

Mark 15:15-20

¹⁵ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged *Him*, to be crucified. ¹⁶ Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. ¹⁷ And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His *head*, ¹⁸ and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.

Before we continue with the text I have a little side road for us to take. I have been repeating what I have read from solid scholars about the timing of all of the events of Christ's last week of ministry. Yet, all the while I have had a single issue running through my mind that I have never been comfortable with. And neither was Mike. We talked about it from time to time.

Most of us have been taught, in fact it is on our calendar, that Christ died on a Friday and raised on a Sunday. If that is correct, Christ would have been in the grave 2 nights and possibly parts of 3 days. Why do we believe that? Well, that is what we have been told. But it isn't like scripture comes right out and says it. And the more I look at scripture, the less sure of this timing I am. Why? My questioning is based on a direct quote of Jesus. It is a direct promise or prophesy.

Matthew 12:38-40

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." ³⁹ But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Notice that it says that Christ will be in the heart of the earth. It would appear then that he would be in the grave for 3 full days.

Christ was very specific here. Many scholars say this phrase- three days and three nights- was a colloquialism that meant a couple of days more or less. But I don't buy that. Christ seemed to be very specific with his language. When I began looking into this I found a lot of very evangelical teachers who weren't buying it either. They reasoned that we have been sold a bill of goods based on the tradition of the Roman Catholic church rather than teaching directly from scripture. It is just like the fact that Christmas on our calendar does not coincide with when we know Christ must have been born.

This morning we will look into what scripture says and you can draw your own conclusions. At the end of the day, this will not change the most important principles about salvation. What **day** Christ died and what **day** He rose is not the most important thing. If it were the most important thing, scripture would be more clear on it. But I think we have been given enough to know what days it was not.

This morning we get to play detective. We have clues as to a timeline, but we have to put all the clues together to work out the puzzle.

First, we are told the day of the week that the followers discovered that Christ had already risen. This is helpful.

John 20:1

¹ Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

OK, Sunday is the first day of the week. Now it is interesting in the Youngs Literal Translation, which translates the actual Greek wording more literally, it reads **“And on the first of the Sabbaths”**. This was a common way of describing the day of the week in relation to the weekly Sabbath. So this is saying the first day after the Sabbath.

Mary Magdalene went out before it was light. So under a Jewish reckoning Sunday would not have even counted as a day seeing that Christ was already risen. Now let's work backwards.

For our purposes let's think of it in terms of how **we** count days.

So if Christ died on Friday, he would have been dead $\frac{1}{4}$ of Friday day and possibly buried a very small part of Friday day, Friday night, Saturday day, and Saturday night, and depending on when he rose maybe Sunday morning before light. That is less than two full days and two nights. In my mind that is a problem.

But the beauty of this John passage is that it sets a parameter. Christ had to have risen before daylight on Sunday morning.

Now let's work backwards.

The latest Christ could have risen would have been just before daylight on Sunday morning. Let's just say 6am.

To have three full days and nights we would need to go out from Sunday at 6am to Saturday, Friday, Thursday at 5 am.

So if Christ's promise was talking about normal 24 hour days, He could not have been buried later than Thursday morning at sunrise.

Now let's start putting the puzzle together.

First- it is unknown when Christ rose because the daylight hours on the day before the followers discovered Christ was risen would have been on the Sabbath. Saturday was a weekly Sabbath. The followers would not have visited the grave

on that day. So that opens up that Christ could have risen at any time from Saturday morning to Sunday morning. It just could not have been **later than Sunday morning and probably would not have been earlier than Friday night.** So the **latest** Christ must have died would have been by Thursday day. But it is very possible that He died on Wednesday day or Wednesday night. That means He could have risen on Saturday day or night. Either way He would have been risen before Sunday morning. And he would have been dead three full days and three full nights.

OK, what else do we know? Well, it is important, at this point to understand the Passover and the Feast of unleavened bread. Let's look at what Leviticus tells us.

Leviticus 23:4-7

4 'These [are] the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. 5 'On the fourteenth [day] of the first month at twilight [is] the LORD's Passover. 6 'And on the fifteenth day of the same month [is] the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. 7 'On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 8 'But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day [shall be] a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work [on it].' "

So, on the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, no matter what day of the week that is, at twilight, the Jews were to celebrate the Passover. Evidently, based on what I have read, this would have actually put the eating of the meal into the fifteenth day of Nissan. Everything began at **the end** of the fourteenth day, at twilight.

