

**THE DAY
CHRIST DIED**

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THE DAY CHRIST DIED

Much confusion and debate regarding the day of the crucifixion of Jesus continues to divide the Christian brethren. There are Christians who maintain that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday, others maintain Thursday, while the great majority maintain that Jesus died on a Friday. One might ask, "What difference does it make?" From a Bible study standpoint it is important in Bible chronology. However, the real importance seems to lie, not so much in the direct effect it has on a detailed Bible study, as in the fact that the subject divides Christians. What brings about this confusion? It is not my desire to lay the blame on someone but rather to explore the subject so thoroughly that this confusion can be brought to an end. There will always be Christians who will refuse to study the Scriptures and others who, either for sensationalism or in order to maintain some pet doctrine, will reject the truth. These persons I'm afraid cannot be helped. I will try to simplify what is really a complex subject.—Christ's death-complex because it is involved with the sacrifice and observance of the passover.

All of the confusion on this subject, of which I have any knowledge, stems from faulty definitions of words and incorrect premises. For example, many Christians declare that the term Sabbath can be applied to the seventh day of the week, OR, to one of the feasts of Israel. This is a false declaration, but once this assumption is made, confusion results. I know you are anxious to get to the conclusion to see what day Jesus was crucified, but please be patient. If I state an opinion it means nothing, but if you come to a conclusion by carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, you will be satisfied. It is for this reason that little by little I will add Scripture to Scripture until all doubts are eliminated. We will use the American Standard Version (ASV) 1901, as it is the best English version that exists. Let us ask ourselves a question, "Does the Bible mention the day Jesus was crucified?" Notice how the day is identified in the following Scripture.

50 ^c And behold, a man named Joseph, who was a ^a councillor, a good and righteous man 51 (he had not consented to their counsel and deed), *a man* of Arimathæa, a city of the Jews, who was ^e looking for the kingdom of God : 52 this man went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where never man had yet lain. 54 And it was the day of ^a the Preparation, and the sabbath ¹ drew on. Luke 23:50-54

Here, we are clearly told that the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross and “It was the day of the **PREPARATION** and the **SABBATH** drew on.” In clear and simple language the Bible says it was the day before the sabbath called the **PREPARATION**.

42 ^a And when even was now come, because it was ^a the Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43 there came Joseph of Arimathæa, a ^a councillor ^b of honorable estate, who also himself was ^c looking for the kingdom of God; and he ^d boldly went in unto Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Mark 15:42,43

This is very clear, “It was the **PREPARATION, THAT IS,** the day **BEFORE** the **SABBATH.**” Now IF the Sabbath is Saturday, the seventh day of the week, then, the **PREPARATION** must have been **Friday** and so the question of the day on which Jesus died is very simple to answer. It was Friday. It is right here, however, that we begin to get a whole series of questions raised by those who would place the crucifixion of Jesus on Wednesday or Thursday, so we have by no means finally settled the matter to their satisfaction.

It is not uncommon for some people to refer to Sunday as the Sabbath, or perhaps the Christian Sabbath. It is wrong to refer to Sunday as the Sabbath, for Sunday is the first day of the week, whereas, the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week.

8 Remember ^athe sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labor, and ^bdo all thy work; 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; 11 ^cfor in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Ex. 20:8-11

Nowhere in the Bible is Sunday ever called the Sabbath. Those who maintain that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday or Thursday understand that the word Sabbath usually refers to the seventh day or Saturday, "BUT," they say, "In Luke 23:54 and Mark 15:42 this Sabbath is a **FEAST Sabbath** not a regular seventh day Sabbath." Once this assumption is made, the Preparation becomes the preparation for, or the day before a feast. The reason for making this assumption is based upon other assumptions. Many contend that Jesus did not eat the regular passover meal because He died exactly when the Passover lamb was slain to fulfill prophecy. Others maintain Jesus must have been in the grave 72 hours as Jonah was in the whale. From Friday afternoon until Sunday morning is not 72 hours.

38 Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Teacher, ^mwe would see a sign from thee. 39 But he answered and said unto them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: 40 for as ^oJonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the ⁴whale; so shall ^pthe Son of man be ^qthree days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Matt. 12:38-40

Rather than state more of the problems here, and there SEEM to be many, let us try to establish a straightforward Biblical conclusion.

To return to where we began a digression, if it were not for these various assumptions, the ordinary reader would have already concluded that Jesus died on the **Preparation**, that is **Friday, the day before the Sabbath**, which is Saturday. Such has been the accepted teaching until recent years as we shall presently see.

The first word we must define is the word Sabbath. Sabbath occurs 111 times in the Old Testament. The primary definition of the word Sabbath is in Exodus 20:8-11.

8 Remember ^athe sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labor, and ^bdo all thy work; 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 ^cfor in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Ex. 20:8-11

This is not the first occurrence of the word Sabbath in the Old Testament, but this is one clear cut definition of the word. The earliest use of the word Sabbath is in Exodus 16:23.

21 And they gathered it morning by morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. 22 'And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one: and all the ^krulers of the congregation came and told Moses. 23 And he said unto them, This is that which Jehovah hath spoken, 'Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto Jehovah: bake that which ye will bake, and boil that which ye will boil; and ^mall that remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

24 And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade : and ²it did not become foul, neither was there any worm therein. 25 And Moses said, Eat that to-day ; for to-day is a sabbath unto Jehovah : to-day ye shall not find it in the field. 26 Six days ye shall gather it ; but on the seventh day is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. 27 And it came to pass on the seventh day, that there went out some of the people to gather, and they found none. 28 And Jehovah said unto Moses, ^oHow long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? 29 See, for that Jehovah hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days ; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. 30 So the people rested on the seventh day.

Ex. 16:21-30

The word Sabbath does have other meanings in addition to the seventh day of the week. The next definition is found in Leviticus 16:29-31.

29 And it shall be a statute for ever unto you : ²in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and ³shall do no manner of work, the home-born, or the stranger that sojourneth among you : 30 for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you ; from all your sins shall ye be clean before Jehovah. 31 It is a sabbath of solemn rest unto you, and ye shall ⁴afflict your souls ; it is a statute for ever.

Lev. 16:29-31

Thus, we see that the Day of Atonement is also called a Sabbath. The word Sabbath can also refer to a year during which Israel's land was to rest (Lev. 25:1-7).

25 And Jehovah spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, ² Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto Jehovah. ³ ⁴ Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruits thereof; ⁴ but in ⁵ the seventh year shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath unto Jehovah: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. ⁵ That which groweth of itself of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, and the grapes of thy undressed vine thou shalt not gather: it shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. ⁶ ⁶ And the sabbath of the land shall be for food for you; for thee, and for thy servant and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant and for thy stranger, who sojourn with thee. ⁷ And for thy cattle, and for the beasts that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be for food.

Lev. 25:1-7

We have, then, a Sabbath every seventh day, the Sabbath of the Day of Atonement, and the seventh-year Sabbath of the land. The word Sabbath **NEVER** applies to any feast of Isreal. The definitions are established in the Pentateuch, or the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. There are no other definitions of this word in the Old Testament. Appendix I sets these uses in table form. The **Passover** is distinctly referred to as a **FEAST, NOT a Sabbath**. This is clearly stated in Exodus 12:12-14.

¹² For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and ¹³ against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am Jehovah. ¹³ And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will

pass over you, and there shall no plague be upon you ¹⁴ to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. ¹⁴ And ¹⁴ this day shall be unto you for "a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to Jehovah: throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by "an ordinance for ever.

Ex. 12:12-14