

**JESUS
CHRIST
OUR
PASSOVER**

VICTOR PAUL WIERWILLE

JESUS CHRIST OUR PASSEOVER

Jesus Christ Our Passover reflects several decades of extensive and detailed Biblical research into the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. It vividly depicts Jesus Christ—the mysterious man from Nazareth who astounded and confounded the religious and political leaders.

Jesus Christ Our Passover examines in detail the Son of God—the Man of God—who endured and accomplished for all men what no other man could.

Jesus Christ Our Passover answers questions:

- Exactly what happened during the last week before Jesus' crucifixion?
- Was the famed last supper a Passover meal, or was Jesus himself the Passover?
- How many times did Peter deny his lord? Three or six?
- Who was the *other* Jesus?
- When did Judas kill himself?
- Did Jesus die on "Good Friday" or Wednesday? Was he resurrected Saturday or Sunday?
- What occurred between the crucifixion and the day of Pentecost nearly two months later?

As you read and study this book, you will grow in thanksgiving and love for the Son of God. He was the perfect one who so loved the world that he suffered and died as the Passover sacrifice. May you come to know Jesus Christ the Passover sacrifice—whom God raised from the dead—accepting the complete deliverance he accomplished for all men.

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To my sisters
Lydia Elizabeth Wierwille Kuck
Sevilla Magdalena Wierwille Henkener
and my brother
Reuben Adolph Wierwille

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PREFACE

To understand the significance of Jesus Christ as our Passover is to come face to face with God's magnificent plan of all ages. This research study encompasses the events of two critical months of God's intervention in human history. After the introduction, which sets the content and context of events, the book begins a scrutiny of the Biblical record from six days before Jesus' crucifixion, through the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension, and, finally, the great day of Pentecost.

During my four decades of research and teaching of Biblical and systematic theology, my studies have consistently brought me back to the subject of this work: the cornerstone of all history, Jesus Christ. The two-month period from before Passover to the day of Pentecost is the apex and fulcrum of all human experience and spiritual history to date.

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Many others have studied and published works that have focused on certain aspects of this period. However, few have attempted to cover the entire period minutely, which is absolutely necessary for a full understanding and appreciation of what Jesus Christ accomplished for all men. We believe that the present work is vital and unique in both scope and significance.

In endeavoring to rightly divide God's Word for this work, my search has taken me to old sources as well as current ones. It has involved the help and advice of many excellent researchers and scholars in the fields of Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Eastern culture, history, and figures of speech. It has necessitated strict attention to the authority of God's inspired Word as well as to the many details that can be searched out of the scriptural records and to the research keys necessary for proper handling of that Word.

Several factors should be recognized by the research student inquiring into this subject, one of which is that the four Gospels simply do not record all that occurred during this time period. The Gospel of John states this truth specifically.

John 21:25:

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

Another factor a student of the Scriptures should recognize is that it can be difficult for those of us living

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in the Occident to fully appreciate, understand, and recapture the Eastern customs and expressions found in God's Word. Thanks to the work of K.C. Pillai in orientalisms and E.W. Bullinger's work in figures of speech, major aspects of God's Word have been clarified.

Finally, we do not have the original manuscripts written by the Gospel writers. Thus we must carefully scrutinize and compare copies, translations, and versions of texts extant to determine what the original documents said.

While there are challenges in every Biblical research study, God has instructed us to rightly divide His Word (II Timothy 2:15) without private interpretation (II Peter 1:20), and to teach it with authority and conviction (Titus 2:15) as well as humility (II Timothy 2:24 and 25). To be able to do this must be available. We are not to water down or handle the Word of God deceitfully (II Corinthians 2:17 and 4:2). Therefore, it is the foremost responsibility of a researcher to do his utmost for God's highest, recognizing that the Scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:35). To the best of my ability, these principles of research according to the dictates of God's Word have been adhered to in *Jesus Christ Our Passover*.

Because of the immense importance and scope of this work and the limiting factors cited above, I do not expect that this work is the final word on the subject. Although I believe it is the most exhaustive and most accurate work done to date, there is more to be learned

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in the accuracy and integrity of God's Word. God's Word is the storehouse of truth, and as new light is learned on this topic, it will be presented in future editions. However, I believe the work on the subject of *Jesus Christ Our Passover* will bless you abundantly as you study it, deepening your knowledge and appreciation of God and His wonderful Son.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many dedicated people have assisted me in the preparation and publication of this book, a project which I have worked on periodically for two decades. However, in the early 1970s, I solicited the cooperation of Walter J. Cummins, chairman of our Research department, to check my research thoroughly and critically concerning all the Gospel records starting with six days before the death of Jesus Christ to the day of Pentecost.

After various facets of the subject had been worked in detail, I made the first presentation of this entire subject to a special Biblical research team in the spring of 1974 in a week-long seminar entitled "The Last Week of Jesus' Life." From this seminar a working manuscript was developed, the embryo of this book.

The first full-scale manuscript of *Jesus Christ Our Passover* was completed in July of 1978. Upon its

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completion, another week-long Biblical research seminar was held at The Way Family Ranch, Camp Gunnison, near Gunnison, Colorado, to again study and refine previous research.

In late September of 1978 the research team was assembled for a number of days to again collectively and critically study and evaluate the revised manuscript. Similar meetings of the research staff were held in August 1979 and April 1980. Providing expertise in important fields were Walter J. Cummins in Greek, Bernita Jess and Gary R. Curtis in Aramaic, Bo Reahard in Eastern customs, John Crouch in figures of speech, Chip Stansbury in history and documentation, and Michele C. Curtis in organizing and editing the material. Donna Randall, my research secretary for many years, helped immeasurably in evaluating the material and contributing to it. Karen W. Martin, my daughter, took primary responsibility for the editing of the manuscript.

Rhoda Becker Wierwille, assisted by Joyce Ziegler, Marian Moczydlowski, and others in The Way International's Word Processing department, typed and retyped the manuscript with love and dedication. Rosalie Rivenbark, Tom Plain and the staff of our Way Publications department finalized the manuscript for publication.

As is evident, this book is truly the result of a large team effort with years of research, study, checking, and rechecking. Others besides those named above have been

Acknowledgments

consulted and have assisted in the production of this work. To all who have contributed to *Jesus Christ Our Passover* out of their love for God and for the accuracy of His Word, I am most thankful and grateful. Of course, the final contents are my responsibility.

PART I

JESUS CHRIST OUR PASSEOVER

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

According to I Corinthians 5:7 Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. To fully appreciate the reality of Jesus Christ as the Passover lamb who fulfilled the Old Testament law and made possible the Age of Grace, we must understand the significance of the Passover.

What circumstances prompted God's ordaining an observance called "Passover"? To understand this, we must understand the historical background of Joseph in Egypt. Joseph brought his father, Israel, and his eleven brothers and their families to Egypt when they were suffering from famine in Canaan. Joseph's family was graciously welcomed to Egypt by Pharaoh. As time passed, the king died, as did Israel, Joseph, and his brothers. Now their children had children and as their numbers increased greatly, the native Egyptians felt

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threatened by them and made slaves of these foreigners. After the children of Israel had been in Egypt for many years, God chose Moses to lead them out of bondage and back to the Promised Land. When Moses repeatedly asked the Pharaoh of Egypt to let the people of Israel depart from his land, the Pharaoh stubbornly refused; and as a result, a series of plagues befell Egypt.