So preparations would have been made on the fourteenth during daylight. When dusk came the Passover celebration would begin and the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened bread would be celebrated during the daylight the next day.

There is something very important to note here. This fifteenth day of Nissan is considered a Sabbath day. That will be important as we try to make sense of our clues. This Sabbath could have been on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday.

Now, let's take a look at more clues, but this time we will start at the beginning of the process.

Matthew 26:17

¹⁷ Now on the first *day* of the *Feast of the Unleavened Bread* the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

We already saw how this poses a difficulty. We have Jesus eating the Passover meal this night and the Jewish leaders preparing to eat it the next night.

There seem to me to be 3 likely possibilities.

We explained this apparent contradiction with the theory or fact, I can't tell which, that the leaders in Jerusalem went by Roman reckoning of time. But the Galileans used Jewish reckoning.

So the 15th of Nisan for Jewish reckoning would have come on the evening before the 15th in Roman time, since a day begins at sunset of the preceding day in Jewish time. The more I look at it, I don't think that theory works out very well. The second possibility could be that both groups interpreted the verse in Leviticus differently. One may have thought that "at twilight" actually placed it on the evening of 14th instead of the 15th.

The third possibility is that the Jewish people weren't extremely particular which actual day they celebrated the Passover.

Frankly, I think there is something that we aren't told here. And without knowing that fact, we can't make sense of this.

But we know that Passover and the Feast of the Unleavened Bread are at hand. Now on this evening Christ was captured and hauled off to the Sanhedrin. They held what could loosely be called a court and hauled Christ off to Pilate. This was first thing the next morning. Normally the Roman offices opened at 6am and closed by noon.

John 18:28

²⁸ Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.

OK. Here is another reference of time. The Jewish leadership would not make themselves unclean because they wanted to eat the Passover. They, essentially had all day to get their business done today. They did not regard this day as a Sabbath. They could work on it. But they could not make themselves unclean on it. So they planned to eat the Passover this evening. That makes me think that they, too, were using a Jewish reckoning of time.

Now we have another scripture that gives us some idea of when Christ was crucified.

John 19:12-14

¹² From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar." ¹³ When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called *The Pavement*, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"

It was the preparation day for the Passover at about the 6th hour. When was that?

The hours of the day begin counting after dawn in Jewish reckoning. So the 6th hour would be about noon. That would fit with Mark who tells us that Christ was crucified probably around noon and was alive until at least 3pm in the afternoon.

Mark 15:33-34

³³ **Now when the sixth hour had come (noon), there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. (3pm)** ³⁴ **And at the ninth hour (3pm) Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"**

Now I think the next passage is probably the most helpful passage to making sense of this timeline.

John 19:31

³¹ **Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.** We know, here, that this is the preparation day. This is probably Nisan 14. This would have been the day the lambs were killed for the celebration. And the next day is the high Sabbath. The next day, beginning at dusk, is Nisan 15 as prescribed in Leviticus. So the Pharisees, at their hypocritical best, want Jesus buried before sunset so that the festivities could go on without interruption. Along with this we have the following passage that sheds some light.

Mark 15:42-43

⁴² **Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,** ⁴³ **Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.**

Then this gives us even more specifics.

John 19:42

⁴² **So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.**

Luke 23:53-54

⁵³ **Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb *that was* hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before.** ⁵⁴ **That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.**

Essentially this is telling us that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were able to get Christ into this tomb before sunset on Nisan the 14th. And the only reason they could is that the tomb was nearby.

So there was darkness over the land from 12 noon to 3pm in our reckoning. Christ died at 3pm or sometime soon after. This leaves about 6 hours to get

Christ off the cross, for permission for his body to be asked and granted, and for Nicodemus and Joseph to get Christ's body to the tomb before sunset.

This gives us a time for when Christ died and an idea of the time for when He was buried.

So, if the prophesy of Christ about His death is that he would be **in the tomb** a full three days and three nights, it would have been from whatever **day this is** to Saturday. This would have to put it at Wednesday sometime between 3pm and 9pm to Saturday between 3pm and 9pm. I would guess that it would be very close to evening when Christ was laid in the tomb.

Now there is one more piece of this puzzle-

Luke 23:54-56

⁵⁴ That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. ⁵⁵ And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

How does this fit in?

