

# Prophetic Observer

Go, set a watchman,  
let him declare what  
he seeth. —Isa. 21:6



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Keeping Time On God's Prophetic Clock

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## Was Jesus Christ Crucified on Good Friday? ... Does It Make Any Difference?

by Noah W. Hutchings

### ***Nisan 14—The Lord's Passover (Israel's Passover Preparation Day)***

Tuesday—6:00 p.m. (First Watch): Jesus observed Passover in the Upper Room with His apostles (no lamb, because Jesus Himself was to be the Lamb.

Tuesday—9:00 p.m. (Second Watch): Jesus arrested and taken to Caiaphas to be judged.

Tuesday—12:00 midnight (Third Watch): Jesus judged and found guilty of blasphemy by the Sanhedrin.

Wednesday—6:00 a.m. (first hour): Jesus taken to Pilate at Antony's Tower to be judged and sentenced.

Wednesday—9:00 a.m. (third hour): Jesus nailed to the cross.

Wednesday—12:00 noon (sixth hour): Darkness over the earth to the ninth hour.

Wednesday—3:00 p.m. (ninth hour): Jesus died and gave up the ghost.

### ***Nisan 15—Israel Passover Day—First Day of Unleavened Bread***

Wednesday—6:00 p.m.: Jesus body placed in the tomb.

Wednesday—6:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Thursday: Jesus' body was in the tomb—one night and one day (twenty-four hours).

### ***Nisan 16—Second Day of Unleavened Bread***

Thursday—6:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Friday: Jesus' body lay in the tomb for a second night and second day (total now forty-eight hours).

### ***Nisan 17—Third Day of Unleavened Bread—Jewish Sabbath***

Friday—6:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturday: Jesus' body lay in the tomb for a third night and third day (total now seventy-two hours).

*“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40).*

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem on the eve of Nisan 9 because He came to fulfill the Father's will that He be the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world; lambs chosen for Passover must be separated from parents for seven days before the Day of Preparation.

Jesus was anointed by Mary on Nisan 10 for His death, because a sacrificial lamb must be chosen (anointed) on this day, four days before the Passover. Nisan 10 the year Christ was crucified was indicated to be a Saturday Sabbath. Four days later, on Wednesday, Jesus was crucified.

Jesus not only must have fulfilled every specific prophecy, but also every example and type, else He could not have been the Messiah.

Christendom, with few exceptions, observes “Good Friday” as the day Jesus Christ was crucified. A few believe that Jesus was crucified on Thursday, and a few more hold to the opinion that He was crucified on Wednesday. The term itself, “Good Friday,” is a mispronunciation of *Gott Friday*, German for “God’s Friday.”

That Jesus Christ was crucified on the Day of Preparation is without controversy (Matthew 24:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42). The Day of Preparation, according to the Scriptures, and as verified by Josephus, always fell on the fourteenth day of Nisan. This was the day in which the lamb was killed for Passover. The sins of those who were to eat the Passover were placed on the lamb, and then the lamb died, symbolically, for their sins. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and declared, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36). Therefore, the Lamb who was to take away the sins of the world must be sacrificed on the Day of Preparation, else He would not have fulfilled all the prophecies identifying Him as the Messiah. Jesus must fulfill every prophecy relating to His first coming: to be born of a virgin, to be born in Bethlehem, to open the eyes of the blind, to make the deaf to hear, to make the lame to leap as a deer, to be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, to be beaten, to be cut off from the land of the living for others sins, and dozens of other things foretold about Him by the prophets. Inasmuch as He came in “the fulness of the time” (Galatians 4:4), even the day and the hour He would be nailed to the cross and then raised from the grave was important.

The primary reason that the vast majority of Christendom accepts Friday as the day of crucifixion is that Jesus was crucified not only on the Day of Preparation, but also on the “day before the Sabbath.” A Jewish Sabbath was a day in which limitations were placed upon physical activities, which not only refer to the last day of the week (Saturday), but also to certain holidays, or feast days. In order to determine whether the day following Christ’s crucifixion was a regular Saturday Sabbath, or a feast day Sabbath, we need to trace the activities of Jesus the previous week. This day-by-day chronology is outlined in the *Companion Bible*, *Dake’s Reference Bible*, and other various other commentaries.

## **THE SIXTH DAY BEFORE THE PASSOVER—NISAN 9**

### ***Thursday sunset to Friday sunset***

Knowing that the Father’s time for His dying for the sins of the world was at hand, Jesus passed through Jericho and arrived at Jerusalem. The reason Jesus must go to Jerusalem is explained in Luke 13:33: “. . . It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”

Jesus would have approached Jerusalem on the seventh day before He was to be crucified, and be in the city six full

days before He would be nailed to the cross. A sacrificial lamb must be separated from its parents for seven days before it could be killed (Leviticus 22:27). The agony of Jesus in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane and His lament from the cross, “My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” indicated that the Old Testament type was being fulfilled in every detail.

