

The Life of Jesus: History's Great Love Story

The Amazing Life of Jesus: History's Great Love Story

Appendix 4: Alternative Chronology

Like Christmas, celebrating Jesus' birth, we may celebrate these events of the crucifixion on symbolic days which remind us of the literal events, even though we may not be following their exact chronology or dates.

Some scholars argue for a crucifixion on the Thursday of Holy Week followed by two Sabbath days, the Passover Sabbath on Friday and the regular Sabbath on the Saturday of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover is one day while the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasts for seven days.

Jesus led the Last Supper with his disciples on the same Jewish day, after sunset, that he died, the day the Passover lambs were killed, to be eaten that night on the special Passover Sabbath (the next Jewish day, as the day ended at sunset).

A literal translation of Matthew 28:1 has Sabbaths in the plural (in Greek), allowing for two: *After the Sabbaths, around dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to take a look at the burial site.* (International Standard Version, © 1995-2014 by ISV Foundation.)

John also allows for this: *Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath* (John 19:31, see also John 13:1).

This chronology correlates with Jesus' predictions:

For just as Jonah was for three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40).

Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.³² For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon.³³ After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again' (Luke 18:31-33).

James Tabor examines the gospel accounts of the last supper in his article 'The Last Days of Jesus: A Final "Messianic" Meal', reproduced by the Biblical Archaeology Society (<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/the-last-days-of-jesus-a-final-messianic-meal/>). He writes:

The confusion arose because all the gospels say that there was a rush to get his body off the cross and buried before sundown because the “Sabbath” was near. Everyone assumed the reference to “the Sabbath” had to be Saturday so the crucifixion must have been on a Friday. However, as Jews know, the day of Passover itself is also a “Sabbath” or rest day no matter what weekday it falls on. In the year 30 AD Friday, the 15th of the Jewish month Nisan was also a Sabbath so two Sabbaths occurred back to back Friday and Saturday. Matthew seems to know this as he says that the women who visited Jesus’ tomb came early Sunday morning “after the Sabbaths” (Matthew 28:1).

As is often the case, the gospel of John preserves a more accurate chronology of what went on. John specifies that the Wednesday night “last supper” was “before the festival of Passover.” He also notes that when Jesus’ accusers delivered him to be crucified on Thursday morning they would not enter Pilate’s courtyard because they would be defiled and would not be able to eat the Passover that evening (John 18:28). John knows that the Jews would be eating their traditional Seder meal Thursday evening.

That discussion sent me checking the plural Sabbaths in Matthew 28:1. It is plural and can be used for either Sabbaths or Sabbath, as also in Matthew 12:1. Most translators opt for singular, but a few retain the literal plural, such as these for Matthew 12:1 and 28:1.

At that time Jesus went through the grain on the Sabbath days. And his disciples were hungry, and began to pluck the ears of grain and to eat.
(New Matthew Bible, © 2016 by Ruth Magnusson (Davis))

At that time did Jesus go on the sabbaths through the corn, and his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck ears, and to eat,
(*Young's Literal Translation*, by Robert Young who compiled Young's Analytical Concordance.)

After the Sabbaths, around dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to take a look at the burial site.
(*International Standard Version*, © 1995-2014 by ISV Foundation.)

The Bible passages allow for a crucifixion on the Thursday of Holy Week, and even where Sabbath is used in the singular it does indicate that they found the stone rolled away on the first day of the week after that Sabbath. The first day of the week had begun at the previous sunset.

That Friday may have been a special Passover Sabbath, not just the Saturday. *Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down* (John 19:31).

Blood Moon AD 31 on Nisan 14

Kevin Woodridge, Ph.D., gives details pointing to a crucifixion date in AD 31 on Thursday, 14th Nisan, including a blood moon on Wednesday night, the beginning of Nisan 14 on the Thursday. Friday 15th Nisan, a special Sabbath, was followed by the normal Sabbath on Saturday 16th Nisan, and the resurrection on Sunday 17th Nisan, the first day of the Feast of First Fruits.