We aren't told which Sabbath they rested in. But we need to think about this. The women from Galilee evidently went with Joseph and Nicodemus to get the particulars of where Jesus was laid. Once they got that, it would have been too late to do any work. It would have been the high Sabbath. Then the day after the high Sabbath they would have had to gather up the spices. This must have taken a while. They certainly could not have kept the Sabbath, then gathered up all these spices and still been at the tomb first thing in the morning unless they did it on Thursday night, which would have really been Friday from a Jewish way of looking at it. But the markets would not be open on a Thursday night. They would have had to wait for Friday morning for them to open. This means they must have gathered up the spices on Friday and then kept the Sabbath again on Saturday.

So my timeline all along has been wrong. This would be the proper timeline-
Tuesday night – Jesus eats the Passover meal with His disciples and is arrested
Wednesday morning – before Pilate, on the cross by noon and dead by around 3 p.m.

Wednesday night – Jesus is in the tomb and High Sabbath begins

Thursday day– Jesus is in the tomb and it is still High Sabbath

Thursday night – Jesus in the tomb, it isn't Sabbath but the market isn't open

Friday – Jesus is in the tomb, spices bought & prepared by the followers

Friday night – Jesus is in the tomb, **third night**, weekly Sabbath begins

Saturday – Jesus is in the tomb **third day**, weekly Sabbath

Saturday Night – Some time near evening, exactly 36 hours after being laid in the tomb, He resurrects.

Whatever the case, it looks like we believe in Good Friday and a Sunday resurrection based more on **tradition** than the **scriptural record**.

Please, check this out for yourselves and think about it yourselves. We need to believe what scripture says, no matter what our tradition says. I think our tradition is wrong at several points. And I think this is one of them. And **I have been inaccurate** as I laid out which day things happened. We probably need to back it up 2 days.

Now on to our text.

Mark 15:15-20

¹⁵ **So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them;**

OK, so the crowd, that was riled up by the religious rulers, cried to crucify Christ and to allow Barabbas to go free. Pilate knew what the right thing to do was. But now he is in a political bind. If he does the right thing he is likely to lose his job. If he does the wrong thing, he is likely to keep it for a while longer. So he decides to gratify the crowd.

Gratify the crowd. I cannot think of a better description of peer pressure. Do what **those around you think** you should do instead of **what you believe is right** to do. Yeah. That pretty much defines peer pressure.

Where do **we** gratify the crowd? Where do **we** fear what people will think to the place we will not do the thing we believe to be right? Where do we gratify the crowd in our lives? Where does public opinion out rule God's opinion in our lives? Now, do we really think that Rome would be pleased to know that Pilate has just let an insurrectionist murderer rebel go free? I don't think Pilate's bosses would be pleased. The only benefit that Pilate has going for him is that Rome is a long ways from Jerusalem.

So Pilate releases Barabbas. And it is very likely that Barabbas walked past Jesus on his way out the door.

and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged *Him*, to be crucified.

It is interesting that the gospel writers don't highlight the suffering Christ went through. They mention it. And they give enough details that those reading or listening would understand the suffering. Everyone being written to would have known what crucifixions were like. But that is not the point that was emphasized. We can gather from that that this is not what **we** should emphasize. But we should understand what it means.

This is what it meant to be scourged.

To be scourged was to be whipped with a device known as a flagellum, consisting of a wooden handle with long leather thongs attached. The thongs,

which were embedded with sharp pieces of bone and metal, were designed to rip the flesh to the bone. The victim would be tied to a post, his hands extended high over his head and his feet suspended off the ground so that his body was taugth. As the scourge tore into his back, muscles would be lacerated, veins cut, and internal organs exposed. Intended to hasten death on the cross, scourging itself was sometimes fatal. After enduring such a debilitating form of torture, the Lord Jesus was handed over to be crucified.

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Mark 9-16.

So we can see that even the scourging itself would be a hideous torture.

Christ, at this point would have had a lacerated back where his organs were actually exposed. His face was probably swollen and bleeding from having been repeated beaten. We know that Christ had already been suffering from extreme distress, probably from taking upon Christ's self the sins of His people. And Christ had already experienced Peter's denial of him.

Christ was past the breaking point of any human being. Maybe there are humans who could take the physical suffering. But there would be none capable of the extreme spiritual anguish Christ must have been in. And knowing He could end it at any time had to be a severe temptation that none of us could have withstood.

¹⁶ Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison.

The word Praetorium was a military word meaning the tent of the greatest leader. It was probably extended to mean the dwelling of the main leader in a Roman territory. In this case it would be Pilate's dwelling. This dwelling probably included a courtyard. And this is probably where most of the proceedings took place.

