many years.

The expression "seventy weeks" seems to be a rather abrupt introduction, but the angel had come for the specific purpose of causing Daniel to understand the vision. He immediately began to explain.

The word here translated "week," *shabuá* in Greek, describes a period of seven consecutive days as in Gen. 29:27, Deut. 16:9, and Dan. 10:2. However, in the pseudepigraphical Book of Jubilees, as well as in the Misnah, *shabuá* is used to denote a period of seven years.¹⁵² Here, evidently, weeks of years are intended rather than weeks of days, for in ch. 10:2,3 when Daniel wishes to specify that the "weeks" there referred to are seven day weeks he explicitly says, "weeks of days" (Heb.: KJV, "full weeks"). Seventy weeks of years would be 490 literal years.

It is probably a good idea at this time to remind readers that in Scripture prophecy, a

day represents a year. This is a widely accepted concept, but this quotation serves this argument well.

"It is a singular fact that the great mass of interpreters in the English and American world have, for many years, been wont to understand the days designated in Daniel and in the Apocalypse, as the representatives or symbols of years. I have found it difficult to trace the origin of this general, I might say almost universal custom."¹⁵⁴

What is more conclusive than all else is the fact that the prophecies have actually been fulfilled on this principle--a demonstration of its correctness from which there is no appeal. This will be found in the prophecy of the seventy weeks throughout, and all the prophetic periods of Daniel 7 and 12, and Revelation, 9, 12, and 13.

Going back to the prophecy itself, the angel now relates to Daniel the event which is to mark the beginning of the seventy weeks. They were to date from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem. Not only is the event given which determines the time of the commencement of this period, but also those events which take place at its close. Thus a double test is provided by which to try the application of this prophecy. But more than this, the period of seventy weeks is divided into three divisions. One of these is again divided, and the immediate events are given which were to mark the termination of each one of these divisions. If we can find a date which will harmonize with all these events, we have beyond doubt the true application, for none but that which is correct could meet and fulfill so many conditions.

It may be important at this time to make note of the points of harmony, just so we can guard against any false application. We are to find at the beginning of the period a commandment going forth to rebuild Jerusalem. To this work of restoration seven weeks

were allotted. As we reach the end of this first division, seven weeks from the beginning, we are to find Jerusalem restored in its material aspect, the work of building the street and the wall fully accomplished. From this point sixty-two weeks are measured off. As we reach the termination of this division, sixty-nine weeks from the beginning, we are to see the manifestation of Messiah the Prince before the world. One week more is given us, completing the seventy. In the midst of this week the Messiah is to be cut off, and to cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. At the expiration of that period which was allotted to the Jews as the time during which they were to be the special people of God, we naturally look for the going forth of the blessing and work of God to other people.

What is the initial date which will harmonize with all these particulars? The command respecting Jerusalem was to include more than mere building. There was to be restoration. By this we must understand all the forms and regulations of civil, political, and judicial society. When did such a command happen? At the time these words were spoken to Daniel, Jerusalem lay in utter desolation, and had been lying like this for many years. The restoration pointed to in the future must be its restoration from this desolation. When then, and how was Jerusalem restored after the seventy years' captivity?

There are four events which can be taken as answering to the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem. These are:

1. The decree of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the house of God, 536 B.C.E.
(Ezra 1:1-4)
2. The decree of Darius for the prosecution of that work which had been hindered,
519 B.C.E. (Ezra 6:1-12)

3. The decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra, 457 B.C.E. (Ezra 7)
4. The commission to Nehemiah from the same king in his twentieth year, 444 B.C.E. (Nehemiah 2)

Dating from the first two of these decrees, the seventy prophetic weeks, or 490 literal years, would fall many years short of reaching even to the Christian Era. Besides this, these decrees had reference principally to the restoration of the temple and the temple worship of the Jews, not to the restoration of their civil state and polity, all of which must be included in the expression, "To restore and build Jerusalem."

These two decrees made a beginning of the work. They were preliminary to what was afterward accomplished. But of themselves they were altogether insufficient to meet the requirements of the prophecy, both in their dates and in their nature. Thus falling short, they cannot be brought into the discussion as marking the point from which the seventy weeks are to begin. The only question now lies between the decrees which were granted to Ezra and Nehemiah respectively.

The facts between which we are to decide here are briefly these: In 457 B.C.E., a decree was granted to Ezra by the Persian emperor Artaxerxes Longimanus to go up to Jerusalem with as many of his people as were minded to go with him. The commission granted him an unlimited amount of treasure, to beautify the house of God, to procure offerings for its service, and to do whatever else might seem good to him. It empowered him to ordain laws, set magistrates and judges, and execute punishment even unto death; in other words, to restore the Jewish state, civil and ecclesiastical, according to the law of God and

the ancient customs of that people. Inspiration has seen fit to preserve this decree: and a full and accurate copy of it is given in Ezra 7. This decree is recorded not in Hebrew, like the rest of the book of Ezra, but in the official Chaldaic, or Eastern Aramaic. Thus we are referred to the original document by virtue of which Ezra was authorized to restore and build Jerusalem.¹⁵⁵

Thirteen years after this, in the twentieth year of the same king, 444 B.C.E., Nehemiah sought and obtained permission to go up to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2). Permission was granted him, but we have no evidence that it was anything more than oral. It pertained to him individually, since nothing was said about others going up with him. The king asked him how long a journey he wished to make, and when he would return. He received letters to the governors beyond the river to help him on his way to Judea, and an order to the keeper of the king's forest for timber.

When he arrived in Jerusalem, he found rulers and priests, nobles and people, already engaged in the work of building Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 2:16) They were, of course, acting under the decree given to Ezra thirteen years before. Finally, after arriving at Jerusalem, Nehemiah finished in fifty-two days the work he came to accomplish. (Nehemiah 6:15)

After looking at the forgoing information, it hardly seems necessary to ask which one of the commissions, Ezra's or Nehemiah's, do we use to date the seventy weeks. It hardly seems that there can be any question on this point.

Reckoning from the commission to Nehemiah, 444 B.C.E., the dates throughout are entirely disarranged; for from that point the troublesome times which were to attend the

building of the street and wall did not last seven weeks, or forty-nine years. If we reckon from that date, the sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years, which were to extend to the Messiah the Prince would bring us to 40 C.E.; but Jesus was baptized by John in the River Jordan, and the voice of the Father was heard from heaven declaring Him His Son, likely 27 C.E., thirteen years before. According to this calculation, the midst of the last or seventieth week, which marked the crucifixion, is placed in 44 C.E., but the crucifixion took place in C.E. 31, thirteen years previous. And lastly, the seventy weeks, or 490 years, dating from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, would extend to 47 C.E., with absolutely nothing to mark their termination. Hence, if that be the year, and the grant to Nehemiah the event, from which to reckon, the prophecy has proved a failure. As it is, it only proves that theory to be a failure which dates the seventy weeks from Nehemiah's commission in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes.

It is evident then that the decree granted to Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, 457 B.C.E. is the point from which to date the seventy weeks. That was the going forth of the decree in the sense of the prophecy. The two previous decrees were preparatory and preliminary to this. Indeed they are regarded by Ezra as parts of it, the three being taken as one great whole. In Ezra 6:14 we read: "They builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia." It will be noticed that the decrees of these three kings are spoken of as one, --"the commandment, [margin, "decree," singular number] of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes," showing that they are all reckoned as a unit, the different decrees being the successive steps by which the work was accomplished. This decree could not be said to have "gone forth" as intended by the

prophecy, until the last permission which the prophecy required was embodied in the decree, and clothed with the authority of the empire. The point was reached in the grant given to Ezra, but not before. Here the decree assumed the proportions and covered the ground demanded by the prophecy, and from this point its "going forth" must be dated.

These dates will harmonize if we reckon from the decree to Ezra. The starting point then is 457 B.C.E. Forty-nine years were allotted to the building of the city and the wall. On this point, Pridaux says: "In the fifteenth year of Darius Nothus ended the first seven weeks of the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy. For then the restoration of the church and state of the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea was fully finished, in that last act of reformation, which is recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Nehemiah, from the twenty-third verse to the end of the chapter, just forty-nine years after it had been first begun by Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus."¹⁵⁶ This was 408 B.C.E.

Sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years, were extended to Messiah the Prince. Dating from 457 B.C.E., they end in C.E.27. There is abundance of authority for C.E. 27 as the date of Christ's baptism.¹⁵⁷ Luke thus informs us: "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the holy ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased." Luke 3:21,22. After this, Jesus came "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled." Mark 1:14,15. The time here mentioned must have been some specific, definite, and predicted period; but no prophetic period can be found terminating then except the sixty-nine weeks of the prophecy of Daniel, which were to extend to Messiah the Prince. The Messiah

had now come, and with His own lips He announced the termination of that period which was to be marked by His manifestation.

So far, we have indisputable harmony. Further, the Messiah was to confirm the covenant with many for one week. This would be the last week of the seventy, or the last seven years of the 490. In the midst of the week, the prophecy informs us, He should cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. These Jewish ordinances, pointing to the death of Christ, could cease only at the cross. There they did virtually come to an end when the veil of the temple was rent at the crucifixion of Christ, though the outward observance was kept up until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. After threescore and two weeks, according to the record, the Messiah was to be cut off. It is the same as if it had read: After threescore and two weeks, in the midst of the seventieth week, shall Messiah be cut off, and cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. Now, as the word midst here means middle, the crucifixion is definitely located in the middle of the seventieth week.

