

Is the Passover and Crucifixion just too Complicated?

How important is it that we understand the true date of God's Passover, and the Crucifixion of Christ? Is this subject just too complex and confusing for us to discern and understand the truth? Does it really matter? Is there so much controversy and difference of opinion that we might as well throw up our hands and admit defeat?

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Just how complicated is it?

I received a letter asking me about the Passover and true date of the crucifixion of Christ. The writer said: "Hi, I read with much interest your arguments for a Thursday crucifixion in your article, "How Long Was Jesus in the Grave?" (<http://www.triumphpro.com/jesus-in-grave-new-truth.htm>). In that article, you give the following timeline for Passion Week:

April 2, Sunday, Abib 10 <i>Jesus' entry Jerusalem</i>	April 3, Monday, Abib 11 <i>Jesus in Temple</i>	April 4, Tuesday, Abib 12 <i>Lord's Supper</i>	April 5, Wednesday Abib 13 <i>Jesus' trial by Pilate</i>	April 6, Thursday, Abib 14 <i>Passover, Crucifixion</i>	April 7, Friday, Abib 15 <i>Holy Day 1st Day UB</i>	April 8, Sabbath, Abib 16 <i>Counting of Omer begins</i>
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"However, the following Scriptures indicate that the Lord's Supper occurred on the first Day of Unleavened Bread, which does not seem consistent with your chart above.

Matt.26:17-19: "On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?' He replied, 'Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, "The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house."' So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover."

Mk.14:12-16: "On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, 'Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?' So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar

of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, “The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?”¹⁵ He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.’ The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.”

“Could you explain how you reconcile these passages with your timeline?”

At first glance, this would seem to be a dilemma. How can it already be “the first day of Unleavened Bread” but they have not yet even begun to “prepare for the Passover,” which is the beginning event of the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

The answer is really very simple.

A Matter of Translation

Notice! The King James Version has inserted the words “day” and “feast of” in Matthew’s account. These words do not belong! In the original Greek, as the *Englishman’s Greek-English Interlinear* shows, the correct rendering is as follows:

“Now on the first [day] of unleavened bread.”

Thus the real Greek reads, “Now on the first of unleavened bread.” However, the first *day* of unleavened bread would not come till Nisan 15th arrived! What does the expression “the first of unleavened bread” really mean? The Greek word for “FIRST” here is #4418 in Strong’s Concordance – *PROTOS* – and means, “FOREMOST (IN TIME, PLACE, ORDER OF IMPORTANCE) – BEFORE, BEGINNING, BEST, CHIEF.”

Therefore, this verse in Matthew merely states, “Now in the *beginning of* unleavened bread,” or “Now *before* unleavened bread!” This refers to a period of TIME at the beginning of or preceding the Feast of Unleavened Bread – *an indefinite period which is not specified but which is related to the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread!*

The Word “DAY”

But what about the word “day” as found in the accounts of Mark and Luke? Mark says it was the “first day” of unleavened bread “when they killed the passover.” Luke says it was “the day” of unleavened bread when the passover “must be killed.”

Now the Passover lambs were killed on Nisan 14, but the Feast did not begin until the 15th day of the month. So, “Houston, we have a problem!”

Again, the answer is very simple, with a little research and investigation!

Many ASSUME that this word “day” MUST mean Nisan 14, because that is the

literal 24-hour day the Passover lamb was commanded to be killed (Exo.12:6). However, the truth of the matter is that the Greek word “DAY” also has *many different meanings!*

“*Hemera*”

Notice! The Greek word translated “day” in these verses is *HEMERA*. It is #2250 in Strong's Concordance and means – “DAY, i.e. (lit.) *the time space between dawn and dark, or the whole 24 hours . . . fig. A PERIOD (ALWAYS DEFINED MORE OR LESS CLEARLY IN THE CONTEXT) – AGE . . . DAY . . . TIME, WHILE, YEARS.*”