In the tenth and final plague, the angel of death, "the destroyer," passed through the entire land of Egypt and killed the firstborn of every household, both humans and animals. To provide protection from the angel of death for the children of Israel, God instructed the people of Israel to sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed lamb on the two side doorposts of the house and on the upper doorpost, called a lintel. The destroyer, upon seeing the blood, had to "pass over" that house and could not destroy its firstborn. Hence the sacrificial lamb was called the "Passover" lamb. In carrying out this commandment from God to use the slain lamb, the children of Israel protected themselves from the destroyer. The twelfth chapter of Exodus relates all this information.

Exodus 12:1,7-13,21-27:

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

And they shall take of the blood, and strike *it* on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.

Eat not of it raw, nor sodden [boiled] at all with water, but roast *with* fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance [innards] thereof.

And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

And thus shall ye eat it; *with* your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: *it is* the Lord's passover.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: *I am* the Lord.

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 the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.

And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip *it* in the blood that *is* in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that *is* in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite *you*.

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And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.

And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

There are two significant aspects of this Passover lamb: its flesh and its blood. The flesh was to be roasted and eaten. In eating the lamb's flesh the believing children of Israel were in reality eating physical health to themselves. When the children of Israel left Egypt, after eating the Passover as commanded by God, there was "not one feeble *person*" among them.¹

While partaking of the flesh of the lamb brought health to the people of Israel, the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb was also significant. It was the lamb's blood sprinkled on the lintels and doorposts which caused the destroyer to pass over them, sparing them. The shedding of the lamb's blood was representative of the atonement or covering for sin. By the shedding

1. Psalms 105:37: "He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and *there was not one feeble person* among their tribes." Also see the record in II Chronicles 30:20 where the Lord healed the people after they ate the Passover.

of blood the children of Israel were spared from the consequences of their sins. This truth of atonement by shed blood can be seen in both Leviticus and Hebrews.

Leviticus 17:11:

For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul.

Hebrews 9:22:

And almost **all** things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

According to Exodus 12, this Passover sacrifice and meal was to be carried out in the families of Israel. First a lamb was selected and killed. The lamb was a male of the first year, without spot and without blemish. Its blood was put into a basin and then hyssop was dipped into the blood and used to strike the blood across the lintels and doorposts. The flesh of the lamb was roasted and eaten along with bitter herbs. This was the first meal of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Numbers 9:12:

They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to **all** the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it.

Exodus 12:10:

And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

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In the killing of the sacrificial lamb, no bone was to be broken, and any part of the lamb not eaten was to be burned.

After this first Passover recorded in Exodus 12, the children of Israel were commanded to celebrate this event annually. According to Numbers 9:3, the second Passover, which occurred in the wilderness, was observed in the same manner as the first.

Numbers 9:3:

In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it.

Shortly before the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, God instructed Moses to declare to them procedures for subsequent Passovers, including some changes. The record of this is found in Deuteronomy 16.

Deuteronomy 16:4-7,16:

And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there *any thing* of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning.

Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee:

But at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.

And thou shalt roast and eat *it* in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents.

Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty.

Thus some additions and changes were made. The lamb was to be killed outside the gates of the city, a commandment to go into effect after they settled in the Promised Land. The lamb was to be killed, roasted, and eaten at the place God would choose to place His name. At this same place and time, the men were to appear before the Lord for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Bible tells us in scriptures written after the books of Moses that the place the Lord “shall choose to place his name” was the area of Jerusalem, the city where the Temple was located.² These are the basic changes set forth in God’s Word concerning the Passover. Later religious laws made by man, not commanded by God, gradually brought about other changes and additions. Thus careful distinction must be made between those changes which were God-ordained and those which were made by man without God’s sanction.

What about the timing of this important event of Passover? The significance of this will become evident

2. I Kings 8:29, 9:3, II Chronicles 8:12-15, 35:1-19, Ezra 6:15-22, Luke 2:41 and 42.

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later when we consider Jesus Christ as the Passover lamb. The Old Testament again gives very specific information.

Exodus 12:1 and 2:

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.

The month called "Abib" was in the spring of the year, during our March and April. It was called "Abib" until the kingdom of Judah was taken captive to Babylon many years later. As a result of the Babylonian influence, God's people began to call this month "Nisan." We can see this change from Abib to Nisan in the Book of Esther.

Esther 3:7:

In the first month, that *is*, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, *to* the twelfth *month*, that *is*, the month Adar.

So the first month of the Hebrew calendar was first called Abib, but later became known as Nisan. This study will use the term "Nisan" throughout for the sake of clarity.

Exodus 12:3-6:

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:

And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take *it* according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats:

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

God's instruction to Israel was to select the Passover lambs on the tenth of Nisan. Then they were to keep them separated from the other sheep and care for them until the fourteenth. During this time from the selection on the tenth to the close of the fourteenth was a period of preparation for the Passover meal and the Feast. The fourteenth was known as a day of preparation, for it was on this day that the lamb was slain and prepared for eating.³

In dealing with the subject of the time of the Passover there are some other points which need to be understood. For example, the beginning of the day according to Biblical reckoning was different from ours. In modern times, midnight marks the end of one day and the beginning of the next. However in Biblical times, sunset, not midnight, was the start of a new day. To illustrate:

3. See Appendix 1, "The Preparations for the Feast."

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the fifth of Nisan ended at sunset and at the same time the sixth began. It would remain the sixth until the following sunset. Although the time of sunset would vary according to the time of year, for convenience in teaching and understanding we mark sunset at 6:00 P.M.

With this understanding, we now look at Exodus 12:6 and scrutinize the phrase "in the evening," which is the time of day the Passover lamb was slain. In Hebrew, the phrase "in the evening" is *ben ha-aryayim*, meaning literally, "between the evenings." This is an expression which, according to evidence from the Talmud, refers to the period between 2:30 and 3:30 in the afternoon.⁴ According to the historian Josephus, the practice in the first century A.D. was to begin slaughtering the Passover lambs at the ninth hour, our 3 P.M.⁵ This is corroborated by Deuteronomy 16:6 where the Passover sacrifice is to take place "at even, at the going down of the sun." This does not refer to sunset, but it means during the afternoon when the sun is visibly declining in the western sky.

The timing of the Passover sacrifice becomes very significant when we study the time of Jesus Christ's

4. *Pesahim* 5.1; I. Epstein, ed., *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud: Pesahim* (London: Soncino Press, 1967), p. 58a; Herbert Danby, trans., *The Mishnah Translated from the Hebrew* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 137-141; and Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 12-14. Some scholars believe "between the evenings" refers to the entire afternoon from the sun's decline from its highest point at noon to its decline below the horizon at sunset.

5. Josephus *Jewish War* 6.9.3; also William Whiston, trans., *Josephus: Complete Works* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1960), p. 558.

death. The lamb had to be slain on the fourteenth of Nisan before sunset, because sunset began the fifteenth, a new day. Leviticus 23, Numbers 9, Joshua 5, II Chronicles 35, and Ezra 6 further corroborate this.

Leviticus 23:5:

In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even ["between the evenings"] is the Lord's passover.

Numbers 9:3 and 5:

In the fourteenth day of this month, at even ["between the evenings"], ye shall keep it. . . .

And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even ["between the evenings"]. . . .

Joshua 5:10:

And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

II Chronicles 35:1:

. . . they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first month.

Ezra 6:19:

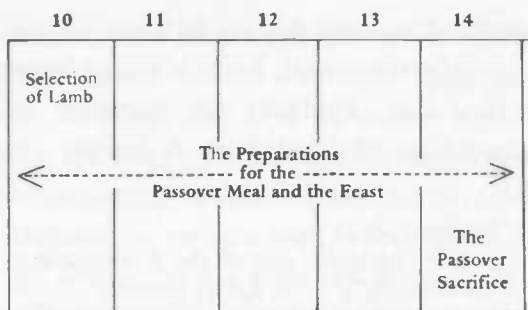
And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth *day* of the first month.