His article is titled [When was Jesus crucified - Evidence pointing to 31 AD](#). His Abstract says:

In which year was Jesus crucified? Many scholars consider that he died sometime between 29 AD and 34 AD. A partial lunar eclipse (as described by St. Peter on the Day of Pentecost) on Wednesday 25 April 31 AD (evening/night on 14th Day of Nisan in the Jewish calendar) corresponds well with the Gospels, if the Last Supper were a private “eve of Passover” meal eaten as a Teacher with his disciples one day earlier than others in Jerusalem, followed by Jesus praying and being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. The crucifixion of Jesus on Thursday 26 April 31 AD (daytime on 14th Day of Nisan) corresponds well with the New Testament, if this were followed by a “special Sabbath” for the Passover on 15th Day of Nisan, then a regular weekly Sabbath on 16th Day of Nisan, then the resurrection of Jesus on 17th Day of Nisan (the First Day of the Feast of First Fruits), with descriptions of fig trees in bloom and bearing “early figs” being suggestive of a late Passover.

He continues:

Crucifixion of Jesus on Thursday 26 April 31 AD (daytime on 14th Day of Nisan)

It is reasonable to assert that Jesus was crucified on the day after his arrest. All four Gospels indicate this, and the priests would have wanted swift action before the Passover and before Pilate left Jerusalem, as the consent of Pilate was needed to inflict capital punishment (Freeman, 2011). If that were the case, then **Jesus was crucified on Thursday 26 April 31 AD (daytime on 14th Day of Nisan)**. Whilst this is contrary to church traditions which assign the crucifixion to a Friday, dates for the crucifixion of Jesus on a Thursday and the resurrection of Jesus on a Sunday fit in very well with certain interpretations of the Gospels and the New Testament.

It is worth noting that the word “Sabbaths” – the Greek word is σαββάτων (sabbaton), which is clearly plural (Nestle et al., 1988) – is used in certain places in the Gospel accounts of the burial and resurrection of Jesus, as shown by Young’s Literal Translation:

“And on the eve of the sabbaths, at the dawn, toward the first of the sabbaths, came Mary the Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre,” (Matthew 28:1)

“And the sabbath having past, Mary the Magdalene, and Mary of James, and Salome, bought spices, that having come, they may anoint him, and early in the morning of the first of the sabbaths, they came unto the sepulchre, at the rising of the sun, and they said among themselves, ‘Who shall roll away for us the stone out of the door of the sepulchre?’” (Mark 16:1-3)

“And the day was a preparation, and sabbath was approaching, and the women also who have come with him out of Galilee having followed after, beheld the tomb, and how his body was placed, and having turned back, they made ready spices and ointments, and on the sabbath, indeed, they rested, according to the command. And on the first of the sabbaths, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bearing the spices they made ready, and certain [others] with them, and they found the stone having been rolled away from the tomb, and having gone in, they found not the body of the Lord Jesus.” (Luke 23:54-24:3)

“And on the first of the sabbaths, Mary the Magdalene doth come early (there being yet darkness) to the tomb, and she seeth the stone having been taken away out of the tomb, she runneth, therefore, and cometh unto Simon Peter, and unto the other disciple whom Jesus was loving, and saith to them, ‘They took away the Lord out of the tomb, and we have not known where they laid him.’” (John 20:1-2) ...

These two consecutive Sabbaths could have been a “special Sabbath” on the Friday that was the First Day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (daytime on 15th Day of Nisan), on which no regular or ordinary work was to be done (Leviticus 23:6-7), followed by the regular weekly Sabbath on the Saturday (daytime on 16th Day of Nisan). This *appears* to be borne out by Luke 23:54-24:1, with the women preparing spices and ointments (to anoint the body that had been prepared and buried by Joseph of Arimathea on the Thursday), on the first Sabbath on the Friday, the First Day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Figure 3). This was a day on which no regular or ordinary work was to be done, and the preparing of spices and ointments by the women was not “ordinary” work. The next day, the regular weekly Sabbath on the Saturday, the women rested according to the commandment. Then on the Sunday, after the two Sabbaths, they went to the tomb (Biblical Hermeneutics, 2016). Furthermore, the Gospel of John clearly specifies that the day after Jesus’ crucifixion was a “special Sabbath”: “Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down” (John 19:31). It would have been highly objectionable to the Jewish leaders to allow crucified bodies to remain on the crosses overnight during this special Sabbath (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). All of this indicates that **Jesus was crucified on Thursday 26 April 31 AD (daytime on 14th Day of Nisan) and was resurrected on Sunday 29 April 31 AD (daytime on 17th Day of Nisan).**

Other scholars argue for crucifixion on Wednesday, 25 April, AD 31.
See [Passover Dates 26-34 A.D.](#)

Irrespective of the day, the great significance is that the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was crucified on the Day of Preparation for the Passover, the day on which the Passover lamb was killed so that after sunset the Passover could be celebrated on the next Jewish day beginning after sunset.