Using further Biblical information, it now becomes an important point to determine in what year the crucifixion took place. It is not to be questioned that Jesus attended every Passover that occurred during His public ministry, and we have mention of only four such occasions previous to His crucifixion. These are found in the following passages: John 2:13; 5:1; 6:4; 13:1. At the last mentioned Passover He was crucified. From facts already established, let us then see where this would locate the crucifixion. As He began His ministry in the autumn of 27 C.E., His first Passover would occur the following spring, 28 C.E.; His second, C.E. 29; His third, C.E. 30; and His fourth and last, C.E. 31. This gives us three and one half years for His public ministry, and corresponds exactly to the prophecy that

He would be cut off in the midst, or middle, of the seventieth week. As that week of years began in the autumn of C.E. 27, the middle of the week would occur three and one half years later, in the spring of 31, when the crucifixion took place. Dr. Hales quotes Eusebius, C.E. 300, as saying:

"It is recorded in history that the whole time of our savior's teaching and working miracles was three years and a half, which is the half of a week [of years]. This, John the evangelist will represent to those who critically attend to his Gospel."¹⁵⁸

Of the unnatural darkness which occurred at the crucifixion, Hales speaks:

"Hence it appears that the darkness which 'overspread the whole land of Judea' at the time of our Lord's crucifixion was preternatural, 'from the sixth until the ninth hour,' or from noon till three in the afternoon, in its duration, and also in its time, about full moon, when the moon could not possibly eclipse the sun. The time it happened, and the fact itself, are recorded in a curious and valuable passage of a respectable Roman Consul, Aurelius Cassiodorus Senator, about C.E. 514. 'In the consulate of Tiberius Caesar Aug. V and Aelius Sejanus (A.D. 31), our Lord Jesus Christ suffered, on the 8th of the Calends of April (25th of April), when there happened such an eclipse of the sun as was never nor since.'¹⁵⁹

"In this year, and in this day, agree also the Council of Caesarea, A.D. 196 or 198, the Alexandrian Chronicle, Maximus Monachus, Nicephorus Constantinus, Cedrenus; and in this year, but on different days, concur Eusebius and Epiphanius, followed by Kepler, Bucher, Patinus, and Petavius, some reckoning it as the 10th of the Calends of April, others the 13th."¹⁶⁰

So, while not definitive, conclusions from these historians and scholars gives us April 25th, 27th, and 30th to chose from in selecting the exact date of the crucifixion.

What is significant for this particular argument regarding the Biblical prophecy is that these thirteen credible authorities locate the crucifixion of Christ in the spring of C.E. 31. We may therefore set this down as a fixed date. This being the middle of the last week, we have simple to reckon backward three and a half years to find when the sixty-nine weeks

ended, and forward from that point three and a half years to find the termination of the seventy weeks. Going back three and half years from of the crucifixion in the spring of C.E. 31, we come to the autumn of C.E. 27, when, as we have seen, the sixty-nine weeks ended and Christ began His public ministry. Going forward from the crucifixion three and a half years, we are brought to the autumn of C.E. 34, as the grand terminating point of the whole period of the seventy weeks. This date is marked by the martyrdom of Stephen, the formal rejection of the gospel of Christ by the Jewish Sanhedrin in the persecution of His disciples, and the turning of the apostles to the Gentiles. These are the events which one would expect to take place when that specific period cut off for the Jews and allotted to them as a peculiar people, should fully expire.

From the facts above, we see that, reckoning the seventy weeks from the decree given to Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, 457 B.C.E., there is perfect harmony throughout. The important and definite events of the manifestation of the Messiah as His baptism, the commencement of His public ministry, the crucifixion, and the rejection of the Jews and the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, with the proclamation of the new covenant--all come in their exact place, sealing the prophecy and making it true.

To summarize, at present there is no conclusive historical and chronological proof, but neither is there disproof, that Jesus began His ministry in the autumn of C.E.27, at the end of the 69 weeks of years after 457 B.C.E.; and that He ended the symbolism of the sacrifices and offerings at the cross three and a half years later, in the spring of C.E. 31, with the later half of the 70th week extending three and a half years longer, to end the 490 years from the starting point. But though one cannot hold these dates as definitely proved by direct

historical source evidence, one can hold them as wholly reasonable deductions from the prophecy--as conclusions not incompatible with any known fact and in harmony with many facts that are known from recent research.

CHAPTER 10

THE DATE THIS RESEARCH FAVORS

The whole question of the Passover date in connection with the death of Christ is so complex that, as far as this research can find, no one view has ever been set forth with complete proof from unequivocal astronomical or calendrical data. However, one has the right to seek, from the evidence offered, what seems the most reasonable basis for a choice. The biblical and non-biblical evidences that appeal to this writer point to the C.E. 31 date, but uncertainty of the lunar evidence necessitates reliance on the interpretation of the biblical text and historical factors. The date C.E. 31 has been set forth in terms of the evidence for Christ's ministry as a whole. It has been shown that the earliest possible date of Jesus' baptism at the age of 30, in the 15th year of Tiberius, is the autumn of C.E. 27. Employing the concept of harmony in the Gospels that gives Jesus a ministry of 3½ years, following His baptism, it naturally selects the year 31 for the crucifixion, which is 3½ years after the autumn of C.E. 27. That is the earliest date compatible with both the 15th year and the duration of Christ's ministry, and it is the latest year compatible with both the midst of the 70th week and the lunar factors.

There are still more arguments that favor C.E. 31. One possibility is that the Jews in Christ's day were using at least a partly calculated rather than a purely observed month, and that the probability put Nisan 14 (when the Passover lamb was slain) after the full moon by

intentionally allowing, at times, a day longer between the conjunction and the first of Nisan. Others propose that the same date would result from a possible adjustment, suggested in one explanation of the Johannine-Synoptic question of the Passover supper: the Friday 14th of Nisan in the year of the crucifixion may have been the result of an intentional delaying of Nisan 1 later than the moon would seem to have required, by the priests who were in charge of the calendar. Such a delay might conceivably have been planned in order to make the offering of the wave sheaf on the 16th of Nisan fall on the day following the Decalogue Sabbath. Among the Sadducees, of whom leading priests were the chief representatives, some believed that "the morrow after the sabbath" (Lev.23:15,16) meant the morrow after the weekly Sabbath, not the festival sabbath. In that case Thursday could have been the 14th day according to the moon, but Friday the 14th according to the official calendar, or at least to the priestly officials who took Jesus to Pilate but would not enter his palace because they were observing the Passover on Friday evening. There apparently is evidence in the Talmud (Soncino edition p.95) of various attempts to manipulate the calendar by such parties, so this idea is not out of line. Certain Sadducees and Pharisees engaged in bitter controversy over whether the day of the wave sheaf should follow the first Passover sabbath or the weekly Sabbath, and the two schools of thought among the Pharisees contended over whether the law of the Sabbath took precedence over the law of the festivals.¹⁶¹

Another argument favoring 31 comes from John 2:20, when Jesus has cleansed the Temple and predicted the destruction of the sanctuary. The Jewish opponents object that the Temple sanctuary has taken 46 years to build. Josephus (Ant.15.11.1; #380; and War 1.21.1; #401) gives two different dates for the start of the rebuilding, namely 23/22 BCE. and 20/19

BCE., to which a 46-year addition would yield CE 24/25 and 27/28 respectively. Even though there are problems about John's placing this Temple-cleansing scene early in the ministry when the Synoptics place it in the very last days of Jesus' life, many scholars accept the latter date as historical and use it to confirm Luke's chronology pointing to the year (late 27) 28 C.E. as the commencement of Jesus' public activity.¹⁶² Part of the difference here is picked up by regnal years changing dates in the fall in the month of Tishri.

In the face of the absence of adequate proof for either 30 or 31, no one can find fault with the selection of 31, even though, as we shall see, it does not command acceptance from all of the source material.

Additional Considerations

Fortunately, there is another way we can look for a date. It comes by trying to co-ordinate other dates in the Bible. While the source documents have not suggested this method, it is worth considering. If Luke employed the normal Jewish method of dating, as seems most probable, especially when one considers his sources, "which from the beginning were eye witnesses" (Luke 1:2) one should expect him to designate as the 15th year of Tiberius the Jewish civil year running from autumn to autumn, C.E. 27/28. Also, if Luke 3:1 refers to C.E. 27/28 as the year in which John the Baptist came out of the wilderness and in which he baptized Jesus, this agrees perfectly with the chronology of Christ's ministry that puts His baptism at some time soon after Tishri 1, in the autumn of C.E. 27 or 483 years after "the going forth of the commandment" in the autumn of 457 B.C.E. Two other factors need to be taken into consideration: that the length of Jesus' ministry was three and one-half years, based on John's three Passovers (John 2: 13; 6:4; and 12:1) and one other unnamed feast

(John 5:1) but interpreted to be likewise a Passover, and thus it assigns 3 1/2 years to the ministry of Christ beginning it in the autumn of C.E.27 and ending it in the spring of C.E. 31. and secondly to consider the prophecy of the 70 weeks (Dan. 9:14-27) as an application to Christ's life. This great prophetic period was to "seal up the vision and prophecy" and to point to Christ's first advent and crucifixion in the midst of the 70th week (468.5 years after Daniel's prophecy).

We see now that all four Gospels agree that Jesus and His disciples celebrated the last supper on the night preceding the crucifixion, that He lay in the tomb over Sabbath, and that He arose early Sunday morning. The Synoptics, however, call the Last Supper, the night preceding the crucifixion, "the Passover," whereas according to John, the Jews celebrated the Passover supper on the night following the crucifixion. The statements of John and the Synoptics thus appear to be in conflict.

Believing in the inspiration of scripture, I for one, am unwilling to consider either John or the Synoptics as having made a mistake. Instead, one of various possible solutions have been presented and are here reviewed, but first a review of the pertinent facts.

The paschal lamb was slain in the late afternoon of Nisan 14, following the regular evening sacrifice, and eaten, with unleavened bread, after sunset that same night, during the early hours of Nisan 15.

Nisan 15, a ceremonial Sabbath, also marked the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

On Nisan 16, the second day of the feast, the wave sheaf of the first fruits was presented in the Temple.

The term "Passover" was originally applied to Nisan 14 only, but in the time of Christ it was sometimes used of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as well.

Apparently, also, the term Feast of Unleavened Bread was similarly used to include the Passover.

Tables that purport to give the Christian Era dates for each paschal full moon during the ministry of our Lord are of no real help in this problem for all such tables are based on modern Jewish methods of computing the time of the Passover. How the Jews of Christ's time coordinated their lunar calendar with the solar year is not known today, all supposedly learned statements to the contrary notwithstanding. It is therefore impossible to determine with absolute certainty the day of the week or even, always, the month in which the Passover of any year of our Lord's ministry may have occurred.