God's Word repeatedly establishes that the Passover lamb was killed during the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan.⁶ After this killing, the lamb would need to be prepared for eating.

6. The law also had a provision so that those who were considered unclean or had been out of town when the Passover was observed in Nisan could

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Exodus 12:8:

And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.

The Passover lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It was to be eaten “in that night,” after sunset and before midnight.⁷ Thus the Passover meal would actually be eaten on the fifteenth of Nisan.

The Passover meal, eaten in the night, was the first meal of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. To this extent Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread overlap. Because this meal is eaten at the beginning of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, these two celebrations are closely related.

partake of the Passover in the second month. Numbers 9:10-12: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or *be* in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the Lord. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, *and* eat it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs*. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it.”

7. The meal had to be eaten before midnight, since that is when the destroyer smote the land of Egypt in Exodus 12:29.

| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
|--|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| The Passover Meal | | | | | | |
| <div style="text-align: center;"> ← → </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> ----- The Feast of Unleavened Bread ----- </div> | | | | | | |
| High Day Special Sabbath Holy Con- vocation | | | | | | High Day Special Sabbath Holy Con- vocation |

Since the Passover meal was part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the preparations for the Passover would obviously be part of the preparations for the entire Feast. The Temple and private homes were to be cleansed of all leaven and other contaminations that would defile Israel for the Feast. Also, all priests and Levites went through a personal, legal cleansing, as did **all** other participants.⁸

The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the fifteenth and continued through sunset closing the twenty-first of Nisan—a seven-day feast. No leavened bread was to be eaten during this time, and the first day and the last days of the Feast were to be days of holy convocation, Sabbaths, in which no servile work was done.

Exodus 12:15-20:

Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

8. Scriptures stating these preparations can be found in Exodus 12:15, Numbers 9:6, 19:11-22, II Chronicles 29:4 and 5, II Chronicles 30 and John 11:55.

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And in the first day *there shall be* an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save *that* which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.

And ye shall observe *the feast of unleavened bread*; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.

In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.

Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger [foreigner, proselyte], or born in the land.

Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

Leviticus 23:6-8:

And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days: in the seventh day *is* an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein*.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread began at the sunset ("even") which ended the fourteenth and began the fifteenth of Nisan. The Feast continued until the sunset

which closed the twenty-first. Except for the Passover meal, no specific times of the day were given for meal-times. However, during the seven days of the Feast all bread consumed was to be unleavened.⁹

Now in understanding Biblical timekeeping, we need to study the "watches." The period between sunset and sunrise was divided into watches rather than hours. Timekeeping by means of sundials was impossible after sunset, so in Old Testament times there were three watches during the course of a night, each lasting about four hours, thus marking time through the night in a general way.¹⁰ The first watch, the evening watch, lasted from sunset to 10:00 P.M. The second watch, the middle watch, went from 10:00 P.M. to 2:00 A.M.¹¹ The third watch, the morning watch, was from 2:00 A.M. to sunrise.¹²

By New Testament times, Roman timekeeping had increased the number of watches from three to four. The first, the evening watch, was from sunset to

9. See Appendix 2, "The Biblical Significance of Leaven."

10. Psalms 63:6: "When I remember thee upon my bed, *and* meditate on thee in the *night* watches." The specific times given above for each watch must be understood as approximate.

11. Judges 7:19: "So Gideon, and the hundred men that *were* with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that *were* in their hands."

12. Exodus 14:24: "And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians."

I Samuel 11:11: "And it was *so* on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together."

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9:00 P.M. The second, the midnight watch, was from 9:00 P.M. to 12:00 midnight. The third, called the cock-crowing watch, went from midnight to 3:00 A.M. The fourth, the morning watch, went from 3:00 A.M. to sunrise. These are all referred to in Mark 13:35.¹³

The daylight period, from sunrise to sunset, was divided into twelve equal segments of time called "hours." Since this daylight period varied in length depending upon the time of the year, the hours would also vary in length. An hour would vary from forty-nine minutes on the shortest day in winter to seventy-one minutes on the longest day in summer.¹⁴ During the Passover season in the spring of the year, an hour was close to a sixty-minute hour. For the sake of clarity as we study Nisan, we will place sunrise at 6:00 A.M., the third hour at 9:00 A.M., the sixth hour at noon, the ninth hour at 3:00 P.M., and sunset at 6:00 P.M.

In the Biblical culture, the days of the week were not referred to by name, but by number. What we call Sunday was called the first day of the week. Monday was the second day, Tuesday the third, and so on. Our Saturday was called the seventh day or the weekly Sabbath. All of these points are really very simple, yet lack of understanding in these basics has caused tremendous confusion in comprehending the events leading up to and including Jesus' crucifixion.

13. Mark 13:35: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning."

14. James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible* (reprint ed., Plainfield, N.J.: Logos International, 1972), pp. 429-430.

Throughout the course of this study we will be using Biblical time reckoning unless otherwise indicated. In referring to a date, I will be treating it as beginning at sunset rather than midnight. When I make reference to the preparation, the Passover, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it will be in terms of what I have just covered about those events. When I refer to "hours" or "watches," it will be in terms of the Biblical usage as shown above. All of these things are fundamental in understanding the last week before the crucifixion.

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Having this background, we can now look specifically at Jesus Christ's final week of natural life. Once the exact day on which Jesus Christ died is pinpointed, all other times can easily be calculated because we have a point of reference from which to count forward and backward in time. So our study must answer the question, On what day did Jesus Christ die? Matthew 12 contains basic information which begins to answer this question.

Matthew 12:40:

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.

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Tradition has taught that Jesus Christ died at 3:00 P.M. on Good Friday and that he arose on early Easter Sunday morning. Yet the above scripture says that the Son of man would be “in the heart of the earth”—that is, buried—for three days and three nights. People have tried to reconcile this verse with tradition by saying that any portion of a day can be called “a day.” That is true, when the word “day” is used by itself. However, when in the Bible the words “day” and “night” are used together, a literal period of twenty-four hours is denoted. Matthew 12:40 does not say just “three days”; it says “three days and three nights.” Therefore, even if one were to press the traditional position of an interment lasting from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning, we can count three days with Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, but only two nights with Friday night and Saturday night. One night is still missing. The evidence is quite clear that something is wrong with this traditional teaching. So let’s put traditional teachings from our minds and look at the accuracy of God’s Word when studying time. While looking for the specific day that Jesus died and was buried, we can first note the time at which he died.

Matthew 27:46 and 50:

And about the ninth hour [about our 3:00 P.M.] Jesus cried with a loud voice. . . .

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost [died].

Jesus Christ died around three o'clock in the afternoon. However, as carefully indicated by Matthew 12:40, the counting of the three days and three nights was not to be marked from the time of death, but from the time of burial. Understanding that he died around three in the afternoon, we must still determine the day and the date on which he died.

John 19:31:

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies [of the crucified men] 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.

The failure to rightly divide this verse has caused tremendous confusion concerning the day of the week of the crucifixion. People have taught that Jesus died on the day before the weekly Sabbath. Since the weekly Judean¹⁵ Sabbath was Saturday, they have said he died on Friday. However, John 19:31 does not say that Jesus died on the day before the weekly Sabbath. It clearly and explicitly states that he died shortly before "the sabbath day" and that "that sabbath day was an high day." A "high day" is a special Sabbath, a Sabbath that can occur on any day of the week, not just Saturday. It is a special day of rest that may come in the middle of the week such as our Christmas often does, depending

15. See Appendix 3, "Jew and Judean." The use of the word "Jew" can cause confusion in the mind of the modern reader.

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on the calendar year. We read previously from Leviticus that the fifteenth of Nisan was a day of holy convocation in which no servile work was to be done. The fifteenth of Nisan was considered a “high day,” a high Sabbath, a special day of rest, because it was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In that night, which began the fifteenth of Nisan, the children of Israel celebrated with the Passover meal.