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words defines *hemera* as follows: “(a) the period of natural light . . . (b) the same, but figuratively for a period of opportunity for service . . . (c) one period of alternate light and darkness . . . (d) *A PERIOD OF UNDEFINED LENGTH MARKED BY CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS, such as ‘the day of small things,’ Zech.4:10, of perplexity and distress, Isa.17:11; Obad.12-14; of prosperity and of adversity, Ecc.7:14; of trial and testing, Ps.95:8; of salvation, Isa.49:8; 2 Cor.6:2; cf. Luke 19:42; of evil, Eph.6:13, of wrath and revelation of the judgments of God, Rom.2:5; (e) an APPOINTED TIME, Eccl.8:6; Eph.4:30 . . . (f) a notable defeat in battle, etc., Isa.9:4 . . . (g) by metonymy – ‘when,’ ‘at the time when.’”*

Clearly, this word has many different uses in the Greek language and most certainly does NOT always refer to a particular 24-hour “day”!

Notice how it is used in various Scriptures in the New Testament!

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see *my day [the period of Christ's coming]*: and he saw it, and was glad” (John 8:56).

“At that TIME [*HEMERA*] there was a great persecution against the church” (Acts 8:1).

“But to Israel he saith, All DAY long [i.e., for a very long time] I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Rom.10:21).

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that ONE DAY is with the Lord AS A THOUSAND YEARS, and a thousand years as one day” (II Pet.3:8).

“But the DAY OF THE LORD [period of Christ's intervention] will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Pet.3:10).

With this understanding then, we see that the verses in Mark and Luke can be translated, and understood, as follows:

“And the *beginning period of unleavened bread*, when they killed the Passover” (Mark 14:12).

“Then came the *TIME of unleavened bread*, when the passover must be killed” (Luke 22:7).

Thus the ostensible problem is really very easily solved!

The Road to Emmaus

In the book of Luke we read a striking account regarding two disciples who were traveling to Emmaus that Sunday, the first day of the week, following the resurrection. Jesus joined up with them, His identity hidden, and He conversed with them. Notice the account:

“Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. And He said to them, ‘What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?’ Then the one who was Cleopas answered and said to Him, ‘Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which Happened there in these days?’ And He said to them, ‘What things?’ So they said to Him, ‘The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, *today is the THIRD DAY since all these things happened*” (Luke 24:13-21).

Notice! It was Sunday, and these two disciples said it was “THE THIRD DAY since all these things happened”! Now if we think Christ was crucified on a Wednesday, and count from Wednesday, when Jesus was crucified on the stake, we have – Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday – FOUR DAYS – it would have been FOUR days “since these things were done”!

The Englishman’s Greek Interlinear has this verse, “But then with all these things *THIRD THIS DAY brings today, SINCE these things came to pass.*” *The Interlinear Bible* has it: “But with all these things *THIRD this day comes today SINCE these things occurred!*” Obviously, Sunday is NOT “three days” from Wednesday but FOUR days! A Friday crucifixion would not fit the facts, either. Sunday is only TWO days from Friday! Therefore, the only available option is a *Thursday* crucifixion!

The Jewish Calendar Proof

The Jewish calendar makes this truth irrefutable and plain. Interestingly, in this day of computers, moon shots, and fly-bys of the moons of Jupiter, Saturn, and landing

spacecraft on the planet Mars, mankind has seen scientific and astronomical knowledge explode exponentially. As the prophet Daniel was told of the last days, or end times, “knowledge shall be increased” (Dan.12:4).

The whole question can be settled, once and for all, by the knowledge of astronomy and the Jewish calendar. Rabbis admit that in the time of the second Temple, the Jewish calendar was regulated by the moon. That is, each month began when a “new moon” crescent was sighted by appropriate observers, and then certified by the Sanhedrin (the Supreme Court).

Writes Arthur Spier in his book *The Comprehensive Jewish Calendar*:

“In the early times of our history the solution was found by the following practical procedure: *The beginnings of months were determined by direct observation of the new moon.* Then those beginnings of the months (Rosh Hodesh) were sanctified and announced by the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court in Jerusalem, after witnesses had testified that they had seen the new crescent and after their testimony had been thoroughly examined, confirmed by calculation, and duly accepted” (p.1).