Upon arriving near Jerusalem during what would be our morning hours, Jesus sent two disciples to bring Him an ass and a colt, upon which He rode into the city to fulfill Zechariah 9:9. Jesus then cleansed the Temple (Matthew 21:12–16) and traveled over the Mount of Olives to spend the night at the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany (Matthew 21:17). We are informed in John 12:1 that this event took place six days before the Passover.

## **THE FIFTH DAY BEFORE THE PASSOVER— NISAN 10**

### ***Friday sunset to Saturday sunset***

Jesus spent this Sabbath at the home of Mary and Martha. The Lord had supper with Lazarus whom He had raised from the dead. Being the Sabbath, and Jerusalem more than a Sabbath day’s journey away, Jesus remained in Bethany. Now how do we know this Saturday Sabbath was the tenth day of Nisan? Because we read in John 12:3 that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with precious ointment. And when Judas protested, Jesus responded, “Why trouble ye the woman? . . . For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial” (Matthew 26:10, 12).

We read in Exodus 12:3, 5: “Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month [Nisan] they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: . . . Your lamb shall be without blemish. . . .”

On the seventh day before Passover, the lamb had to be separated from its parents, and then on Nisan 10 it has to be separated, or anointed, for the sacrifice. This would have been the fifth day before the Passover, or four days before the crucifixion. Four is the number of the world, and from creation, the crucifixion occurred four thousand years later in time. We read also in Revelation 13:8 that Jesus is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Therefore it is obvious that Mary anointed Jesus for His death on the tenth of Nisan.

## **THE FOURTH DAY BEFORE THE PASSOVER— NISAN 11**

### ***Saturday sunset to Sunday sunset—Palm Sunday***

Jesus sent the disciples a second time to bring Him a colt (this time without the mother animal), and He rode into Jerusalem where the multitudes hailed Him as King and spread palm

branches in His path. Jesus presented His legal claim to the throne of David, but knowing that the people were praising Him for the wrong reasons, He wept over the city, passed through the Temple, and returned to Bethany (Luke 19:41–44; Mark 11:11).

### **THE THIRD DAY BEFORE THE PASSOVER— NISAN 12**

***Sunday sunset to Monday sunset***

After daybreak, Jesus once more left the home of Mary and Martha, traveled over the Mount of Olives, and entered Jerusalem. He cursed the unfruitful fig tree on the way, an object lesson on the estate of unfruitful Israel during the Diaspora.

“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the LORD. I will surely consume them, saith the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them” (Jeremiah 8:12–13).

Jesus’ activities in Jerusalem on the third day before the Passover were centered around the Temple where He again chased the merchants and moneychangers away. After this, He taught on the Temple grounds and many, including Greeks, crowded around to hear Him. Opposition of the chief priests arose, so Jesus left Jerusalem and returned to Bethany (Mark 11:12–19; Luke 19:45–48).

### **THE SECOND DAY BEFORE THE PASSOVER— NISAN 13**

***Monday sunset to Tuesday sunset***

In returning to Jerusalem over the Mount of Olives, the apostles observed that the fig tree that Jesus cursed had died to the roots. Jesus again taught in the Temple and pronounced eight woes upon that generation. He once more wept over Jerusalem (Matthew 23). When asked about those things coming upon Israel, and for signs of the end of the age, Jesus explained within the context of what is known as the Olivet Discourse (Luke 21; Matthew 24; Mark 12). Jesus continued to teach in parables about things to come (Matthew 25), including the end of the age to be followed by the Millennium. Before returning to Bethany, Jesus foretold the time of His crucifixion: “And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified” (Matthew 26:1–2).

The rulers (Sanhedrin) realized that if Jesus was to be

silenced, He must be killed before Passover week began (Matthew 26:3–5). But Jesus and His disciples slipped out of Jerusalem and returned to Bethany for supper in the home of Simon the leper.

### **THE DAY BEFORE THE PASSOVER LAMB— NISAN 14—PREPARATION DAY**

***Tuesday sunset to Wednesday sunset***

According to Exodus 12, unleavened bread was to be eaten from Nisan 14 to Nisan 20. The words in italics in Matthew 26:17, added by the translators for clarification, actually confuse the meaning in this case rather than helping to clarify the disciples’ question. Omitting them, we have: “Now the first of the unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?”