The final day of preparation for the Passover was the fourteenth of Nisan. Since this was also the day before the special Sabbath, this was the day on which Jesus Christ died. That is what John 19:31 clearly teaches when it is read with Biblical understanding.

By the time the events recorded in John 19:31 occurred, Jesus was already dead on the cross. He had died around 3:00 P.M. The Judeans did not want the bodies to hang on the crosses after sundown, which was when the new day began, for that new day would be a special Sabbath. The Judeans wanted the corpses to be removed and buried before the special Sabbath began.

Luke 23:52-54:

This *man* [Joseph of Arimathea] went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath [the special Sabbath of the fifteenth of Nisan] drew on.

This record in Luke establishes the fact that Jesus Christ was laid in a sepulchre, he was buried, sometime between 3:00 P.M. and sunset on the fourteenth of Nisan. Once one recognizes that he died and was buried before a special Sabbath, a high day, rather than the weekly Sabbath, the entire record clarifies itself.

John 19:41 and 42:

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation *day* [omit "day"]; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

Mark 15:42:

And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day ["the day" is omitted in the Greek texts] before the sabbath [the special Sabbath, the high day].

God's Word is so clear about the timing of Jesus' burial that it is surprising so many of us have missed it for so long. All four Gospels readily concur that Jesus died by 3:00 P.M. and was buried before sunset on the fourteenth of Nisan. Now let us see what the Gospel accounts say regarding the time of Jesus Christ's resurrection. Once we have determined the day of his resurrection, we may count backwards three days and three nights to pinpoint the day of his death and burial.

Luke 24:1-6:

Now upon the first *day* of the week [our Sunday], very early in the morning, they [the women] came unto the sepulchre,

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bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee.

The first day of the week was Sunday. Upon arriving early that morning, the women discovered that Jesus' body was gone. Jesus Christ had already been resurrected. It has been inferred from this that he had just risen before the women arrived that Sunday morning. God's Word does not say that. Look at the records in Mark and John.

Mark 16:2 and 6:

And very early in the morning the first *day* of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

John 20:1:

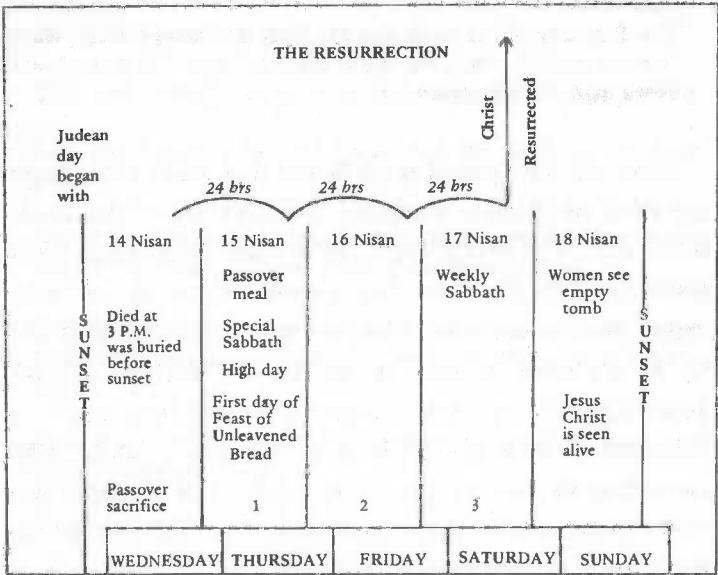
The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

None of the Gospel records say that Jesus arose from the dead on Sunday morning, the first day of the week. What the records do establish is that Jesus Christ was resurrected by the time these people arrived at the tomb early Sunday morning. Now we can calculate from the truths we have learned. According to Matthew 12:40, Jesus was to be buried for three days and three nights, a full seventy-two hours. It is interesting to note that, according to Judean law, identification of a corpse was to be given within three days after its death, before the body decomposed beyond recognition.

Since Jesus Christ was buried on the fourteenth of Nisan after 3:00 P.M. and before sunset and had to be buried for three days and three nights, then he must have risen on the seventeenth of Nisan after 3:00 P.M. and before sunset. When the women arrived at the tomb early Sunday morning, the tomb was already empty. So putting all these facts together, Jesus Christ must have been raised the day before Sunday, late on Saturday afternoon after 3:00 P.M. but before sunset.

By these simple calculations, the timing of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ becomes perfectly clear. Counting back three days and nights from Saturday afternoon, we come to Wednesday afternoon. Jesus

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Christ died at 3:00 P.M. on Wednesday, the fourteenth of Nisan, and was buried before sunset. This was the last day of preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was also the day and time the Passover lamb was to be slain.

To review this important information, Jesus Christ was buried on Wednesday afternoon after 3:00 P.M. and before sunset. Three days and three nights later, after 3:00 P.M. and before sunset on Saturday, the seventeenth of Nisan, Jesus Christ was raised by God from the dead. On early Sunday morning, his disciples visiting the tomb found that he had already risen. The accuracy of God's Word is breathtaking!

Some may wonder how Jesus Christ could be in the grave three days and three nights and still be raised the third day.¹⁶ The answer is now very simple. Since Jesus died very late on Wednesday, the first day would be counted as Thursday. Friday was then the second day and Saturday the third. Since he was raised late on Saturday, he was raised on the third day,¹⁷ after he had been in the grave three days and three nights—seventy-two hours.

Another question about the timing of Jesus' burial has come from Luke.

Luke 24:21:

But we [the two men walking to Emmaus] trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day [Sunday] is the third day since these things were done.

People have said that this verse contains a discrepancy because it says that Sunday was "the third day since" the crucifixion.¹⁸ This is a misunderstanding. The word "since" literally means "away from." Jesus died late on Wednesday. The third day "away from" Wednesday

16. Matthew 16:21: "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." Also see: I Corinthians 15:4, Matthew 17:23, 20:19, Mark 9:31, 10:34, Luke 9:22, 24:7 and 46, Acts 10:40.

17. Victor Paul Wierwille, "The Day Jesus Christ Died," *The Word's Way* (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1971), pp. 187-199.

18. Sunday could certainly not be called "the third day since" the crucifixion if he died late on Friday. That would make Friday the first day "since" the crucifixion, even though it supposedly occurred on Friday. Thus, this verse, even traditionally interpreted, makes impossible a Friday crucifixion.

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would be the fourth day. It means three full days had gone by. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday had passed, making Sunday the fourth day. The Greek literally reads, "But surely also together with all these things, it brings a third day away from which these things occurred." That is how accurate God's Word is. Three other translations of this same verse, Luke 24:21, should be noted by students of God's Word.

... but he is dead, and that is three days ago!¹⁹

... Moreover, three days have already passed, since all those events occurred.²⁰

... and lo, three days have passed since all these things have occurred.²¹

In context, the men had not believed the report that Jesus had been raised on the third day as promised (Luke 24:6-11, 22, 23). In their minds, Jesus was legally and totally dead. It was an irreversible fact. Three days had come and gone and their supposed Messiah was still reckoned dead. In disappointment they were going home. That is the great importance of the observation of the two men on their way to Emmaus.

19. James Moffatt, trans., *The Bible: A New Translation*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1935).

20. Gerrit Verkuyl, ed. and trans., *The Holy Bible: The New Berkeley Version in Modern English*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969).

