

Matthew 12:40; 26:1-2, 17-19

Mark 14:1, 12-14

Luke 22:1, 7-8, 11-15

John 11:55; 12:1, 12; 19:14

The date from which the calculation is made concerning the day of crucifixion is complicated. (*i.e.* whether he was crucified on the 14th or 15th of Nisan)

Also, whether a “harmony” is possible or not with the statements contained in the synoptic gospels - who all three record that Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples.

Those who hold to a Friday crucifixion say that there is still a valid way in which He could have been considered “in the grave” for three days.

In the Jewish culture of the first century, a part of a day was considered as a full day. Since Jesus was in the grave for part of Friday, all of Saturday, and part of Sunday—He could be considered to have been in the grave for three days.

One of the principal arguments for Friday is found in Mark 15:42.

If that was the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) - then that fact leads to a Friday crucifixion.

Another argument given for Friday; Since Jesus would rise on the third day He would not need to be in the grave a full three days and nights. (Matthew 16:21 and Luke 9:22)

But while some translations use “on the third day” for these verses, not all do, and not everyone agrees that “on the third day” is the best way to translate these verses.

Also, Mark 8:31 says that Jesus will be raised “after” three days.

Next is the Thursday view.

This position expands on the Friday view and argues mainly that there are too many events (some count as many as twenty) happening between His burial and Sunday morning to occur from Friday evening to Sunday morning.

Those who hold this view point out that this is a problem when the only full day between Friday and Sunday was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

Then the Wednesday view.

Opinion states that there were two Sabbaths that week.

After the first one (the one that occurred on the evening of the crucifixion) the women purchased spices—note that they made their purchase after the Sabbath. (Mark 15:42; Luke 23:52-54 and Mark 16:1)

The Wednesday view holds that this “Sabbath” was the Passover.

(Leviticus 16:29-31, 23:24-32, 39; John 19:31) - high holy days that are not necessarily the seventh day of the week are referred to as the Sabbath).

The second Sabbath that week was the normal weekly Sabbath. The women purchased spices after the first Sabbath returned and prepared the spices, then “rested on the Sabbath.” (Luke 23:55)

The argument states that they could not purchase the spices after the Sabbath, yet prepare those spices before the Sabbath—unless there were two Sabbaths.

With the two-Sabbath view, if Christ was crucified on Thursday, then the high holy Sabbath (the Passover) would have begun Thursday at sundown and ended at Friday sundown—at the beginning of the weekly Sabbath or Saturday.

Purchasing the spices after the first Sabbath (Passover) would have meant they purchased them on Saturday and were breaking the Sabbath.

Therefore, according to the Wednesday viewpoint, the only explanation that does not violate the biblical account of the women and the spices and holds to a literal understanding of Matthew 12:40 - is that Christ was crucified on Wednesday.

The Sabbath that was a high holy day (Passover) occurred on Thursday, the women purchased spices (after that) on Friday and returned and prepared the spices on the same day, they rested on Saturday which was the weekly Sabbath, then brought the spices to the tomb early Sunday.

Jesus was buried near sundown on Wednesday, which began Thursday in the Jewish calendar. Using a Jewish calendar, you have Thursday day (day one), Thursday night (night one), Friday day (day two), Friday night (night two), Saturday day (day three), Saturday night (night three). We do not know exactly what time He rose, but we do know that it was before sunrise on Sunday. He could have risen as early as just after sunset Saturday evening, which began the first day of the week to the Jews.

The discovery of the empty tomb was made at sunrise just before it was fully light. (Mark 16:2 and John 20:1)

A possible difficulty with the Wednesday view is that the disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus did so on “the same day” of His resurrection. (Luke 24:13)

The disciples, who do not recognize Jesus, tell Him of Jesus’ crucifixion (24:21) and say that “today is the third day since these things happened” (24:22). However - Wednesday to Sunday is four days.

A possible explanation is that they may have been counting since Wednesday evening at Christ’s burial, which begins the Jewish Thursday, and Thursday to Sunday could be counted as three days.

Mark’s narrative raises two difficulties concerning the timing. Passover Day itself was celebrated

on 14 Nisan: on it the lambs were killed during the late afternoon or early evening, literally 'between the two evenings' (Ex. 12:6; Lv. 23:5).

Then after sunset, when according to Jewish reckoning a new day had begun (*i.e.* 15 Nisan), the Passover meal was eaten. This was 'the first day of Unleavened Bread'.

The first difficulty is raised by Mark's statement in chapter 14:12, since the custom was actually to eat the lambs that day, having sacrificed them the previous day.

A possible solution is that, although (strictly speaking) the first day of Unleavened Bread followed Passover Day, yet in loose, popular speech (as used by Mark here), it was thought of as including and indeed beginning the Passover.

The second difficulty is that Mark, followed by Matthew and Luke, sees the last supper as the Passover meal (verses 14 and 16), enjoyed on the day after the lambs were killed; whereas John depicts Jesus as dying a day earlier, at the very time when the sacrificial lambs were being slaughtered. (John. 18:28; 1 Corinthians 5:7).

Several theories have been offered up to resolve this difficulty.

One is that two different calendars were in operation at that time, one used by the Pharisees and the other by the Sadducees, with a gap of one day between them—in which case the synoptic and Johannine chronologies are both correct.

Another explanation is that Jesus was indeed on the cross while the lambs were being killed, but that he deliberately brought his own Passover meal forward a day because, as he said, he 'eagerly desired' to eat it with his apostles before he died. (Luke 22:15–16)

There is no easy solution to either of these difficulties, and no there is no scholarly consensus about them.

What is clear, however, is that for both the synoptic writers and John, Jesus sees the Passover as a basis for understanding the meaning of His forthcoming death.

The day of the week Christ was crucified is one of the many details surrounding the event.

What is important is that He did die and that He physically, bodily rose from the dead.

What is equally important is the reason He died—to take the punishment that all sinners deserve.

Thus, the Passover.....