We also read in Leviticus 23:5: “In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD’s passover.” It is evident from Leviticus 23, Numbers 28:16–17, Exodus 12, and other scriptures, that there was to be a Passover supper for the Lord on Nisan 14 in the evening, and in the following morning the Passover lamb was to be killed and prepared, and roasted on the fire to be eaten in prayer and meditation all the night of Nisan 15.

It appears from the scripture in all four Gospels relating to the Lord’s Passover, the items at the meal were wine, unleavened bread, and sop. While “sop,” a regular part of the Israeli diet, probably contained lamb, it was not a substitute for whole, roasted Passover lamb. Jesus Himself was the Passover Lamb.

According to Josephus (*Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, chapter 9), the lambs killed on the Day of Preparation at the time the Romans trapped the inhabitants of Jerusalem on the first day of Passover, A.D. 70, numbered 256,500. Counting even the minimum of ten to the lamb (not including lepers, those with sexual diseases, and women in their menstrual cycles), there would have been a minimum of 2,565,000 in Jerusalem for the Passover at the time of the siege.

The first Passover in Egypt was a all-night vigil, and so were the Passovers that followed to be also. The Passover supper of unleavened bread that Jesus ate with His disciples lasted only about an hour.

### **THE EVENTS THAT FOLLOWED**

- ▶ Jesus and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane about one mile distant.
- ▶ Jesus was betrayed and arrested; His interrogation at the house of Caiaphas followed.

- ▶ On Nisan 14, at 6:00 a.m. (about sunrise), He was taken to Pilate at Mark Antony's tower.
- ▶ He was judged and nailed to the cross at 9:00 a.m. (lambs were to be prepared between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. on Nisan 14).
- ▶ Darkness was over the earth from 12:00 moon until 3:00 p.m.
- ▶ In accordance with requirements for the Passover lamb, the soldiers seeing that He was already dead, His legs were not broken (John 19:36).
- ▶ He was laid in the tomb minutes before the beginning of the High Sabbath, not the regular Saturday Sabbath. We read in John 19:31–33, "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs."
- ▶ Jesus was laid in the tomb minutes before the beginning of the High Sabbath, 6:00 p.m., the twelfth Hebrew hour, and Thursday began a few minutes later.

and two nights means forty-eight hours; three days and three nights means seventy-two hours.

When Jesus was informed that Lazarus was sick unto death, He delayed going to Bethany until after Lazarus had been in the tomb three days, and part of the fourth day (John 11:17). Martha protested it was much too late to help because her brother's body was already stinking. It was an accepted Jewish tradition that a person not be legally declared dead until three days had passed. Jesus proved to the Jews that He did indeed raise to life a personal legally dead.

"It was the Jewish belief at that time that when a person died his spirit remained within his body for three days. . . . Jesus had to be in the tomb for three days, not only to fulfill His own prophecy concerning Himself, but to keep Jews . . . from claiming that He had not really been dead" (*A Scientific Approach to Biblical Mysteries*, Robert Faid, p. 70).

The chief priests and Pharisees understood that Jesus meant He would be in the tomb for three full days, seventy-two hours, or else their conversation with Pilate in Matthew 27:62–66 makes no sense at all. It seems conclusive to this writer that Jesus Christ was crucified on Wednesday, Nisan 14; His body placed in the tomb just before the twelfth Hebrew hour (6:00 p.m.); and He arose from the grave just after the twelfth hour on Saturday, or the first Hebrew hour on Sunday, the first day of the week.

The Lord's Passover was foretold to be Nisan 14, from sunset on Tuesday to sunset on Wednesday (according to our calendar). The sheaf of firstfruits, according to Leviticus 23:10–11, was to be waved before the Lord on the day after the regular Sabbath following Passover. Jesus Christ did indeed rise from the grave on the first day of the week following the regular Sabbath (Matthew 28:1–8), the firstfruits of the first resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:23).

While we believe it is important that Jesus' body did lie in the grave three days and three nights, infinitely more important is that we believe that He did indeed die for our sins, and that He did indeed rise from the grave for our justification. Because unless the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred as Scripture declares, then "we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19).



## CONCLUSION

If, as the vast majority of Christendom believes, Jesus was crucified on Friday, then His body would have lain in the tomb only twenty-four to twenty-six hours—one night and one day, even though the time frame may be stretched to one whole day and a few minutes of the other two days. Jesus said of the time His body would be in the tomb: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40).

It is evident from the Book of Esther, the Book of Jonah, and other scriptures, when the time period is given as one day and one night, they mean twenty-four hours; two days

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