21. James Murdock, trans., *The Syriac New Testament Translated into English from the Peshitto Version* (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1851; 9th ed., Boston: H.L. Hastings & Sons, 1915). This reading can also be verified by two of the oldest manuscripts in Estrangelo Aramaic: the Sinaitic Palimpsest and the Curetonian Syriac.

There are some other interesting observations that can be made about the number three, since Jesus Christ was buried three days and three nights. Three denotes completeness in its Biblical usage.²² It is used of a time of darkness, judgment, and separation, when all seems hopeless. The end of a three-day period may be marked by life, release, and restoration.²³ Jesus was not in a temporary coma or similar state. His death was complete. Thus, in being raised "on the third day" after "three days and three nights" in the grave, Jesus Christ was raised from complete death to complete life, fulfilling every legality.

In Old Testament law as stated in Numbers 19:11 and 12, a man who contracted defilement through touching a dead body was required to purify himself on the third day of his cleansing period. Also, in Leviticus 7:17 and 18, the flesh of the peace offering (when offered as a vow or a voluntary offering) was not to be kept beyond the third day, but was to be burnt on that day as unfit for food. According to Jonah 1:17, the Prophet Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish. When the great sea creature spit him out onto dry land, Jonah was delivered. God's Word utilizes this historical incident with Jonah as a prophetic

22. For a fuller exposition of the number three's relation to completeness, see E.W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture* (1894; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1967), pp. 107-122.

23. Study the use of three in Genesis 1:9-13 (where the dry land first appears above the water and life is first brought forth by the earth). Also, note the following scriptures: Genesis 40:12 and 13; 42:17 and 18; Exodus 10:22 and 23; II Samuel 21:1; I Kings 17:1; 18:1; Hosea 6:2; Jonah 1:17; Luke 2:46; and Acts 9:9, 17 and 18.

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picture of how long Jesus would be in the grave. Jesus Christ fulfilled this. He was absolutely marked out as God's Son by being raised, delivered from death, on the third day.²⁴

That Jesus died and was buried on Wednesday is absolutely established beyond a shadow of a doubt. Jesus Christ did not die on Friday. Nor was he resurrected on Sunday. When we strip away the cloak of tradition, God's Word unfolds in brilliant simplicity.

However, just because he died on Wednesday, I am not advocating that we change our modern commemorative events to Good Wednesday rather than Good Friday. God's Word says we are not to be bound to special days, times, or hours.²⁵ But we must adhere to the accuracy of God's rightly-divided Word if we are to stand approved before Him and enjoy the abundance of His truth. We can afford to do no less, regardless of man's tradition and theology.

In dying on the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan, Jesus Christ fulfilled the law as *the* Passover lamb. He died for the sins of mankind. During John the Baptist's ministry, he recognized that Jesus Christ would be the

24. There are other numerical points of interest. Jesus Christ, being raised on Saturday, was resurrected on the seventh day of the week. Seven is the number of spiritual perfection. The risen Christ first appeared to mankind on Sunday, the eighth day (the first day of the week), signifying a new beginning.

25. Galatians 4:9-11: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

supreme sacrificial lamb offered by God as the consummate atonement for you and for me.

John 1:29 and 36:

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

Jesus was the lamb of God. And as we learn what Jesus Christ accomplished as the Passover lamb, we can appreciate the greatness of our redemption.

I Peter 1:18 and 19:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things. . .

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Jesus Christ was our Passover lamb, the lamb of God without blemish and without spot. He died at the exact hour that the Judeans were making their annual Passover sacrifices and he remained buried for a full three days and three nights.

We now have established the background and chronological framework for the rest of this research study. Keeping these truths in mind we are ready to begin a study of Jesus Christ's last week before his

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crucifixion and follow it through to Pentecost. These times were the most significant and stirring in human history. What a thrilling opportunity for us to have God reveal in His Word the truth that Jesus Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us and to learn all that his sacrifice means to our lives.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EIGHTH AND NINTH OF NISAN

That Jesus Christ died at 3:00 P.M. on Wednesday, the fourteenth of Nisan, has already been established in this study. We have also established that the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan was the day and time the Passover lamb was killed. With this point of reference, let us now count back six days to the eighth of Nisan, a Thursday, to proceed chronologically forward throughout this study. The Gospel of John begins setting the stage for the events of this final Passover by revealing what happened six days prior to it.

John 12:1 and 2:

Then Jesus six days before the passover [the slaying of the lamb on the fourteenth¹] came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

1. The word "Passover" is used several ways Biblically. For a fuller explanation of this, see Appendix 4, "The Word 'Passover'."

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2. This chart represents part of the first month of the Hebrew calendar in the resurrection year. The dates are given according to Hebrew time reckoning, in which the day begins at sunset. Since by modern reckoning the day begins at midnight, the modern names of the days of the week are

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| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|-----------|--|--|----------|
| | 7 | 8 6 days before Passover John 12:1-11 | 9 1st entry to Jerusalem Mark 11:1-11 Luke 19:29-44 John 12:12-19 | 10 |
| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
| | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
| | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |

set forth to show the time relationship to modern readers. Some events taking place near sunset may actually overlap the end of one day and the beginning of the next.

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There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

These events took place six days before the Passover sacrifice on the fourteenth, in other words, on the eighth of Nisan and early in the evening of the ninth (since supper would take place near the time of sunset). Thus, on Thursday, the eighth of Nisan, Jesus came to Bethany and stayed for supper with Lazarus and a few others. This is how simply God's Word sets the time for this event in Bethany and the beginning of our research.

Jesus had recently raised Lazarus from the dead, and this miracle had caused no small stir in the area of Bethany and Jerusalem. As a result of the miracle many believed in Jesus, but those who did not believe became even more determined in their persecution and conspired to have Jesus put to death.

John 11:45-53:

Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.

But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council [the Sanhedrin], and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.

And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

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And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

The chief priests and Pharisees who were the respected religious leaders conspired with the high priest of Israel to kill Jesus, the Son of God. Such irony exemplifies what religion can do to people. It can so blind and misdirect them that they walk in vehement opposition to the true God whom they claim to serve.

John 11:54-57:

Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.³

Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?

Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew *it*, that they might take him.

3. "To purify themselves" relates to the week-long cleansing ceremony given in Numbers 19:11-22 where the children of Israel would purify themselves from contact with a dead body. (Also see Numbers 9:6-14.) It was also a time of purification from their presence among Gentiles of pagan lands (John 18:28, Ezra 6:20 and 21, Numbers 9:10). The Judeans would come to Jerusalem a week or so early to prepare themselves legally, physically, mentally, and spiritually for the holy occasion of Passover (II Chronicles 30:3,15-20). See Appendix 1, "The Preparations for the Feast."

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Jesus was a wanted man, public enemy number one. The religious leaders were lying in wait to take him and to have him put to death. The people were not certain that he would come to Jerusalem to take part in the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread under such treacherous circumstances. In this context comes the record in John 12 when on the evening of Thursday, the eighth of Nisan, Jesus is having supper in Bethany. It is remarkable that he came to Bethany, since it was so close to the danger lurking in Jerusalem less than two miles away.

Lazarus was present at the meal as were Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha. Since Martha served the supper and Mary ministered to Jesus, the meal must have been at their house.

Other disciples were also there. It must have been an emotional time—the love among them being so great while the danger was so imminent. The events of this supper are quite significant.

John 12:1-3:

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Then took Mary a pound of ["a pound of" is not found in Estrangelo Aramaic] ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Mary was acting with deep gratitude when she used her finest, most expensive ointment to anoint Jesus. Its aroma pervaded the house.⁴ In the East, the act of anointing was observed when crowning a king and when expressing a joyful welcome to a household visitor. It was also observed when priests were dedicated.⁵ Oil symbolized the presence of God and anointing with oil was a sign that God was setting a person apart. Jesus Christ was the Messiah, God's Anointed One, the king. In Bethany that evening Mary anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with an Eastern woman's glory, her hair. With great humility Mary was demonstrating that only her best was good enough for the Master. By anointing his feet, Mary magnified her willingness to serve Jesus as her lord. What a tender, loving gesture by the sister of the man whom Jesus had raised from the dead. However, not everyone present approved of this.