Astronomical tables and calculations today can give us the time and occurrence of every “new moon” as it would have been seen from Jerusalem (or other major cities) backwards in time for centuries and millennia.

The Swift Guide to the Galaxy, a software program for computers, under “Lunar Calendar,” provides such a program. For the first month of Nisan or Abib, 30 A.D., it gives a calendar showing all the moon’s phases, as seen from Jerusalem, for every day of the month.

In A.D. 30, for the month of March, the molad or conjunction of the New Moon occurred on Wednesday, March 22. The crescent New Moon was seen in the evening of Thursday, March 23, making Abib 1 Friday, March 24. Therefore, in A.D. 30, the 15th day of Abib – the First Day of Unleavened Bread – was *Friday, April 7th!*

This means that in 30 A.D. the day of the Passover sacrifice, Abib 14, was NOT ON WEDNESDAY, BUT RATHER ON THURSDAY, April 6th!! In other words, the date of the crucifixion was THURSDAY, APRIL 6TH, 30 A.D.!

Corroborating this witness, Dr. Monzur Ahmed, author of the “mooncalc” software program, was contacted by Nick Wood in England. Dr. Ahmed sent him the dates and times of all the lunar conjunctions for the years 29, 30, and 31 A.D. These figures agreed with his own software “COSMI Guide to the Galaxy,” which show the positions of all the heavenly bodies, including the Sun and Moon, for any given day or hour, all the way back to way before 1 BC. As he says in an e-mail, “I am sure that the Solar System has been stable since the Exodus and Joshua’s ‘Long Day’, so there is no need to really dispute these figures.”

There is a website devoted to the Phases of the Moon, called *Obliquity*. You can

go on their website and obtain the New Moon conjunction data – time and date for the New Moons for the year 30 A.D., especially March (which New Moon would correspond with the Hebrew month Nisan or Abib). Just go to <http://www.obliquity.com/cgi-bin/lunar.cgi?Year=30&Month=3>. You will find that the conjunction of the Nisan New Moon was on March 22, at 17:29 GMT. This would have been 19:29 Jerusalem time (the Jerusalem time zone is two hours after GMT). 19:29 would have been 7:29 PM, Wednesday evening.

Since Hebrew days begin at sunset, this would have been the beginning of the next day by Hebrew reckoning. Thus the first sighting of the new crescent would have most likely been Thursday evening, around sunset, about 22 ½ hours later. Thus would mean that Friday, March 24th (beginning Thursday evening) would have been the first day of the New Moon/Month of Nisan/Abib. This means the 14th day of the month – the day the Passover was killed – would have been Thursday, April 6th, and Friday, April 7th was the annual holy day (First Day of Unleavened Bread).

Roger Rusk, Professor of Physics at the University of Tennessee, has also provided astronomical evidence that in A.D. 30 the New Moon crescent for the month of Nisan would make Nisan 14 occur on a Thursday. So reported *Christianity Today*, a well-known Christian magazine (March 24, 1974).

Jack Finegan in *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* says absolute astronomical evidence proves the crucifixion date could not have been on a Wednesday for the years A.D. 29 to A.D. 33. He points out April 25 could NOT have been a possible date in 31 A.D. because it would involve an extra lunar month, and the barley would have been ready to begin harvesting much sooner, by March 27th. (If the previous winter had been long and cold, the necessary barley sheaves could have also been obtained from the region of Jericho. Passover (Nisan 14) on March 27 would not have fallen on a Wednesday, but on a Tuesday.

A major article appeared in the journal *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol.27, back in 1870, entitled “The Crucifixion on Thursday – Not Friday,” by J. K. Aldrich (p.401-429). Then Professor Wescott of Great Britain maintained Thursday was the proper day, in *An Introduction to the Study of the Gospels* (Cambridge, 1881).