John suggests this: *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ² And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. (John 13:1-5)*

However, most scholars see the special Passover Sabbath as on Saturday. Some point out that there is no Nisan 14 (the day of preparation) on a Thursday, and that from the celestial calendars Nisan 14 fell on Friday April 7 in AD 30, and Friday April 3 in AD 33, the most likely dates for the crucifixion, based on the dates from the new moon of those years.

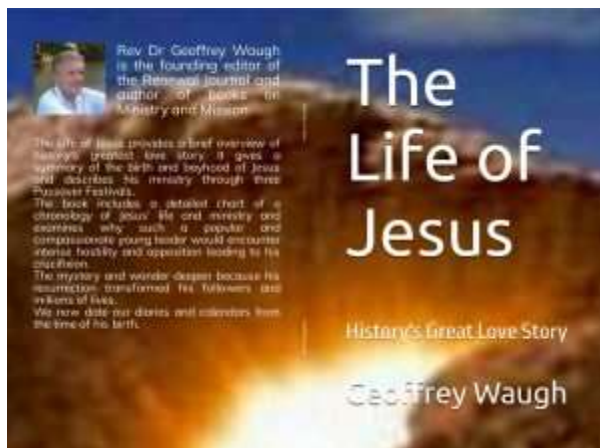
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The synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) describe how the meal with Jesus was celebrated as a Passover meal and Jesus gave it new meaning, telling us to "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

Like Christmas, celebrating Jesus' birth, we may celebrate these events of the crucifixion on symbolic days which remind us of the literal events, even though we are not following their exact chronology or dates.

I'm content to follow the traditional chronology and dates, as in our diaries, as symbolic and liturgical reminders of the greatest events in human history.

See also:



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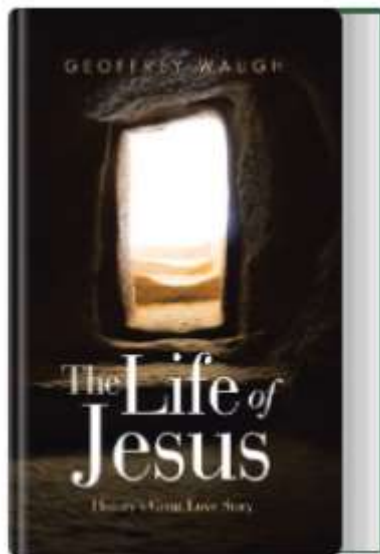
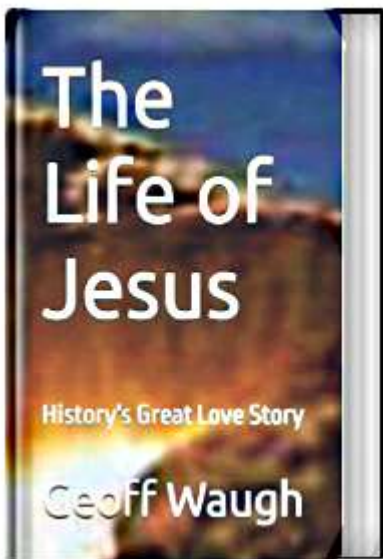
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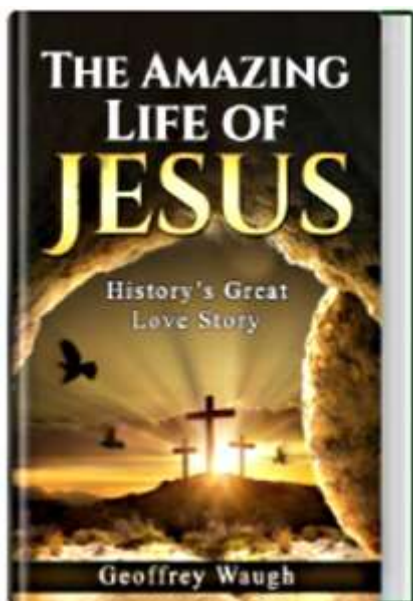
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