4. In Eastern culture ointment was kept in a small, tapering vase called an "alabaster." This vessel was originally made of a kind of soft, white marble noted for preserving the aroma of its contents. The Greek name *alabastra* was derived from the town of Alabastron, Egypt, where these vessels were designed for perfumes and fragrant ointments. Later, all such perfume vessels were called "alabasters" regardless of the material from which they were made. Normally, these containers would hold about a half pint of fluid. See Murdock, *The Syriac New Testament Translated*, p. 191; J. Payne Smith, ed., *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), p. 573; and Freeman, *Manners and Customs*, pp. 379-380.

5. Exodus 30:30 and 31: "And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that *they* may minister unto me in the priest's office. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations."

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John 12:4-6:

Then saith one of his disciples [speaking to Jesus], Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, which should betray him,

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Judas objected to the costliness of Mary's gesture. The value of the ointment was three hundred pence, very great worth. That Judas "had the bag" meant that Judas was the treasurer for the disciples. He also was a thief who stole money from that bag. Jesus, perceiving Judas' weakness, spoke up and reproved his thinking.

John 12:7 and 8:

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

For the poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always.

After this reproving of Judas, the account in John 12 returns to the topic of the chief priests.

John 12:9-11:

Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;

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Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

We read before that they doubted that Jesus would dare to approach the area because of the dangers awaiting him. But many people had found out that Jesus was in Bethany. The crowds, lured by curiosity, came to see both Jesus and Lazarus. The chief priests, who before had decided to put Jesus to death, now determined that Lazarus also must die. Why did they want the death of Lazarus also? Because the testimony of one whom Jesus had raised from the dead increased popular interest in following their archenemy, Jesus of Nazareth.

John 12:12 and 13:

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The day is Friday, the ninth of Nisan, five days before Passover. On this day Christ's first entry into Jerusalem occurred. Traditional religion teaches that Jesus made one entry into Jerusalem, called the "Triumphal Entry," and that this entry took place on Palm Sunday. Such teachings are not in accordance with God's Word. When we look carefully at the Gospels, we find that Jesus entered Jerusalem a first time on Friday, the ninth of Nisan, in judgment, and a second time on Saturday, the tenth of Nisan, in blessing.

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Three Gospels, John, Luke, and Mark, record the first entry of Jesus on Friday, the ninth of Nisan. Reading through these records, the facts can be seen clearly.

John 12:12-19:

On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,

Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and *that* they had done these things unto him.

The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

Another account of this identical entry is found in Luke 19.

The Eighth and Ninth of Nisan / 41

Luke 19:29-44:

And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called *the mount* of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

Saying, Go ye into the village over against *you*; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring *him hither*.

And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose *him*? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

Saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

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And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

This record is given in more detail in Mark 11.

Mark 11:1-11:

And when they had come nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples,

And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring *him*.

And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

And certain of them that stood said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him.

And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord:

Blessed *be* the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

All three of these records complement each other with no contradiction.⁶ They are individual records of an identical event: the first entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. All these occurrences surrounding this entry occurred on Friday, the ninth of Nisan.

On this first entry into Jerusalem, only one animal, an ass's colt, was involved. By going to other scriptural accounts where a single ass's colt was involved, we can determine its Biblical significance. When a word or expression does not explain itself in the verse or in the context, we must search out how God has used it before. Previous usage sets the pattern for any subsequent usage. Furthermore, Eastern customs must be understood in order to accurately divide God's Word because the Bible is an Eastern book. For example, in

6. See Appendix 5, "Why Four Gospels?"

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Eastern culture a ruler riding into town on an ass's colt was indicative of judgment. The Old Testament speaks regarding this.

Judges 5:10:

Speak, ye that ride on white asses [she-asses], ye that sit in judgment, and walk by the way.

Judges 10:3 and 4:

And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.

And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead.

Judges 12:13 and 14:

And after him Abdon the son of Hillel, a Pirathonite, judged Israel.

And he had forty sons and thirty nephews, that rode on threescore and ten ass colts: and he judged Israel eight years.

At one time Israel was ruled by judges who rode on white asses' colts.⁷ Riding white asses showed that they were judges. To be a judge meant much more then than it does now. A judge during the time between Joshua and Kings was a man who set at right the situation of his people and then proceeded to rule over them. The first

7. Asses, especially pure white she-asses, were highly prized in the East. Only the very wealthy could afford to own one. Princes or "those that sat in judgment" rode on them. White is Biblically significant of righteous judgment, purity, and cleansing. When Christ returns in judgment, John, in Revelation 19:11, describes him as coming on a white horse.

entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem on an ass's colt was as a judge coming in judgment.

There was a reason why Jesus requested this specific animal, an ass's colt. As the sons of judges in the Old Testament each rode an ass's colt, so Jesus rode in on one because he rode into Jerusalem to judge as the representative of his Father, who is the Supreme Judge, God.

The Gospel accounts tell of Jesus' beginning his trip to Jerusalem by ascending the Mount of Olives. At one point he sent two disciples into a nearby village to get an ass's colt.

Some people teach that since Jesus wanted an ass to ride he sent his disciples to take a colt away from the first man they saw. Would the Son of God simply help himself to private property? Biblical research shows that there was a great reason for Jesus' command to his disciples and that he had a perfect right to request such an animal. This can only be understood if we understand the culture of that time.

In the East, animals were donated to the Temple for God's service and were kept in a special place. These Temple animals were usually stabled on the outskirts of town where they were always ready for Temple use. They could be used by any holy man in service to the Lord, as they were gifts to God according to Biblical culture.⁸

8. Bernita Jess, "Beasts of Burden," adapted from the teachings of Bishop K.C. Pillai, *The Way Magazine*, March/April 1969, pp. 9-11.

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Mark 11:2:

And [Jesus] saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring *him*.

“Whereon never man sat” was an expression dealing with ownership. It meant the animal was consecrated for God; it was God’s property, not to be used for man’s work.

Mark 11:3:

And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither.

All that a man had to do was say that an animal was needed in the service of the Lord and the keeper would release the animal.

Mark 11:4-7:

And they [the two disciples] went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met; and they loose him.

And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt?

And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go.

And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him [the colt].

The record in Luke 19:29-35 is identical to this one in Mark 11. John 12:1 and 12 show that this happened the day after the sixth day before the Passover.

Mark 11:8 and 9:

And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

The custom in those days was for people to spread their mantles before the king as he passed by. This displayed great honor and esteem. An Old Testament example of this custom is in II Kings 9.

II Kings 9:13:

Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put *it* under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.

In Mark 11:8 and John 12:13 we see the crowd cut down palm branches and "strawed *them* in the way." The palm branches represented joy and triumph.⁹ Great multitudes of people had gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and when they heard Jesus of Nazareth was coming, they ran out of the city to greet him enthusiastically.

9. Leviticus 23:40 and Joel 1:12 associate palm branches and joy. Freeman, *Manners and Customs*, pp. 358-359.

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Luke 19:37 and 38:

And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

Saying, Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

John 12:15:

Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.¹⁰

At the time of Jesus' first entry, the disciples who had witnessed Lazarus' being raised from the dead spread this news to the people who were in Jerusalem.

John 12:17 and 18:

The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

But there were more people than just well-wishers and curiosity-seekers attracted to the road into Jerusalem that day.