In addition to these witnesses, a book entitled *Astronomical Tables of the Sun, Moon and Planets* by astronomer Jean Meeus (second edition, published by Willmann-Bell, Inc., PO Box 35025, Richmond, Virginia 23235) gives the proof. Part four deals with the “Phases of the Moon.” This remarkable work provides tables by which readers can compute the phases of the moon, including the New Moons (molads) with an accuracy within 10 minutes or less, for any year from 1500 B.C. to 2999 A.D. (The calculations of course may not work for years prior to the Exodus or Noah’s Flood, if the earth’s orbit or the moon’s orbit were changed during those periods of upheaval). However, the tables work just fine for the year 30 A.D., when the Messiah was crucified!

Using these tables, and doing a little math, it turns out that this witness concurs

completely with the previous witnesses! My calculations, using the tables in this book, show that the conjunction of the New Moon for March, 30 A.D., was on the 22nd day of the month (Wednesday), at 17:32 GMT– that is, 5:32 PM, Wednesday evening! This would have been about 7:32 Jerusalem time.

Since the conjunction occurred Wednesday evening, the New Moon crescent for the month just beginning – Abib – could not possibly have been seen before *Thursday* evening. You cannot see the crescent the same evening the conjunction occurs! Normally it is visible about one day or 24 hours later – which fits the picture perfectly.

This information means that Abib 1 was a Friday that week, and Abib 14 – the day of the crucifixion – had to be on a Thursday, not a Wednesday! There is no disputing these facts – and the Jews plainly state that in those days the months were determined by the sighting of the New Moon crescent by confirmed, authorized witnesses who were posted to watch for it.

Our conclusion, then, has to be that the Wednesday crucifixion theory is wrong, disproved by this indisputable astronomical evidence! The Friday crucifixion theory also fails to conform to all the Biblical evidence. But the Thursday crucifixion fits perfectly with both Biblical evidence and astronomical evidence!

Too Complicated?

However, after explaining this principle, in the article I sent to him, I asked in a following email if he had had a chance to read the articles I sent. He replied:

“Hi, Yes I did read it, and I found your explanation persuasive. Unfortunately, as I got further into it, I decided this issue was *too complicated for me to understand* without putting in an exorbitant amount of research.”

I was aghast! What a cop-out! He went on:

“After all is said and done, what is apparent to me is that the followers of Jesus all considered that Jesus’ statement about being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth had been fulfilled by His crucifixion and resurrection. So while I am not sure which one of the different theories are correct, one of them is, and that is the one that Jesus’ followers understood by Jesus’ statement.”

In other words, he is not sure whether Christ was crucified on a Wednesday, a Thursday, as I show in the original article, or on the traditional “Good Friday,” as it is believed by most of so-called “Christendom.”

His remark struck me. Is this “issue too complicated” for people to understand? Does it require an exorbitant amount of research to find the truth? Is the Passover irrelevant? Is the crucifixion merely an intellectual exercise?

Does it really matter?

The word of God says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov.14:12; 16:25).

What is of little importance to men may be of great importance to God! The apostle Paul commands us, “STUDY to prove yourself approved unto God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (II Tim.2:15). The New King James Version says, “BE DILIGENT.”

Solomon in the book of Proverbs attests, “The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labour” (Prov.12:24). Further, “He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich” (Pro.10:4). Solomon adds, “He who is slothful in his work is brother to him who is a great destroyer” (Prov.18:9).

In the Living Bible we read: “Steady plodding brings prosperity; hasty speculation brings poverty” (Prov.21:5). The Moffatt translation says, “A diligent soul will have plenty, but lazy creatures will all end in poverty.”

Solomon also wrote, “Work hard and become a leader; be lazy and never succeed” (Prov.12:24, Living Bible). And in verse 11 we read, “Hard work means prosperity; only a fool idles away his time.”

Moffatt has it, “The diligent will get the upper hand, but slothful men will end as serfs” (Prov.12:24). And, “The man who works his farm has plenty of food: a man of useless interests has no sense.”