A notable perversion of Biblical data regarding the time of the Last Supper is the Wednesday crucifixion theory which assumes:

- (1) that the Christian Era date of the paschal full moon of the crucifixion year can be determined with absolute accuracy.
- (2) that the Hebrew idiomatic expression "three days and three nights" indicates a period of 72 full hours.
- (3) that the Greek of Matt. 28:1 assigns the resurrection to Sabbath afternoon. This

theory does not bear the marks of sound scholarship and is utterly at variance with Biblical meanings of terms. Therefore it is untenable.

Some (Thursday crucifixion theorists) have assumed that the expression "in the evening" of Exodus 12:6, literally, "between the two evenings," denotes the moment of sunset beginning Nisan 14, or the period between sunset and dark. There are no other clear references to support this.

The following chronological statements regarding the Last Supper and the crucifixion appear to be either explicit or implicit in the Gospel narrative and are rather generally accepted.

- a. The crucifixion took place on "the preparation [eve] of the Passover," that is, on Nisan 14.
- b. The death of Christ took place on a Friday afternoon, about the time of the evening sacrifice.
- c. Accordingly, in the year of the crucifixion, Nisan 14, the day appointed for slaying the paschal lambs, fell on Friday; the preparation for (or eve of) the Passover coincided with the preparation for (or eve of) the weekly Sabbath. The first ceremonial sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15, thus coincided with the weekly Sabbath.
- d. The Last supper took place the night preceding the crucifixion, that is, during the early hours of Nisan 14 and thus on Thursday night.
- e. The synoptic accounts call the last supper a Passover supper.

- f. John's account places the official Jewish celebration of the Passover supper 24 hours later than the Last Supper, and thus on Friday night following the crucifixion, during the early hours of the weekly Sabbath, which would be Nisan 15.
- g. At the time of the Last Supper, during the course of the trial, and on the way to Calvary, the official celebration of the Passover was apparently yet future.
- h. Jesus lay in the tomb over the Sabbath, which would be Nisan 15.
- i. Jesus arose from the tomb early Sunday morning, Nisan 16.

In considering this forgoing, generally agreed upon thoughts, four possible solutions are plausible.

1. That when referring to the Last Supper, the Synoptic writers describe, not the Passover meal, but a ceremonial meal that preceded it by 24 hours. According to this assumption Nisan 14 fell on Friday in the year of the crucifixion and the Passover of John was the official Passover meal.
2. That "the Passover" to which John refers was not the Passover meal, but a ceremonial meal connected with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. According to this assumption Friday was Nisan 15, and the Last Supper the preceding night was a celebration of the official Passover meal, at the regular time. This explanation is the reverse of the preceding one.
3. That the Last Supper was a true Passover meal, as in the Synoptics, even though celebrated only by Jesus and His disciples, 24 hours in advance of the official

Passover meal referred to by John, and thus of the time other Jews celebrated it.

According to this assumption Friday was Nisan 14.

4. That in the time of Christ sectarian differences with respect to calendrical reckoning, as to whether Nisan 14 and 16 should be correlated with certain days of the week, had led, in actual practice, to a celebration of the Passover on two successive days, that is, a double celebration. According to this assumption one religious faction (i.e. the Pharisees and other conservatives) would have considered that Nisan 14 fell on Thursday in the crucifixion year, and the other (ie. the Sadducees and other liberals), that it fell on Friday. Christ and his disciples thus, presumably, celebrated the Passover with the first group--the "Passover" of the Synoptics--and the Jewish leaders celebrated it the following night--the "Passover" of John. This assumption differs from the preceding one in that here Christ and the disciples were not alone in their celebration of the Passover.

So, finally, we get to the point where we can understand that our present-day ignorance of ancient Jewish practices appears to be the cause of our inability clearly to harmonize the seemingly conflicting statements of John and the Synoptics. However, on the basis of all available evidence, but without accepting any one of these four proposed explanations, one can suggest the possibility of the following sequence of events connected with the Last Supper, the crucifixion, and the Passover:

1. That in the year of the crucifixion, whether the result of controversy between liberal and conservative elements of Judaism, or because of other circumstances now unknown, there may have been a double celebration of the Passover.

2. That, with other conservative Jews, Christ and the disciples celebrated the Last Supper on Thursday night, during the early hours of what was officially Nisan 14, and that the Last Supper was a true celebration of the Passover.
3. That Jesus died on the cross about the time of the evening sacrifice and the slaying of the paschal lambs, on Friday, Nisan 14.
4. That, in that year of the crucifixion, the official celebration of the Passover came on Friday night, after the crucifixion.
5. That Jesus rested in the tomb over the weekly Sabbath, which, in that year, coincided with the ceremonial, or annual, sabbath Nisan 15, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
6. That Jesus arose from the tomb early on Sunday morning, Nisan 16, the day when the wave sheaf, which typified the resurrection, was presented in the Temple.
7. The only possible Friday the 14th of Nisan, calculated by various calendrical methods for the year C.E. 31 would give the date of the crucifixion as April 27th in the Julian calendar. (See p. 76)

And it here that we probably should stop. What is important is the message, our Blessed Hope for the future. Understanding the types clues us in to what really happened. The paschal lamb prefigured Christ, "the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "Christ (is) our Passover," who was to be "sacrificed for us" (1 Cor.5:7). Similarly, the wave sheaf of the Feast of Unleavened Bread typified "Christ risen from the

dead,...the first-fruits of them that slept." (1 Cor.15:20,23) Happily, it is not necessary to solve this problem in order to avail ourselves of salvation.

This writer has come to the conclusion that knowing the precise date is not important to our faith relationship with our Lord, or our Savior Jesus Christ. There is perhaps a very good reason why God has obscured this date in the dust of history; this writer believes that that reason is that we humans are apt to attach a disproportionate significance to that date in much the same way as we have transferred God's Sabbath to Sunday, recognizing the resurrection as opposed to its proper intent of recognizing the God of Creation and the satisfaction he got from that job well done. Perhaps God was protecting us from our own folly.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

Summary of the Results

1. A date, April 27, 31 C.E., as the date of the Crucifixion and strong evidence to support it, even though this date falls outside of current modern speculation as the favored choice.
2. A new way, especially for sabbitarians, to look at how we calculate the Sabbath. It is especially important that we understand the dogma of any particular denomination may not be the final authority about the way it really is.
3. The understanding that there is a common focus in Christianity, and that is Jesus Christ. Maybe, in this third millennium, we would do better if we focussed on Him, rather than what really may be petty differences.
4. And finally, that God may have a very good reason why there is so much difficulty in determining the date. If we look at humanity's obsession with certain other dates (i.e. Christmas and Easter) in the calendar year that really are not accurate observances, then perhaps we can get the idea that it really is not the date that is important, but the event and its meaning and how it impacts on our lives that we need to pay some attention to.

Revisiting the Literature

Not much more needs to be said about the literature other than to note the huge chasm between the two distinct lines of literature in the public domain. This work depended heavily upon theologians from numerous denominations whom first of all believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and secondly believe that the crucifixion, and more importantly, the resurrection took place. They would subscribe to the idea that the resurrection was a part of God's plan to reconcile His people to Himself, and the Crucifixion and Resurrection were events demarking the break between the Old and the New Testaments and the different way humanity interacts with God. Rather than being a period event, this event is a happening that has significance until the end of time.

The other stream of writers are theologians who have created some interesting thoughts of their own. A very sweeping statement of this group would be to say that they are not in agreement with the first group regarding the sonship of Jesus and would more likely say that the Jesus experience was a human socio-political statement of rebellion in the time period of the first century when the Jewish people were under the dominion of Rome. Little dependence on the work of these scholars was relied upon to complete this research.

Further Topics of Enquiry

If we are still asking the question (that could not be accommodated within the narrow scope of this study), "Is the resurrection an historical fact?" there are still more topics to consider: the disciples themselves, who are reported to be eye witnesses to what really happened, the contemporaries of Jesus whose schools of thought never amounted to anything of significance, and the conversion of Paul.

The Disciples

One of the deepest mysteries we encounter in reading the Bible is how it could be that these disciples, who had been cowards, became in the end courageous apostles? How was it that these same cowards, who in the words of Mark "all deserted him and ran away" when Jesus was arrested, afterward "went out and preached everywhere," and not only to the Israelites, for they undertook distant journeys to many other countries. The question is: how were such men able to endure all manner of persecution and even death?

It is also recorded in the Bible (Matthew 15:16) how the disciples who went on that earlier journey with Jesus were by no means very discerning listeners to Jesus. It is plainly written that among them were some with presumptuous worldly ambitions (Mark 10:15-41). There is talk of how even Peter himself fell short of any sympathetic understanding of the final task that Jesus was about to face (Mark 8:33).

Records like these certainly represent something close to the facts, because it is unthinkable that the primitive Church would deliberately invent a tale about such follies occurring in the early days of its own leaders. Even more persuasive is the way in which the four Gospels all relate that the disciples ran away from their beloved master when he was arrested.

In brief, the disciples were a group of people hardly different from the rest of us. Like us, they were happy enough to hear good stories, but they lacked firm convictions and their dispositions were self-centered enough to sacrifice the master to their own fear. They were average human beings, strong-minded only in their vanities and worldly ambitions.

To put it gently, poltroons like these possessed no powerful convictions. Therefore, after Jesus died, how did they manage to wakeup, to regain their footing, to realize for the first time the true merit of Jesus? How were they able to bring off this interior conversion, changing themselves from mere disciples to apostles?

The New Testament does not discuss the why and the how. It only asserts the enigma, then leaves it. To solve this riddle is then another important step in considering the Resurrection theme.

The Contemporaries

There is still another problem. Granted that there existed schools of thought which varied one from another among the primitive Christian communities established by the disciples, the fact remains that all the communities were one in accepting the Resurrection of Jesus and in proclaiming the Godhead of Jesus as Christ the Savior. Everybody now realizes that the New Testament was written against the background of the theology prevalent in the early Christian Church. Modern Biblical scholars, whether they use the method of form-criticism or the method of historical redaction, set their aim at sorting out from the contents of the Gospels what belongs to the Jesus of historical fact and what belongs to the fictitious Jesus born of the theology in the early Christian Church. Of course, their efforts have rendered tremendously meritorious service, except that they fail to come up with the key to one momentous problem.