Luke 19:39 and 40:

And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said

10. This last verse is a partial quote from Zechariah 9:9. The quote is used simply because of similar situations. This particular entry into Jerusalem was not a complete fulfillment of that verse. It is not even called a fulfillment. Part of the passage in Zechariah 9 is omitted in the quote to accommodate it to this new and different circumstance.

unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples [from making such joyous commotion].

And he [Jesus] answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

The “stones crying out” is a figure of speech called personification, giving inanimate objects human characteristics. The excitement in the crowd was electrifying. The common people really loved Jesus.

John 12:19:

The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

The Pharisees were overcome with jealousy. They observed that the whole world was gone after Jesus. Everyone except these Pharisees seemed enthralled with this great miracle worker.

Luke 19:41:

And when he [Jesus] was come near, he beheld the city, and wept [wailed aloud] over it.

The word “wept” does not mean he shed a few tears; Jesus wailed as he overlooked the city of Jerusalem from the western slope of the Mount of Olives. His heart was rent for Jerusalem, and then he prophesied of her destruction.

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Luke 19:42-44:

Saying, If thou [Jerusalem] hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

The word “visitation” is *episkopē* in the Greek meaning “inspection, overlooking,” as in judgment. Jerusalem and its inhabitants did not realize that this was the day Jesus would assess and pass judgment. That was the significance of his first entry into the city.

Mark 11:11:

And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

Thus concluded the first entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. It occurred on Friday, the ninth of Nisan, five days before the Passover. At the end of the day, the judgment of Jerusalem’s destruction having been passed and Jesus Christ having “looked round about on all things” in the Temple, he returned to Bethany with his apostles where he was abiding at this time. Multitudes of people in Jerusalem had joined Jesus’ disciples in

acclaim of him that day. The religious leaders were again upset and rekindled their determination to rid themselves of this menace, Jesus. The man from Galilee had boldly entered Jerusalem and the Temple in judgment despite threats of death from the religious leaders. With this day the most unusual and tumultuous week in history began to unfold.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TENTH OF NISAN

Mark 11 relates that late on our Friday afternoon, the ninth of Nisan, Jesus returned to his friends and followers in Bethany. The next day, Saturday the tenth, he left again for Jerusalem with his disciples.¹

Mark 11:12 and 13:

And on the morrow, when they were come from [*apo*, away from] Bethany, he was hungry:

And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not *yet*.

“On the morrow” places this record on the day after the events previously recorded in Mark 11:1-11, the events of his first entry into Jerusalem on Friday the

1. This day was the weekly Sabbath. See Appendix 6, “The Sabbath Day’s Journey.”

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| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | |
| | | | |
| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | |
| | | | |

2. This chart represents part of the first month of the Hebrew calendar in the resurrection year. The dates are given according to Hebrew time reckoning, in which the day begins at sunset. Since by modern reckoning the day begins at midnight, the modern names of the days of the week are

The Tenth of Nisan / 55

| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|-----------|--|--|---|
| | 7 | 8 6 days before Passover John 12:1-11 | 9 1st entry to Jerusalem Mark 11:1-11 Luke 19:29-44 John 12:12-19 | 10 Weekly Sabbath Selection of lamb 2nd entry to Jerusalem Matt. 21:1-17 Mark 11:12-19 Luke 19:45-46 |
| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
| | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
| | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |

set forth to show the time relationship to modern readers. Some events taking place near sunset may actually overlap the end of one day and the beginning of the next.

ninth. Mark 11:12 shows that time has moved ahead one day to Saturday, the tenth of Nisan.

In those days the fig tree was known as a "people's tree," meaning any person was permitted to eat from any fig tree. These trees were public, not private property. During the late spring, the fig tree normally blossoms with both leaves and sweet, edible buds. These buds are what Jesus intended to eat. Later these buds develop into figs. Now on this tree which Jesus passed there were leaves, but no buds; that is why it says "he found nothing but leaves." "The time of figs was not yet" means that it was still spring, the time of buds before the time of the mature fruit.

Mark 11:14:

And Jesus answered and said unto it [the tree], No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

Since there were no buds, Jesus knew there would be no fruit later. The fig tree symbolized Israel.³ Israel was not budding with fruit; she was barren. Although she appeared from a distance to be flourishing, she was in reality unfruitful. So God was being forced to cut off His special blessing to Israel. From this point forward, no fruit would come out of Israel as a nation because she had rejected God's only-begotten Son, God's greatest gift to her.

3. Biblically a fig tree is often associated with Israel's status before God. See Jeremiah 8:13; Hosea 2:12; 9:10,16; Joel 1:7; Isaiah 34:4; also *The Companion Bible* (reprint ed., London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1972), pp. 339, 1357, 1410.

It was Saturday morning, the tenth of Nisan. The next Gospel record following in chronological order is Matthew 21. In this record Jesus and several of his disciples stopped at the village known as Bethphage while on their way to Jerusalem.

Matthew 21:1 and 2:

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples [where were they? they “were come to Bethphage”],

Saying unto them, Go into the village [Bethphage] over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose *them*, and bring *them* unto me.

How many animals did Jesus ask for? He asked for two—an ass and a colt with her. This record is different from the previous one on the ninth of Nisan when he asked for one animal. Why? Because here Jesus was about to make a *second* entry into Jerusalem. For years people have tried to make the accounts of the ninth and tenth of Nisan identical, even though there is only one colt in the former, while there is a mother ass and her colt in the latter. Why did Jesus make a second entry in this fashion? In Zechariah there is a prophecy of a king entering Jerusalem with two animals.

Zechariah 9:9:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

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A king is prophesied to come to Jerusalem who “*is just, and having salvation.*” What greater blessings can a ruler offer? The king would enter riding upon an ass, and accompanied by the colt, the foal of the ass. Two animals are involved. The above verse prophesies specifically of Jesus’ second entry, which was an entry of blessing. Note the following examples of two animals being used for blessing.

II Kings 5:15 and 17:

. . . I [Naaman] pray thee [Elisha], take a blessing of thy servant.

But Elisha resolutely refused Naaman’s offer.

And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules’ burden of earth? . . .

II Samuel 16:1-3:

And when David was a little past the top of *the hill*, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred *loaves* of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine.

And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses *be* for the king’s household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink.

And the king said, And where *is* thy master’s son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father.

In II Kings 5, Naaman offered the prophet Elisha a blessing; but when Elisha refused, Naaman asked Elisha for the blessing of two mules' burden of earth. In II Samuel 16, Ziba met David with two asses and their cargo indicating blessing and abundance.

On the day when Jesus was preparing for his second entry into Jerusalem, he specifically asked for an ass and her colt. He also repeated the instructions given the day before, to tell the animal-keepers that the Lord had need of them.

Matthew 21:4-7:

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,

And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they sat *him* thereon.

What prophecy was being fulfilled with this action? The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. In John 12:15, where the first entry was recorded, this verse was only partially quoted: "thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt." Here in Matthew 21 the full reference, including two animals, is quoted. Zechariah's prophecy is fulfilled at the time of this second entry.

Matthew 21:8-11:

And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way;

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others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way.

And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed *is* he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?

And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

The entry of the previous day involved the rejoicing of the disciples and the multitude of bystanders attracted by the news that the man who had raised Lazarus from the dead was coming. In this second entry the entire city responded and questioned, "Who is this?" Matthew 21:10 says "all the city was moved." And, unwittingly, the onlooking throngs in Jerusalem were witnessing God's selection of Jesus as the final Passover lamb. Note that this day was the tenth of Nisan, the day designated to select the Passover lamb. How remarkable that Israel was seeing the perfect lamb, the one without spot and without blemish. How perfectly God's timetable fits with this second entry.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the tenth of Nisan, he went to the Temple as he had on the previous day. This time, however, he did not simply look around and go back to Bethany. This time he overthrew the merchants' tables and taught the people.