A garrison is 600 soldiers. We have got to wonder why. Why would someone in the military feel inclined to call all the soldiers to be in on this? We don't know. Was Christ the entertainment of the day? Maybe the soldiers were tired of this people who viewed themselves superior to these gentile heathens. That kind of attitude was sure to build up some resentment among these soldiers. And then to know there were some zealots among the Jews who were more than happy to slip a long knife between their ribs while they weren't looking had to make it a little worse. It would be easy to understand that these Roman soldiers would have a little hostility toward the Jews. And finally they have a whipping boy. They have a way to take out their hostilities. Christ is their opportunity to give vent to their wickedness. Maybe that is why the whole garrison is invited to the event. It will be interesting in eternity to find out if there were some in the group who were disgusted with this show. I wouldn't be surprised at all if there were some

who are in eternity themselves, having been converted by seeing this Son of man respond to the face of sheer cruelty. At least I hope so.

So there are 600 soldiers in on the “Kill Christ” show.

¹⁷ And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head

Matthew says it was a scarlet robe. Matt 27:28. It is likely that it was once scarlet but now it has faded to a dull purple. So both would be true.

This would have been another attempt to mockingly make Christ look like He was some kind of royalty. But to do it in such a way that is sure to be a mockery. Now keep in mind anything touching Christ’s body is going to increase his suffering.

His back is ripped apart.

Then they took thorns and twisted them together in such a way that it formed a wreath. Then they pressed it onto his head in such a way that the wreath would cut into his head and cause the blood from his head to spill across Christ’s face.

This wreath would have been intended to imitate the golden laurel wreath worn by Caesar. Matthew tells us that they also put a reed in His hand to imitate a scepter.

There may be times in our lives when we are forced to do business with those who see themselves as superior to us, like the Jews did to the Romans. They may treat us in a condescending fashion. And they may actually have some power over our future, like the Jews did to these soldiers. When those people finally fall under our power these soldiers serve as the perfect example of what **we should never do**. Odds are that these soldiers have no idea who Christ is. All they know is that they are tired of this Jewish people that they are responsible to rule over. And finally one of them has fallen into their power. He is the whipping boy of all their frustration.

¹⁸ and began to salute Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

Then the soldiers followed Pilates lead and began saying “Hail the King of the Jews.”

This had to be intensely satisfying to the flesh considering that these Jews regarded these Romans to be unclean and second class human beings. Every day these guys were dealing with these Jews and it would have been very difficult for them to hold their tongues and their swords.

Now their mockery hits full swing. They take great satisfaction in mocking this so called Jewish King.

¹⁹ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him.

We read a Messianic prophesy in Isaiah that says this.

Isaiah 50:5-7

⁵ **The Lord GOD has opened My ear; And I was not rebellious, Nor did I turn away. ⁶ I gave My back to those who struck Me, And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. ⁷ "For the Lord GOD will help Me; Therefore I will not be disgraced; Therefore I have set My face like a flint, And I know that I will not be ashamed.**

Christ knew this was coming. And this is exactly what He did.

These Roman soldiers showed the cruelty they had inside them. They did what they did because of who they were. There is no excuse. There is simply revelation. They were hitting Christ on the head with a reed or, possibly in the Greek, a stick. This seemed to be great fun to them. This is a hideous way to treat a human being. But all of us have some of this in us, whether we want to admit it or not.

They spat on Christ. They showed him the greatest disregard they had at their disposal. Now these Romans probably did not share the same depth of guilt as their Jewish counterparts. These Romans were just treating a human being hideously. The Jewish leaders were treating someone they should have known was their Messiah in a hideous fashion. That was probably why Christ would say of the Roman soldiers, "Forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." So they were hitting Christ on the head with a stick. They were spitting upon Christ. And then in a great mockery they bowed their knees to Christ and acted like they were honoring Him as some great King.

Every single one of them are going to have a second round at that activity. Every one is going to kneel again in front of the Risen Christ. And they will be shaking in fear. And they will be forced to confess, if they have not humbled themselves before God, that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of Lords. What a horrible thing that will be for many of them. Let's just hope that some have come to know Christ as Savior and Lord before that point.

Those who mock God will one day be faced with God mocking them. The greatest difference is that all of man's mockery against God is futile. All of God's mockery of man will be found with an eternal penalty.

²⁰ **And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.**

So after these Roman guards had had their fun they had to get down to business. They took off the purple robe king costume. They found his clothes and put them back on him. This was a garment with no seams that would be gambled for and the winner would get them. It was actually an expensive garment, probably given to Christ by one of his more wealthy supporters.

Then they led Him out to crucify Him.