Are you willing to work hard, and exercise your mind, and do patient research and unglamorous, persistent plugging away, with bulldog tenacity, to discover and understand the truth of God’s Word? A little effort builds spiritual character, integrity, confidence, and knowledge of God.

God’s Word declares, “Seek the Lord while you may find him. Call upon him now while he is near. Let men cast off their wicked deeds; let them banish from their minds the very thought of doing wrong!” (Isa.55:6-7, Living Bible).

What you discover through diligent study may not be what you have assumed to be true or have been taught in the past. God says, “This plan of mine is not what you would work out, neither are my thoughts the same as yours! For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than yours, and my thoughts than yours” (Isa.55:8-9).

Seek the truth. Redeem the time. Become a profitable servant!

How important is the TRUTH to you?

Spiritual truth, the truth of God, is priceless. Christ told a parable, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he has found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matt.13:44-46).

How important is the truth of God to you?

Christ Himself said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

The world has entered a time of great deception, overwhelming darkness, lies, mischief and villainy. Violence and illusion is everywhere. Fiction is made to appear as fact, and fact is villified and made to appear ridiculous and foolish.

The apostle Paul wrote, “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, *because they did not receive the LOVE OF THE TRUTH, that they may be saved.* And for this reason God gave them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie” (II Thess.2:9-11).

God does not throw His precious pearls of truth before swine. But He gives every man a choice – to seek out truth, to highly value it, to love it – or to believe “the lie.”

It is good to stretch our brain, exercise our mind, do the research and study, both to obtain the approval of God, and also for our own mental health and well being. Many people, in this deceptive age, have lost the ability of “critical thinking” and analysis, patient examination of evidence, and coming to logical, sensible conclusions.

For this reason, and perhaps sheer laziness, many are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (II Tim.3:7). Because of this, many “will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires [lusts], because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears *away from the truth*, and be turned aside to fables” (II Tim.4:3-4).

Searching for Gold

People argue over the correct date of the crucifixion. Why argue? A wise man or woman will patiently study the Scripture and withhold judgment until they have finished their study. Studying the Scriptures is like exploring and searching for gold. It takes work. Once you find it, you have to dig it out – using a pick axe, or sledge hammer, or even dynamite. It is not easy to free the gold ore from the rock. Prospectors go to a lot

of effort seeking their earthly fortune, and often work like a slave, living in the wilds, without luxuries, suffering hardships, in order to find the golden metal.

The truth of God's Word IS provable. The TRUTH about the Passover, week of Unleavened Bread, and the timing and date of the crucifixion, are clear, consistent with all the facts, to those who are willing to put in the patient effort and explore the relevant data. All the evidence points to a Thursday crucifixion.

To put it simply, notice that Sunday, crucifixion week, was "three days" after the crucifixion. Simple addition shows Sunday is three days from Thursday. The first day would be Friday, then Saturday, and then Sunday!

So What Does This Mean?

And old saying declares, "Attitude is everything." Some people might say, "So what? What difference does it all make?" They are too busy, don't want to get involved in careful, painstaking study and research, and be forced to think deeply and actually use their brains. To them, their head is just a hat rack. Or they are too busy sampling the "pleasures" in life!

But to a spiritually minded person, there is nothing more pleasurable than delighting oneself in the Word of God. David exclaimed, "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Psalm 119:18). He declared, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (v.11).

David also said, "Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). David studied God's Word zealously. He cried out, "My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your words. Your word is very pure; therefore Your servant loves it" (Psa.119:139-140).

David declared, "I see the treacherous, and am disgusted, because they do not keep Your word. Consider how I love Your precepts . . . The entirety of Your word is truth" (Ps.119:158-160). "Your law is my delight," he proclaimed (v.174).

"Your word is truth," Christ declared (John 17:17). Paul admonished, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [literally, "God breathed"], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction [training, discipline] in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim.3:16-17).

How precious is God's Word to you? Do you spend much time STUDYING it? Do you consider the Word of God to be the foundation of your life?

How much real value do you place on understanding the truth of God?