The problem is the one about why each of Jesus' disciples came to recognize the divine nature of Jesus. It is the problem of one man, who had been so feckless in this world

and who had met an utterly miserable death, came to be thought of as Christ the Savior by the same disciples who had deserted him. It is the problem of why the Master, who had upset the dreams and hopes of the disciples, was worshipped after his death as the Messiah of Love by those same disciples.

In the days of Jesus there were in Judea a number of prophets like Jesus, each with his own group. Besides the Qumran community in the wilderness of Judea who followed the teacher of righteousness, there were several other baptismal societies, apart from the group on the banks of the Jordan who had made John the Baptist their leader. Among those several groups there never developed any leader who was apotheosized in the manner of Jesus. Of course, various political and social reasons intervene to explain why the different religious movements disappeared one after another, but the failure of these groups to apotheosize their leaders does not in itself explain what happened in the case of Jesus.

The second problem regarding this is, therefore, why among all these prophets, each with its own group of followers, only the religious assembly of the disciples of Jesus managed to survive? It doesn't solve anything to indicate simply that only the Church of Jesus advanced beyond Israel to spread its doctrine among the Gentile nations, whereas other groups doggedly kept themselves within the confines of the Jewish world.

How did the cowardly disciples come by their sturdy faith after Jesus died? How did a man so ineffectual in this world, who had upset the dreams of his own disciples, come then to be divinized by these same disciples? These two questions forever entangle people who read the Bible, yet the Biblical scholars, that use the theories of form-criticism or of

redactionism, hardly so much as allude to these questions. In other words, they seem to accomplish everything except to answer the basic questions that make the New Testament uniquely what the New Testament is; they do no more than offer solutions which prove exceedingly fragile on close inspection.

Paul

Numerous scholars have suggested that 1 Corinthians 15 offers perhaps the earliest and fullest writing about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ that has come down to us. It offers a number of factors that require further consideration. Paul's writings, just by the number of them, have a great influence in shaping the New Testament story. Because of their very early date and Paul's personal experience with Christ Jesus, great credence must be given to his writings being normative.

First, look at the man who wrote it. This was Saul of Tarsus, the chief enemy of the Christian "heresy." He was turned around in midcourse by the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15: 3-4). On the Damascus Road he was, as he puts it in Philippians, "apprehended by Christ Jesus." "Have I not seen our Lord?" he asks in 1 Corinthians 9:1. No single event apart from the Resurrection of Jesus has been so determinative of the course of Christian history as the conversion of Paul.

Second, consider the prominence of the message. Paul delivered to the Corinthians "as of first importance" this message of the Resurrection that he himself had received with such power and joy into his life. It was the heart of Christianity. The Resurrection was so prominent in his preachings at Athens, in fact, that his hearers could satirize Paul as

proclaiming two deities to add to the pantheon, Jesus and Anastasis (that is "Resurrection," Acts 17:18). The Resurrection is therefore no tailpiece to Christian doctrine; it is the centerpiece.

Third, notice the age of the traditions. By our counting, Jesus was executed in C.E. 31. First Corinthians was written in 54, some 20 years later. It would be very good tradition if the evidence went back only that far, but it goes back even further. Paul says, "I delivered you...what I also received" (1 Cor. 15:3). That is to say, he passed on the message he had himself received. This immediately takes us back to within three or four years of the Resurrection, when Paul was converted. The approximate date of this can be determined in Galatians 1:18 and 2:1. If the "14 years" of Galatians 2:1 mean 14 years after his conversion, then it would have been C.E. 35 that he came face to face with the Risen Christ. If the 3 years of Galatians 1:18 are to be added to those 14 years, then we must assume he came to faith in 32/33, for the visit to Jerusalem can be fixed at 49. In either case, the time gap between the event and Paul's discovery was tiny.

Even more significant than this small time gap is Paul's choice of words for "receive" and "deliver." They are technical words, both in Greek and in the underlying Hebrew, for receiving and handing on authorized tradition.¹⁶³ The Resurrection, fact and story were already authorized in Christian circles before the conversion of Paul. No wonder the German theologian Edward Meyer has called these verses "the oldest document of the Christian Church."

Fourth, consider the source of this tradition. Paul stresses in 1 Corinthians 15:11 that

he proclaimed precisely the same message of the Resurrection as did the Jerusalem church. His message comes from the very center of the events themselves, and within only two or three years of those events. Could one have better evidence of any historical event than this? Incidentally, in this passage Paul mentions two names of significance--Peter and James. Both met with Jesus after his Resurrection (1 Pet. 5:1; 1 Cor. 15:7). Paul went up to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion, to question them (Gal. 1:18).

Paul obviously was transformed by some incredulous event. What else would explain his transformation from persecutor to apostle?

If we grant, merely for the sake of discussion, that the incident of the empty sepulcher is fiction, when we come to consider the questions I have just raised, we are forced to believe that what did hit the disciples and Paul was some other amazing event, some event different in kind yet equal in force in its intensity. At least, logic impels us to conclude that, whatever it was that might have happened, it was enough to change the "powerless" Jesus in the hearts of the disciples into the "all-powerful" image of Jesus. And then we are constrained to suppose that this other event, whatever its nature, was enough to persuade the disciples that the Resurrection of Jesus was a fact.

Areas of Potential Application

For most believing Christians, what matters is not what the apostles experienced 2000 years ago, but what they meant when they preached that God raised Jesus from the dead. "A resuscitation is excellent news for the patient and family," observes Luke Timothy Johnson, professor of Christian Origins at Emory University's Candler School of Theology on Atlanta,

"But it is not 'good news' that affects everyone else. It does not begin a religion. It does not transform the lives of others across the ages. It is not what is being claimed by the first Christians.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, what is most distinctive about the claims made by Jesus was not that he was the Messiah or that he was "King of the Jews," as the Romans mockingly suggested. Rather, in proclaiming that Jesus had been resurrected, they were asserting something profoundly new about God as well as about Jesus himself.

As Jews themselves, Jesus' apostles knew only one God--the Yahweh of Hebrew Scriptures. From those Scriptures they could hardly have expected that they would ever see their disgraced and executed master again. According to those Scriptures, even Moses died, and of the Hebrew prophets, only two--Elijah and Enoch--had ascended to heaven. But neither rose from the dead. The Hebrew Bible is very reticent to talk about "life after death," says Alan Segal, professor of religion at Barnard College in New York. "There must have been beliefs in life after death, but the people who edited the Bible kept them out."¹⁶⁵

However, during the Maccabean revolt (circa 167 B.C.E.), the idea of bodily resurrection began to surface among the Jews. In a national revolt against Greek rulers, young Jewish men were dying as martyrs in defense of what they considered the laws of God. A just God, it was believed, would eventually restore them to life. Early Christianity was born in a climate of apocalyptic expectation created by the Maccabee's revolt, Segal believes. In Jesus' 33-year lifetime there were Pharisees who thought that the just would be resurrected by God at the end of secular time. "But they didn't speculate about how it would take place," says Segal.¹⁶⁶

Against this background, the Resurrection of Jesus was a provocative claim for anyone to make. In a paper submitted to the 1996 Resurrection Summit in New York, New Testament scholar Carey C. Newman points to another tradition in the Hebrew Scriptures that helps explain what the first Christians saw in Christ's Resurrection. According to the tradition, "The Glory of Yahweh"--meaning the divine presence--appeared at key moments and places in Jewish history: the Exodus cloud, at Mount Sinai, and over the temple. Those moments, says Newman, who teaches at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, also signal major changes in Yahweh's dealings with the people. For the early Christians the Resurrection was another of those moments, Newman argues. It brought them together as a new religious community and immediately distinguished them from other apocalyptic Jewish movements. The early Christians claimed that in the Risen Christ, the Glory of Yahweh was made manifest in a new and unexpected way. It revealed the dawn of a "new creation"--the church--and a new hope, that "in Christ" everyone could reliably expect his or her own resurrection from the dead.

From the very beginning of Christianity, Christ's "victory" over death, as Paul puts it, was not his alone. It was the victory promised to those who were baptized to his body, the church. Throughout two centuries of Roman persecution, countless Christian martyrs went to their deaths convinced that in God's coming kingdom they would rise again with a new glorified body. Medieval historian Caroline Walker Bynum, in her study The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336 (Columbia University Press), traces the persistent Christian conviction that the body as well as the soul would inherit eternal life. It wasn't easy. "Right through the Middle Ages," says Bynum, "you find spiritual material

interpretation of both the resurrected body of Christ and of our own resurrected bodies." But time and again in contention with neo-Platonists, Gnostics, and other spiritualizers, advocates of the more physical interpretation win out over the more vaporous explanations. Why? "They saw the body as the carrier of particularity, including gender and race," Bynam says. "Choosing for the body was choosing for individual identity for all eternity."¹⁶⁷

For as long as death remains a mystery, so, too, will resurrection. That Jesus rose from the dead is a statement of Christian faith and human hope--and implies a bond of trust between those who live in the presence of Christ today and those who first carried the Easter message 2000 years ago. Bonds like these sustain all religious traditions. "If we can dismiss as 'unhistorical' most of the Gospel's Jesus of Christianity, what can faithful Israel save for our rabbi, Moses, for Judaism"? asks Rabbi Jacob Neusner, a distinguished Talmudist at the University of South Florida in Tampa. "Religion does not merely recite secular facts about what happened in ordinary affairs on a particular day. Religion speaks of God's intervention into the world, and that claim does not come before the court of secular history, to be judged true or false by historian's ways of validating or falsifying historical facts."¹⁶⁸

Personal Statement

For more than a hundred years, the liberal theological tradition has tended to ignore the history behind the Christian proclamation of the Resurrection. It is my feeling that certain educators have been leaning heavily on this tradition and have guided many future church leaders, from a number of denominations, down a path headed away from traditional, fundamental beliefs. Depending on scholars such as Rudolf Bultmann, who insisted that the important thing is the Resurrection faith, not the Resurrection event, begs the question of

what event, or events, brought the faith into being. Why would the early Christians have proclaimed the Risen Christ unless "something happened" that they were convinced justified a message worth living, and dying, for? That those early Christians were deranged lunatics or untruthful liars does not, on the basis of the evidence, bear close examination.

