



It is necessary to examine the following facts in order to understand the relationship between the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter celebration.

THE JEWISH CALENDAR

The Jewish calendar is tied to the moon and follows the lunar cycles. A Jewish year has 12 months, and because it is based on the circling of the moon, a Jewish year has 354 days with 29 or 30 days in each month. Compare this with the Roman calendar we use today that follows solar cycles of 365 days.

A Jewish day begins and ends at 6:00pm but they began counting the daylight hours from 6:00am. Evidence of this can be found in the four gospels by searching "third hour," "sixth hour" and "ninth hour." A day in the Roman calendar begins and ends at midnight.

Jews who are members of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement have gone to the extreme and the hours of each day have to be calculated. For example, if sunrise is at 5:00am and sunset is at 7:30pm, they will divide the 14 hours and 30 minutes of daylight (870 minutes) by 12 so that an hour that day will be 72.5 minutes long. Thus, if they are going to observe a special ritual at the 2nd hour, it will occur at 8:37am and thirty seconds.

Here is a glimpse of what time was like in the first century when the gospel accounts of Jesus' death and resurrection were recorded.

DAYTIME

First hour - Dawn to 8:00am

Second hour - 8:00 to 9:00am

Third hour - 9:00 to 10:00am

Fourth hour - 10:00 to 11:00am

Fifth hour - 11:00am to 12:00pm

Sixth hour - 12:00 to 1:00pm

Seventh hour - 1:00 to 2:00pm

Eighth hour - 2:00 to 3:00pm

Ninth hour - 3:00 to 4:00pm

Tenth hour - 4:00 to 5:00pm

Eleventh hour - 5:00 to 6:00pm

Twelfth hour - 6:00pm to sunset

NIGHT TIME

First watch - sunset to 9:00pm

Second watch - 9:00pm to midnight

Third watch - midnight to 3:00am

Fourth watch - 3:00am to sunrise

THE JEWISH PASSOVER

Few Christians know that the Jewish Passover is currently a seven day period in Israel and eight days for the Jews who live outside of Israel. At the time of Christ, the Jews had two names for the same festival, it was called the Feast of the Passover or the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.

The first month in the Jewish calendar is Nissan (also spelled Nisan) and occurs during the months of March thru April in the Roman calendar. Nissan is the month that the Passover is observed.

The 13th day (Tuesday) of Nissan is called the preparation day for the Passover. The Passover meal is eaten after 6:00pm, which means that it is eaten on the 14th day of Nissan.

From the New Testament we know that Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover meal on a Tuesday night. (Matt.26:17-19; Luke 22:13-20)

The 14th day (Wednesday) of Nissan was called the first day of the Passover and people worked their normal jobs during this day. This was the day that Jesus was brought to Pilate at 6:00am (Matt.27:1-2) and was crucified the sixth hour (12:00pm).

The 15th day (Thursday) of Nissan was the Feast of the Unleavened Bread and also known as the high Sabbath (John 19:31). This is not to be confused with the regular Sabbath. The high Sabbath was a holy day for the Jews and no work could be done on this day. All roads and bridges leading to Jerusalem had been cleaned the day before from garbage and the corpses of dead animals had been removed. Furthermore, all graves had been whitewashed so that the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem would not be defiled. This was the reason the Jewish leadership did not want to have anyone hanging on a cross on

a high Sabbath.

The 16th day (Friday) of Nissan was called "The Morrow After" the Sabbath and this was the day of the cutting of barley sheaves.

The 17th day (Saturday) of Nissan in the year Jesus was crucified was the regular Sabbath. Jesus rose from the dead sometime between 6:00pm Saturday night and 6:00am on the first day of the week (Sunday morning). This timeline is consistent with Jesus' words that he would be dead for three days and three nights:

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 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 the prophet Jonas: 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 12:38-40)

Jesus was dead and in the grave at beginning of the 15th day (Thursday) of Nissan. Using the timeline Jesus provided of three full days and nights, Thursday night was the first complete day, Friday night was the second complete day and Saturday night was the third complete day. If we correctly interpret the timeline provided by the four gospels, it is not possible for Jesus to have been crucified on Friday as commonly thought, but He was crucified and buried on Wednesday. Please refer to the scripture citations of the Passover week timeline for specifics of that week.¹

¹ www.eaec.org/bibleanswers/the_passover_week.htm

The period from the 17th day to the 20th day of Nissan was called The Lesser Festival.

It is interesting that the Christian Easter week in 2015 is observed from March 29th through April 5th, while the Jewish Passover is observed from April 3rd to April 11th.

Which week is correct? It is impossible to know since there is no real conversion rate between a solar year and a lunar year. What is important is that we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians sometimes react with hostility to information that contradicts what they “know to be true.” It is my hope that you would re-examine your assumptions of truth through the clear lens of a sincere Biblical analysis. It should be the goal of every Christian to debunk the Devil’s lies about our Savior’s death and resurrection. Given the facts, it is a blatant lie that Jesus was crucified on a Friday and no Christian should be perpetuating it.