Wolfhart Pannenberg, a world renowned systematic theologian from Munich, Germany, writes, "The legends created by excessive criticism [that tries to explain away the Resurrection] have been less credible than the Biblical reports themselves."¹⁶⁹

Other ideas pressed forward are that, historical events aside, the Resurrection is a "meaningful" mythopoetic statement, or New Age reincarnation, or the transmigration of souls, or theosophy is more "meaningful." Some Christians, wishing to be orthodox, say they don't bother their heads about the historical evidence; they just accept the Resurrection "on faith." But that can be a form of fideism--a kind of faith in faith--that is hard to square with the understanding of Christians such as the Apostle Paul. "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain," Paul wrote (1 Corinthians 15). In this passage and elsewhere Paul assumes the importance of historical evidence in making the case for the Resurrected Lord.

Those who argue against the historical reality are also in some difficulty. Gary Habermas of Liberty University, marshals some eleven events on which all scholars, Christians or not, agree. Four he considers especially important: Jesus died by crucifixion, afterward the disciples were convinced they had witnessed the literal appearance of the Risen Jesus; their lives were transformed as a consequence; and Paul had a conversion experience that he also believed to be and appearance of the Risen Jesus. Delve deeply enough into

these and other undoubted events, and you come up with the most probable of possible explanations, namely, that Jesus rose from the dead.

When compared to the author of The Presumption of Atheism, Anthony Flew's argument that the Resurrection did not happen because such things do not happen,¹⁷⁰ one wonders where is the weight of such an argument? Fortunately, the C. S. Lewis comment on the denial of the possibility of miracles gives us fodder for a deep inner chuckle. He wrote: "Unfortunately, we know the experience against miracles to be uniform only if we know all the reports of them are false. And we know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, if we do this, we are arguing in circles."¹⁷¹ Case dismissed?

One realization of this study is that all the evidence does not, by the canons of scientific methodology, prove that the Resurrection happened. My contention is that the evidence creates a very high level of certainty. Of course, if it did happen, the ramifications are rather far-reaching. It might even explain the existence of Christianity.

However, skeptics can and will appeal to "the innumerably repeated experiences that in this world the dead do not rise again." Only when, as Jesus promised, the dead do rise again, will the claims of the skeptics be definitely laid to rest. Until then, Christians walk by faith illuminated by reason, and reason illuminated by faith. If we are right about the Resurrection, we do not walk alone!

END NOTES

AND

WORKS CITED

Notes

¹Henry N. Wieman, "The Revelation of God in Christ," Process Studies 10, cited in Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, eds., Challenges to Inerrancy (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984) 271.

²Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951) 45.

³Marvin Moore, "The Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?" Signs of the Times April 1998: 6.

⁴John R. Rice, "He Didn't stay Dead," The Saturday Evening Post April 1980: 120.

⁵John Shelby Spong, Resurrection: Myth or Reality - A Bishop's Search for the Origins of Christianity (San Francisco: Harper, 1994) 210.

⁶Spong 211.

⁷John Dominic Crossan, Who Killed Jesus? (San Francisco: Harper, 1995) 180.

⁸Crossan 180.

⁹Raymond E Brown, The Death of the Messiah (New York: Double Day, 1994) 1351. (lists B.F. Westcott, J.K.Aldrich, and R. Rush)

¹⁰Brown 1351. (lists W.G.Scroggie and A. Davison)

¹¹Brown 1351.

¹²Kenneth L. Woodward, "Rethinking the Resurrection," Newsweek April 8, 1996: 62.

¹³Woodward 63.

¹⁴Woodward 65.

¹⁵Woodward 65.

¹⁶Woodward 65.

¹⁷Woodward 65.

¹⁸Woodward 65.

¹⁹Woodward 67.

²⁰Gerald O'Collins, "Christ's Resurrection and Ascension: A Reflection," America 160.11 Mar. 25, 1989: 263.

²¹Woodward 68.

²²Marcus J. Borg, Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1994) 3-4.

²³Borg 4.

²⁴Borg 21.

²⁵Borg 24.

²⁶Borg 26.

²⁷Borg 29.

²⁸Francis D. Nichol, et al., eds., Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 5 (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980) 249.

²⁹Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary 250.

³⁰Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary 250.

³¹Brown 1350.

³²Brown 1352.

³³F. Legard Smith, commentator, The Daily Bible NIV (Eugene, Oregon, Harvest House Publishers, 1984) 1454.

³⁴F.L.Smith 1454.

³⁵F.L.Smith 1454.

³⁶F.L.Smith 1455.

³⁷F.L.Smith 1455.

³⁸F.L.Smith 1455.

³⁹F.L.Smith 1455.

⁴⁰F.L.Smith 1456.

⁴¹F.L.Smith 1456.

⁴²F.L.Smith 1456.

⁴³A. Davison, "The Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus," Palestine Exploration Fund 38 (1906): 124-129.

⁴⁴W. Graham Scroggie, A Guide to the Gospels (London, 1948) 569-577.

⁴⁵The Time Element in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ Bible Advocates Press of the Church of God (Seventh Day) 7.

⁴⁶Herbert W. Armstrong, The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday (Pasadena, California: Ambassador College, 1972) 12.

⁴⁷Armstrong 13.

⁴⁸Armstrong 4.

⁴⁹Armstrong 4.

⁵⁰Armstrong 6.

⁵¹Norval Geldenhuys, "Commentary on the Gospel of Luke," The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1983) 334.

⁵²Samuele Bacchiocchi, The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Bible Perspectives, 1985) 25.

⁵³The Time Element 20.

⁵⁴Bacchiocchi 39.

⁵⁵Bacchiocchi 39.

⁵⁶Bacchiocchi 41.

⁵⁷Bacchiocchi 42.

⁵⁸Geldenhuys 664.

⁵⁹Geldenhuis 664.

⁶⁰The Time Element 20.

⁶¹The Time Element 20.

⁶²Bacchiocchi 43.

⁶³Bacchiocchi 44.

⁶⁴Bacchiocchi 44. Quoted from H.L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash vol. 2 (Munich, 1922-1928), 581 and 847.

⁶⁵Charles C. Torrey, "The Date of the Crucifixion According to the Fourth Gospel," Journal of Biblical Literature 50 (1931): 235.

⁶⁶Charles C. Torrey, "In the Fourth Gospel the Last Supper was the Paschal Meal," The Jewish Quarterly Review, 42 (January, 1952): 241.

⁶⁷Bacchiocchi 46.

⁶⁸Bacchiocchi 46.

⁶⁹Herman L. Hoen, The Crucifixion Was Not on Friday (Pasadena, California: Ambassador College, 1968) 14.

⁷⁰The Time Element 14.

⁷¹Bacchiocchi 53.

⁷²Eduard Lohse, "Sabbaton," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1971) vol. VII 20.

⁷³Bacchiocchi 57.

⁷⁴Brown 1366-1367.

⁷⁵Brown 1367-1368.

⁷⁶P.J. Heawood, "The Beginning of the Jewish Day," The Jewish Quarterly Review 36 (April 1945): 393-401.

⁷⁷U. Cassuto, Commentary on Genesis (New York, 1961) comment on Genesis 1:5.

⁷⁸Cassuto

⁷⁹Solomon Zeitlin, "The Beginning of the Jewish Day During the Second Commonwealth," The Jewish Quarterly Review 36 (April 1945):403-414.

⁸⁰Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions, trans. by John Mchugh (London, 1961), 180-183.

⁸¹Jacob Z. Lauterback, Rabbinic Essays (Cincinnati: 1951) 448.

⁸²G. Barrois, Manuel d'Archéologie Biblique, Vol. 2 (Paris 1953) 183.

⁸³G. von Rad, "hemera," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: 1974), vol. II, p. 943, where he says: "according to the cultus it officially began in the evening (Ex. 12:18; Lev. 23:32)." The implication is that there was also an unofficial method of reckoning.

⁸⁴Roger T. Beckwith, "The Day, Its Divisions, and its Limits, in Biblical Thought," The Evangelical Quarterly, 43 (October-December 1971):226.

⁸⁵Zeitlin 404.

⁸⁶Jack Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology (Princeton, 1964) 13.

⁸⁷Finegan 13.

⁸⁸H.R.Stroes, "Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning?" Vetus Testamentus 16 (1966):405.

⁸⁹Other examples are found in Deut. 1:33; 28:66; 1 Sam. 25:16; Ps. 91:5; Is. 27:3; 34:10; Jer. 14:17.

⁹⁰See Mark 4:27; 5:5; Luke 2:37; Acts 20:31; 26:7; 2 Cor. 11:25; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8; 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3.

⁹¹Josephus, War of the Jews 4, 9, 12, in Josephus Complete Works, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, 1974), 543. see also Antiquities of the Jews 16, 6, 2.

⁹²Roland de Vaux (n. 5) 187.

⁹³Josephus, War of the Jews 6, 9, 3.

⁹⁴Lauterback (n. 6) 447.

⁹⁵Finegan (n. 11), 290.

⁹⁶Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 2, 15, 7 (n. 16), 62.

⁹⁷Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 3, 10, 5 (n.16), 79.

⁹⁸Pliny, Natural History 2, 79, 188, cited in Jack Finegan (n. 11), 8.

⁹⁹Julian Morgenstern, "The Sources of the Creation Story--Genesis 1:1--2:4," The American Journal of semitic Languages and Literatures, 36 (April 1920):176.

¹⁰⁰Beckwith (n. 9) 225.

¹⁰¹Beckwith 226.

¹⁰²SDA Bible Commentary 237.

¹⁰³SDA Bible Commentary 238.

¹⁰⁴SDA Bible Commentary 238.

¹⁰⁵SDA Bible Commentary 238.

¹⁰⁶Talmud "Rosh Hashanah" 3a, Soncino edition, 7.

¹⁰⁷The dates given for Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas are not actually contradictory. Annas was deposed by a Roman Governor, but Luke was evidently among those who regarded him as the rightful high priest long after he lost the actual office. Annas as long as he lived seems to have retained more influence over the Jews than his successors; he was looked up to as a sort of "high priest emeritus," as the head of a family that furnished five high priests after him. (SDA Bible Commentary vol. 5 715.)

¹⁰⁸George Ogg, The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus (Cambridge: The University Press, 1940) 339.

¹⁰⁹Brown 1375.

¹¹⁰Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary 252.

¹¹¹SDA Bible Commentary 252.

¹¹²Sherman E. Johnson, The Interpreter's Bible exegetical comment on Matt. 26:17.

¹¹³Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, Babylonian Chronology, 626 B.C.-A.D. 75. (Providence R.I.: Brown University Press, 1957) 25.

¹¹⁴SDA Bible Commentary 236.

¹¹⁵SDA Bible Commentary 236.

- ¹¹⁶SDA Bible Commentary 236.
- ¹¹⁷SDA Bible Commentary 236.
- ¹¹⁸SDA Bible Commentary 236.
- ¹¹⁹SDA Bible Commentary 236.
- ¹²⁰SDA Bible Commentary 237.
- ¹²¹Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary on Matt. 28:1, vol. 5 553.
- ¹²²Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898 and 1940) 377 and 380.
- ¹²³SDA Bible Commentary 554.
- ¹²⁴SDA Bible Commentary 555.
- ¹²⁵Wilbur Fletcher Steele, "Must Syntax Die That the Sabbath May Live"? Methodist Review 81 (May-June, 1899) 401-402.
- ¹²⁶Watch Tower (Aug.15, 1987) 22-23.
- ¹²⁷Watch Tower 23-23.
- ¹²⁸Watch Tower 22-23.
- ¹²⁹Watch Tower 22-23.
- ¹³⁰Watch Tower 22-23.
- ¹³¹Watch Tower 22-23.
- ¹³²Watch Tower 22-23.
- ¹³³Watch Tower (Feb. 1, 1968) 94-95.
- ¹³⁴Dwight K. Nelson, "The Godforsaken," Signs of the Times September, 1998: 16.
- ¹³⁵Dietrick E. Thomson, "The Passover Computation: Precise astronomical calculation and historical reasonings are used to date the Crucifixion," Science News, 125 Jan. 21, 1984: 40.
- ¹³⁶Thomson 40.

¹³⁷Thomson 40.

¹³⁸Thomson 40.

¹³⁹Thomson 40.

¹⁴⁰Thomson 40.

¹⁴¹Thomson 40.

¹⁴²Bradley E. Schaefer, "Dating the Crucifixion," Sky and Telescope April 1989: 374.

¹⁴³Schaefer 374.

¹⁴⁴Schaefer 374.

¹⁴⁵Gary DeLashmutt, "The Events Accompanying Jesus' Crucifixion"
http://www.xenos.org/ct_outln/jon92.htm (sermon notes)

¹⁴⁶DeLashmutt

¹⁴⁷DeLashmutt

¹⁴⁸SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5 247.

¹⁴⁹William Hales, A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy, vol. 11 (London: C.J.G. and F. Rivington, 1830.) 517.

¹⁵⁰Uriah Smith, The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation (Oshawa, Ontario: Signs of the Times Publishing Association, 1945) 202.

¹⁵¹SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4 851.

¹⁵²SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 4 851.

¹⁵³Moses Stuart, Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy (Andover: Allen, Morrill and Wardwell, 1842) 74.

¹⁵⁴Uriah Smith, 205.

¹⁵⁵Uriah Smith, 209.

¹⁵⁶Humphery Prideaux, The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of Jesus and Neighboring Nations, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Bros., 1842) 322.

¹⁵⁷See S. Bliss, Sacred Chronology 180; New International Encyclopedia, art. "Jesus Christ;" Karl Wieseler, Chronological Synopsis of the Four Gospels 164-247.

¹⁵⁸William Hales, A New Analysis of Chronology vol. 1 94.

¹⁵⁹Uriah Smith 215.

¹⁶⁰Uriah Smith 69-70.

¹⁶¹SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5 257.

¹⁶²Brown 1374.

¹⁶³Micheal Green, "Why the Resurrections Matters," Christianity Today March 17, 1989: 30.

¹⁶⁴Woodward 68.

¹⁶⁵Woodward 68.

¹⁶⁶Woodward 68.

¹⁶⁷Woodward 70.

¹⁶⁸Woodward 70.

¹⁶⁹N. T. Wright. "Grave Matters," Christianity Today Apr. 6, 1998: 51-53.

¹⁷⁰Richard John Neuhaus, "History and Faith (Resurrection of Christ as Historical Fact)," National Review Apr. 15, 1988: 45.

¹⁷¹Neuhaus 45.

¹⁷²Neuhaus 45.

¹⁷³SDA Bible Commentary 200 - 201.

¹⁷⁴SDA Bible Commentary 224.

¹⁷⁵SDA Bible Commentary 225.

¹⁷⁶SDA Bible Commentary 232.

¹⁷⁷SDA Bible Commentary 233.

¹⁷⁸Brown 1367.

Works Cited

- Armstrong, Herbert W. The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday. Pasadena, California: Ambassador College, 1972.
- Bacchiocchi, Samuele. The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Berrien Springs, Michigan: Bible Perspectives, 1985.
- Beckwith, Roger T. "The Day, Its Divisions, and its Limits, in Biblical Thought." The Evangelical Quarterly 43 (Oct-Dec. 1971):226.
- Berrois, G. Manuel d'Archéologie Biblique. vol.2 Paris: 1953.
- Borg, Marcus J. Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship. Vally Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1994.
- Brown, Raymond E. The Death of the Messiah. New York: Double Day, 1994.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. Theology of the New Testament. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.
- Cassuto, U. Commentary on Genesis. New York: 1961.
- Crossan, John Dominic. Who Killed Jesus. San Francisco: Harper, 1995.
- Davison, A., "The Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus." Palestine Exploration Fund 38. (1906): 124-129.
- de Vaux, Roland. Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions. trans. John Mchugh. London: 1961.
- DeLashmutt, Gary. "The Events Accompanying Jesus' Crucifixion"
http://www.xenos.org/ct_outln/jon192.htm (sermon notes)
- Finegan, Jack. Handbook of Biblical Chronology. Princeton, 1964.
- Geldenhuis, Norval. "Commentary on the Gospel of Luke." The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grande Rapids, Michigan, 1983.
- Green, Micheal. "Why the Resurrection Matters (The Great Reversal)." Christianity Today, 33.5 March 17, 1989: 28-32.

- Hales, William. A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy. London: C.J.G. and F. Rivington, 1830.
- Heawood, P.J. "The Beginning of the Jewish Day." The Jewish Quarterly Review 36 (April 1945): 393-401.
- Hoen, Herman L. The Crucifixion Was Not on Friday. Pasadena, California: Ambassador College, 1968.
- "Is the Cross for Christians?" Watch Tower, Aug. 15, 1987: 21-24.
- Johnson, Sherman E. The Interpreter's Bible. exegetical comment on Matt. 26:17.
- Josephus. War of the Jews. and Antiquities of the Jews. in Josephus Complete Works trans. William Whiston Grand Rapids: 1974.
- Lauterback, Jacob Z. Rabbinic Essays 6 Cincinnati: 1951.
- Lohse, Eduard. "Sabbaton." Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1971.
- Moore, Marvin. "The Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?" Signs of the Times April 1998: 6.
- Morgenstern, Julian. "The Sources of the Creation Story--Genesis 1:1--2:4." The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures 36 April 1920: 176.
- Nelson, Dwight K. "The Godforsaken." Signs of the Times Sept. 1998: 16.
- Neuhaus, Richard John. "History and Faith (Resurrection of Christ as Historical Fact)." National Review, 40.7 Apr. 15, 1988: 45.
- Nichol, Francis D. et al. editors. The Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 5. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980.
- O'Collins, Gerald. "Christ's Resurrection and Ascension: A Reflection." America, 160.11 Mar. 25, 1989: 262-263.
- Ogg, George. The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus. Cambridge: The University Press, 1940.
- Parker, Richard A. and Dubberstein, Waldo H. Babylonian Chronology, 626 B.C. - A.D. 75. Providence R.I.: Brown University Press, 1957.
- Pliny, Natural History. cited by Jack Finegan.

- Prideaux, Humphery. The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews and Neighboring Nations. New York: Harper and Bros., 1842.
- Rice, John R. "He Didn't stay Dead." Saturday Evening Post, Apr. 1980: 10, 120-121, 127.
- Schaefer, Bradley E. "Dating the Crucifixion." Sky and Telescope April 1989: 374.
- Scroggie, W. Graham. A Guide to the Gospels. London: 1948.
- Smith, F. Legard, commentator. The Daily Bible, NIV. Eugene Oregon: Harvest House Publishing, 1984.
- Smith, Uriah. The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. Oshawa, Ontario: Signes of the Times Publishing Association, 1945.
- Spong, John Shelby. Resurrection: Myth or Reality. San Francisco: Harper, 1994.
- Steele, Wilbur Fletcher. "Must Syntax Die that the Sabbath May Live?" Methodist Review, 81 May-June, 1899.
- Stroes, H. R. "Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning"? Vestus Testamentus 16 (1966):405.
- Stuart, Moses. Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy. Andover: Allen, Morrill and Wardell, 1842.
- Talmud "Rosh Hashanah." Soncino edition.
- Thomson, Dietrick E. "The Passover Computation: Precise astronomical calculation and historical reasonings are used to date the Crucifixion." Science News, 125 Jan. 21, 1984: 40.
- The Time Element in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. Bible Advocate's Press of the Church of God (Seventh Day).
- Torrey, Charles C. "In the Fourth Gospel the Last Supper was the Paschal Meal." The Jewish Quarterly Review 42 (January, 1952): 241.
- Torrey, Charles C. "The Date of the Crucifixion According to the Fourth Gospel." Journal of Biblical Literature 50 (1931): 235.
- von Rad, G. "hemera." Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: 1974.
- Watch Tower Aug. 15, 1987: 22-23.

- Weiman, Henry N. "The Revelation of God in Christ", Process Studies 10, cited in Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest, ed., Challenges to Inerrancy Chicago: Moody Press, 1984.
- White, Ellen G. The Desire of Ages. Mountain View California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898 and 1940.
- Woodward, Kenneth L. "Rethinking the Resurrection." Newsweek, 127.15 Apr. 8, 1996: 61-70.
- Wright, N.T. "Grave Matters (Easter Resurrection)." Christianity Today, 42.4 Apr. 6, 1998: 51-53.
- Zeitlin, Solomon. "The Beginning of the Jewish Day During the Second Commonwealth." The Jewish Quarterly Review 36 (April 1945): 403-414.

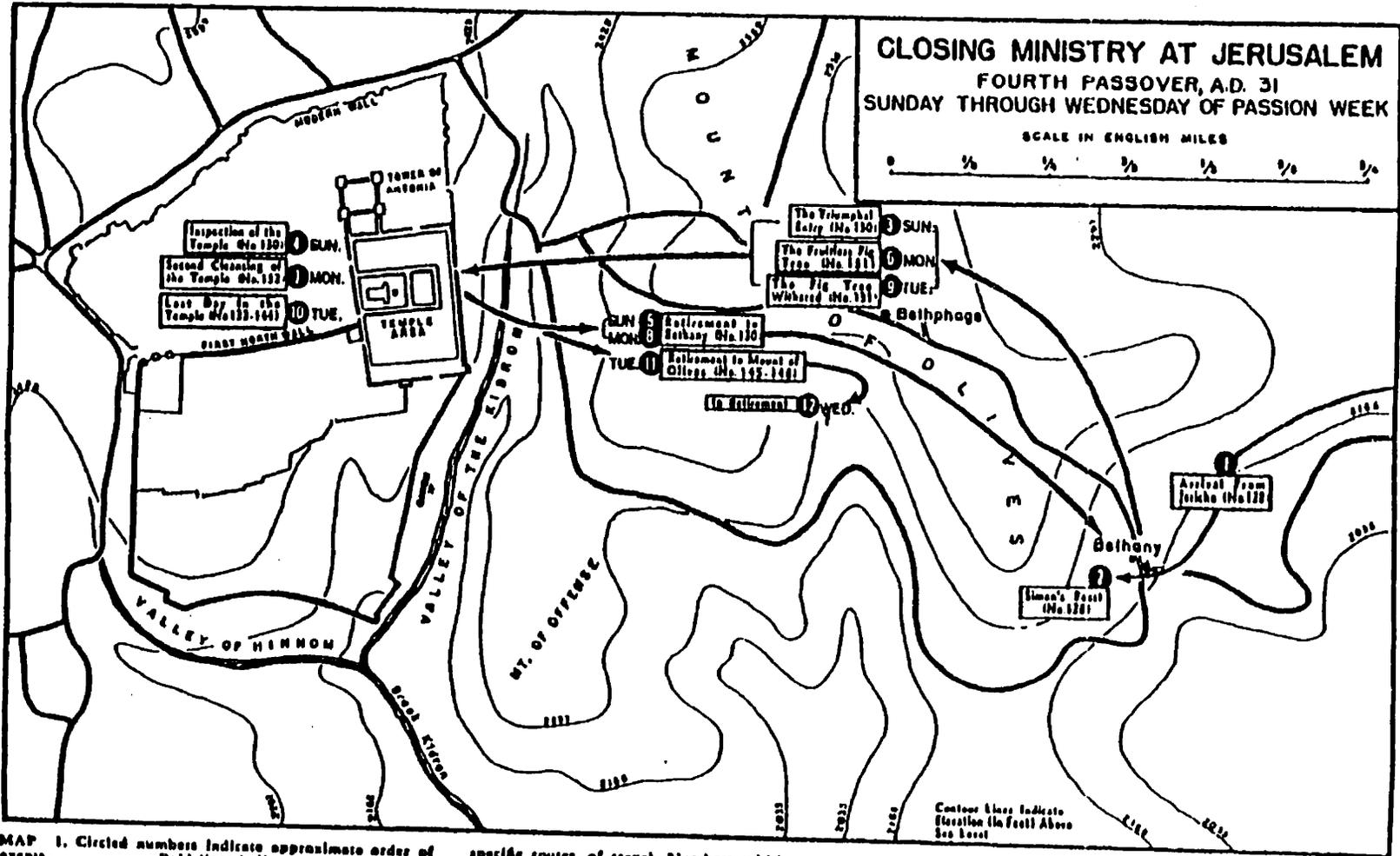
APPENDICES

THE
FOURFOLD
GOSPEL
NARRATIVE

No.	Incident	Map*	Chart*	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
130	Fourth Passover:†† The Triumphant Entry	11	9	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-19
131	The Fruitless Fig Tree (M-33)	11	9	21:18-22	11:12-14, 20-26		
132	Second Cleansing of the Temple	11	9	21:12-17	11:15-19	19:45-48	
133	The Leaders Challenge Jesus' Authority	11	9	21:23-27	11:27-33	20:1-8	
134	The Two Sons (P-16)	[11]	-	21:28-32			
135	The Wicked Husband- men (P-8)	[11]	-	21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-19	
136	The Man Without a Wedding Garment (P-21)	[11]	-	22:1-14			
137	Paying Tribute to Caesar	[11]	-	22:15-22	12:13-17	20:20-26	
138	Marriage and the Resurrection	[11]	-	22:23-33	12:18-27	20:27-38	
139	The Great Commandment	[11]	-	22:34-40	12:28-34	20:39, 40	
140	Jesus Silences His Critics	[11]	-	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44	
141	Woes Upon Scribe and Pharisee	[11]	-	23:1-39	12:38-40	20:45-47	
142	The Widow's Mites	[11]	-	--	12:41-44	21:1-4	
143	Interview With Certain Greeks	[11]	-	--	--	--	12:20-36*
144	Final Rejection by the Jewish Leaders	11	-	--	--	--	12:34*-50
145	Retirement to the Mount of Olives; Signs of Christ's Return (P-35)	11	9	24:1-51	13:1-37	21:5-38	
146	The Ten Virgins (P-34)	[11]	-	25:1-13			
147	The Talents (P-27)	[11]	-	25:14-30			
148	The Sheep and the Goats (P-39)	[11]	-	25:31-46			
149	Preparation for the Passover	[12]	-	26:17-19	14:12-16	22:7-13	
150	Celebration of the Passover	[12]	8,9	26:20	14:17, 18*	22:14-16	
151	Washing the Disciples' Feet	[12]	-	--	--	22:24-30	13:1-20
152	The Lord's Supper	12	8,9	26:26-29	14:22-25	22:17-20	
153	The Betrayer Revealed	[12]	-	26:21-25	14:18*-21	22:21-23	13:21-30
154	Parting Counsel	[12]	-	--	--	--	13:31-14:31
155	Retirement to Gethsemane	12	8,9	26:30	14:26	22:39	
156	A Warning to Peter and the Ten	12	-	26:31-35	14:27-31	22:31-38	[13:36-38]*
157	The True Vine	[12]	-	--	--	--	15:1-17
158	A Warning of Persecution	[12]	-	--	--	--	15:18-16:4
159	The Coming of the Comforter	[12]	-	--	--	--	16:5-33
160	Jesus' Intercessory Prayer	[12]	-	--	--	--	17:1-26
161	Gethsemane (M-34)*	12	9	26:36-56	14:32-52	22:40-53	18:1-12
162	Hearing Before Annas	12	9	--	--	--	18:13-24
163	Night Trial Before the Sanhedrin	12	9	26:57-75	14:53-72	22:54-65	13:25-27
164	Day Trial Before the Sanhedrin	12	9	27:1	15:1	22:66-71	
165	Judas' Confession and Suicide	[12]	9	27:3-10			
166	First Trial Before Pilate	12	9,11	27:2, 11-14	15:2-5	23:1-5	18:28-38
167	Hearing Before Herod Antipas	12	9,11	--	--	23:6-12	
168	Second Trial Before Pilate	12	9,11	27:15-31*	15:6-19	23:13-25	18:39-19:16
169	The Crucifixion	12	8,9	27:31*-56	15:20-41	23:26-49	19:17-37
170	The Burial	12	8,9	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42
171	The Guard at the Tomb	12	9	27:62-66			
172	The Resurrection	13	8-10	28:1-15	16:1-11	24:1-12	20:1-18
173	The Walk to Emmaus	13	9	--	16:12	24:13-32	
174	First Appearance in the Upper Room	13	9	--	16:13	24:33-49	20:19-23
175	Second Appearance in the Upper Room	13	10	--	16:14	--	20:24-29
176	Appearance by the Lake of Galilee (M-35)	[13]	[10]	--	--	--	21:1-23
177	Appearance on a Mountain in Galilee	[13]	[10]	28:16-20	16:15-18		
178	The Ascension	13	10	--	16:19, 20	24:50-53	

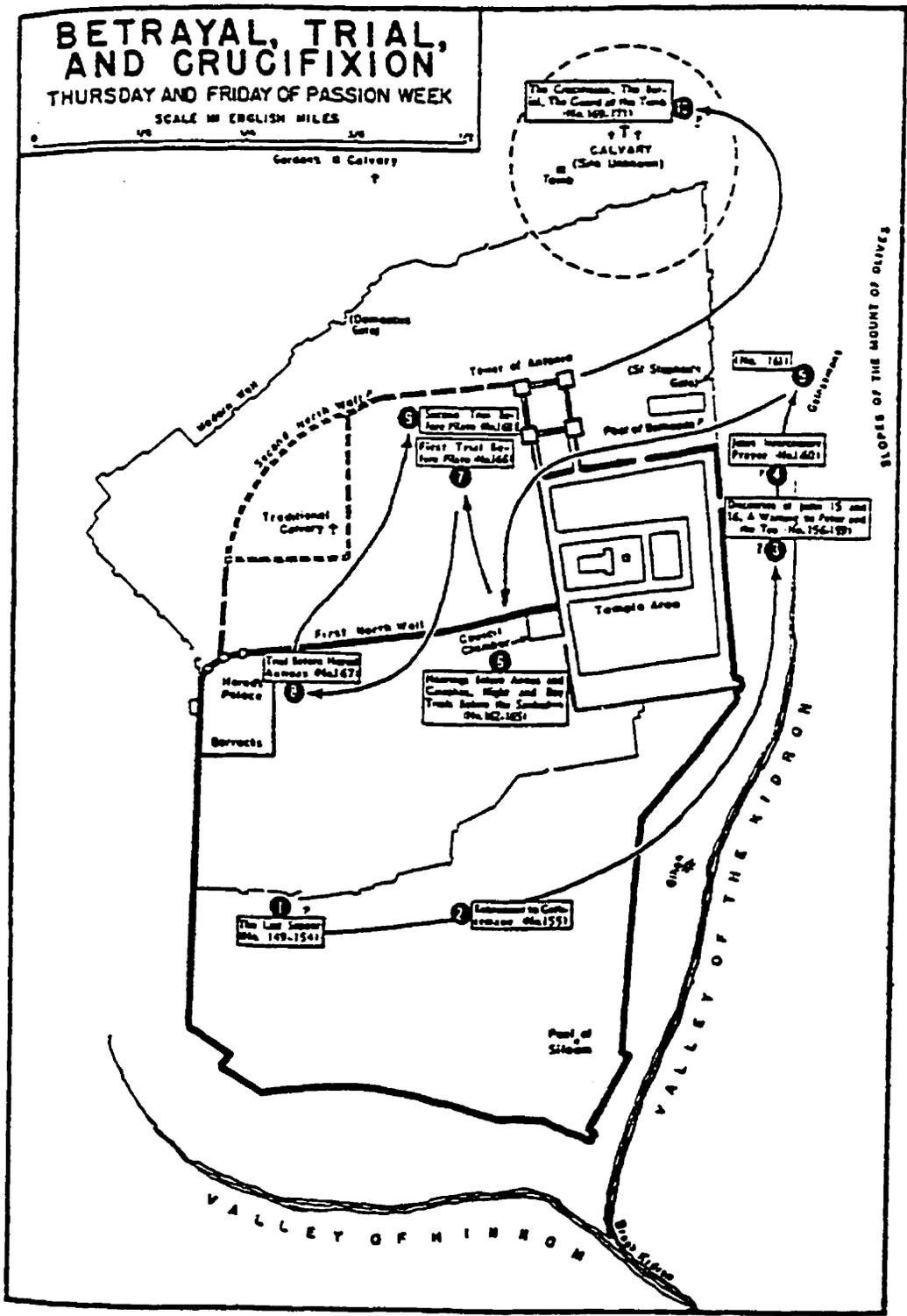
End Note ¹⁷³

†† For the day of the week of each incident see map p. 157 chart 2, p. 169



MAP 1. Circled numbers indicate approximate order of events. Bold lines indicate direction, but not

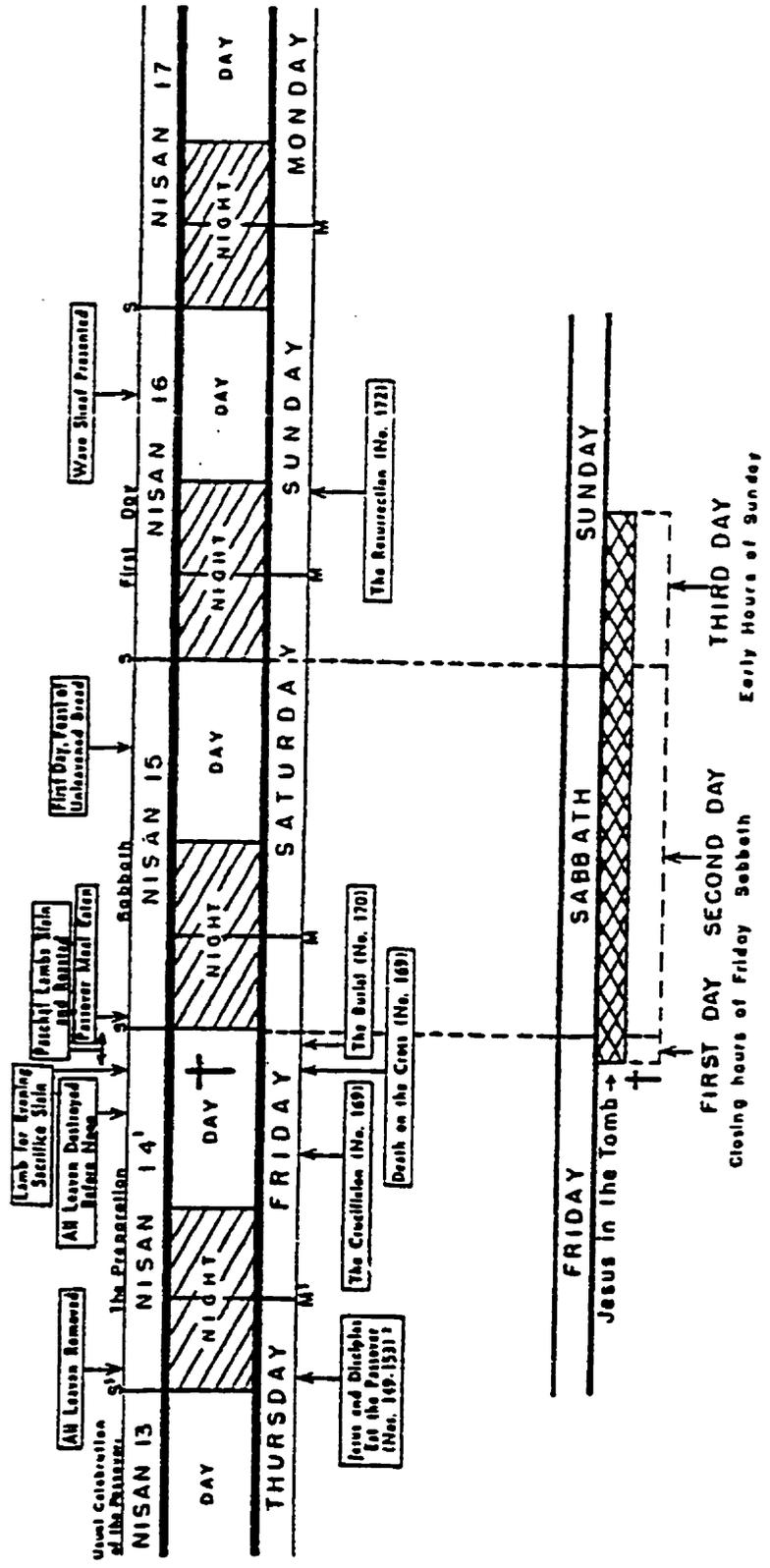
specific routes of travel. Numbers within boxes refer to the harmony of the Gospels.



MAP 2. Circled numbers indicate approximate order of events. Bold lines indicate direction, but not specific routes, of travel. Numbers within boxes refer to the Harmony of the Gospels, events see Map 1

For preceding

End Note 175



"THREE DAYS" BY JEWISH RECKONING'

CRUCIFIXION IN RELATION TO PASSOVER

CHART 3.—This chart illustrates the problem of reconciling the Gospels and the crucifixion with the usual celebration of the Passover by the Jews, as set forth by the Synoptics and in the Gospel of John. For a full study of this problem, see the Additional Notes on the Crucifixion (Nos. 169-172).
 ① Numbers refer to the Additional Notes on the Crucifixion.

② Nisan 14 was known as the "eve of the Passover," that is, the day on which preparations were to be made for the Sabbath. Preparations were to be made for the Sabbath, that is, the day on which the Passover was to be eaten. The Sabbath, in this year, coincided with the "eve of the Sabbath." (See Additional Notes on Matt. 24: 21.) This chart illustrates the various biblical references referring to the time Jesus was in the tomb. ③ S = sunset; M = midnight.

COMPARISON OF THE (QUMRAN) SOLAR CALENDAR AND THE LUNAR CALENDAR
FOR DATING EVENTS IN THE PASSION NARRATIVE

Day	Gospel Happening	Nisan Date
Tues. day →	preparation for paschal meal (Mark 14:12-16)	solar 14 lunar 11
Tues. eve → night → (Tu./Wed.)	Last Supper paschal meal (Mark 14:17-18; Luke 22:15) eaten before (lunar) 15th Nisan (John 13:1) Gethsemane; arrest of Jesus Inquiry before Annas (Mark 14:53a; John 18:13) Peter's denials; mockery by servants (Luke 22:54-65) Sent to Caiaphas (John 18:24); 1st Sanhedrin session (Luke 22:66-71)	solar 15 (paschal meal) lunar 12
Wed. day →	Mockery of Jesus by authorities (Mark 14:65)	
night → (Wed./Th.)	(Jesus in custody of high priest)	solar 16
Th. morn. →	2d Sanhedrin session (Mark 15:1a) Jesus taken to Pilate (Mark 15:1b; Luke 23:1) Opening of Pilate trial (Luke 23:2-5) Jesus taken to Herod (Luke 23:6-12)	lunar 13
Th. P.M. →	Return to Pilate and trial resumed (Luke 23:15ff.); adjournment	
night → (Th./Fri.)	(Jesus in Pilate's custody)	solar 17
Fri. morn. →	Pilate's wife's dream (Matt 27:19) Pilate trial resumed; Barabbas Pilate sentences Jesus (Mark 15:15) noon before Passover (John 19:14) (Jewish priests slay lambs in Temple precincts) Crucifixion, death, burial by Joseph	lunar 14
Fri. eve. →	Jesus in the tomb	solar 18
Sat. morn. →	Jews eat their paschal meal (John 18:28b) Priests and Pharisees ask Pilate to guard sepulcher (Matt 27:62-64)	lunar 15 (paschal meal)