Matthew 21:12 and 13:

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

In Mark 11:15 this second entry is noted, but without details. Mark, however, does record this incident with the moneychangers.

Mark 11:15-17:

And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves;

And would not suffer that any man should carry *any* vessel through the temple.

And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.

The actions recorded here contrast vividly with the events of the previous day when Jesus simply entered Jerusalem on the ass's colt, went into the Temple, and looked around.⁴

4. The Gospel of Luke does not mention the second entry, though it does record this incident with the moneychangers immediately following the account of the first entry in Luke 19:45 and 46. By studying the Gospels together with the principle of narrative development, one can understand that the passage in Luke covers events over a period longer than a single day. Recording events that occur over a long period of time without relating the time factors involved is characteristic of the Gospels, especially Luke. Other examples are the events of Luke 24:35-53 which span a period of forty days and Luke 19:47-20:1 which is a passage summarizing events over a general period of time. Luke 19:45 and 46 occur on the tenth of Nisan, the day following the events in Luke 19:29-44.

The record of the moneychangers in Mark 11:15-17 is another key in determining that the entry described in Matthew 21:1-11 occurred the day after the first entry. The words "on the morrow" of Mark 11:12 clearly separate the events of Mark 11:11 and Mark 11:15-17, thus making absolute the reality of Jesus' two distinct and uniquely significant entries into Jerusalem. Only by recognizing that the Gospels complement each other will one see the great accuracy with which God sets this forth.

When Jesus went into the Temple during his second entry, he was completely familiar with the tradition of the Temple market. The Temple market was situated in the outer courts of the Temple. There merchants exchanged money and sold wine, salt, oil, sacrificial animals, and other necessities used by the worshippers. The market was a lucrative business for both the merchants and the religious leaders of the Temple. However, the sin to which Jesus objected was not that lucrative commerce was conducted in the Temple area, but rather the corruption and hypocrisy involved—the selling of second-rate goods at first-rate prices. The Temple market had become dishonest, a den of thieves. Jesus was not in any way cruel or physically abusive to these men; he just pointedly told them to get out. Although he did not touch any of the merchants, he did

overthrow their tables and seats.⁵ A similar situation was recorded by Malachi.

Malachi 1:7 and 8:

Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord *is* contemptible.

And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.

To sell polluted bread and crippled animals for offerings to the Lord was in complete contradiction to the Word of God which specified that only the best animals were to be offered. The Temple had become the center of dishonest business dealings, all in the name of religion. Therefore, Jesus came in and cleansed the Temple. In addition, this cleansing was essential for the Temple to be properly prepared and cleansed for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The record continues in Matthew 21:14.

5. We should note that this is a completely different occasion from the event recorded in John 2:15 which took place earlier in his ministry. John 2:15 and 16 reads: "And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all [the sheep and oxen] out of the temple, and ["and" is "both" in the text] the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." Jesus drove out the four-legged animals with a whip; he poured out the money and overthrew the tables (inanimate objects). He then used persuasion to authoritatively tell the people to take their dove sacrifices and leave. He never laid a whip to a human being as tradition would have us believe.

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Matthew 21:14-16:

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

And when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,

And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

Out of the mouths of those humble enough to believe, God had perfected praise to Himself and His Son. After cleansing the Temple, Jesus healed the blind and lame there. Of course, his teachings and powerful deeds again incensed the religious leaders.

Mark 11:18 and 19:

And the scribes and chief priests heard *it*, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine.

And when even was come, he went out of the city.

Matthew 21:17:

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

So Jesus, having been designated by God as the Passover lamb, finally left Jerusalem around sunset on Saturday and returned to Bethany.

Let's briefly recount the events of Saturday, the tenth of Nisan, which terminated at sunset. First of all, Jesus cursed a fig tree that would bear no fruit. He then entered into Jerusalem with two animals to indicate the blessing he was bringing to Israel. With the masses of Jerusalem looking on, Jesus was selected as God's consummate Passover lamb. He cleansed the Temple, healed the sick, and taught the Word of God. And, once again, the religious leaders were irate and frustrated by Jesus Christ's show of power and boldness; again they vowed to destroy him. Finally Jesus returned to lodge in Bethany with the family of Lazarus who loved him. Thus Saturday, the tenth of Nisan, drew to a close.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ELEVENTH OF NISAN

The eleventh of Nisan has come to be known as "Palm Sunday," named for the palm branches involved with Jesus' first entry¹ and possibly with his second entry into Jerusalem.² Tradition has combined these two entries into one and the same event, and has made them identical, saying they occurred on Sunday. We have seen that God's Word clearly shows that these two events were two distinct entries occurring on Friday and on Saturday. To find out what actually happened on Sunday the eleventh of Nisan, we must continue the chronological record beginning in Mark 11.

1. John 12:13: "Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." Palm branches represent joy and triumph.

2. Matthew 21:8: "And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed *them* in the way."

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|--|--------|--------|---------|
| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | |
| | | | |
| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY |
| 11 Jerusalem at Temple Matt. 21:18-26:5 Mark 11:20-14:2 Luke 20:1-22:2 | 12 | 13 | |
| | SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | |
| | | | |

3. This chart represents part of the first month of the Hebrew calendar in the resurrection year. The dates are given according to Hebrew time reckoning, in which the day begins at sunset. Since by modern reckoning the day begins at midnight, the modern names of the days of the week are

The Eleventh of Nisan / 69

| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|-----------|--|--|---|
| | 7 | 8 6 days before Passover John 12:1-11 | 9 1st entry to Jerusalem Mark 11:1-11 Luke 19:29-44 John 12:12-19 | 10 Weekly Sabbath Selection of lamb 2nd entry to Jerusalem Matt. 21:1-17 Mark 11:12-19 Luke 19:45-46 |
| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
| | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
| | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |

set forth to show the time relationship to modern readers. Some events taking place near sunset may actually overlap the end of one day and the beginning of the next.

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Mark 11:20:

And in the morning [this is the Sunday morning after the record in Mark 11:12-19, which was on Saturday], as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

Jesus had cursed this very fig tree the previous day while on the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, as stated in Mark 11:12-19. Now, less than twenty-four hours later, the tree had already dried up. This amazed Peter.

Mark 11:21-24:

And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God [originally, "Have the believing of God"].

For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

Jesus used this fig tree to teach and to demonstrate for his disciples the law of believing. Having cursed the tree on Saturday morning as they were traveling from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus and his disciples passed by the fig tree on Sunday morning and found it dried up from the roots. Jesus paused to teach his disciples the great law of believing, and then they proceeded to

Jerusalem. This brings us to a similar, though not identical, event in Matthew 21.

Matthew 21:18:

Now in the morning [the eleventh of Nisan, Sunday morning; we have seen the events of Matthew 21:1-17 to be on Saturday] as he returned into [*eis*] the city, he hungered.

This event occurred on the same morning that we just read about in Mark 11:20. Here in Matthew 21:18, however, Jesus had returned *into* (*eis*) the city of Jerusalem.

Matthew 21:19:

And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only. . . .

Just like the fig tree of Mark 11:12 and 13 which grew by the way leading from Bethany to Jerusalem, so this fig tree *within* Jerusalem had only leaves and no buds that could later turn into fruit. The tree in Mark had been cursed outside the city the preceding Saturday morning, and was found withered as they returned to Jerusalem on Sunday. But this tree was inside the city and was cursed there on Sunday morning. Matthew 21 notes another great difference between these two incidents.

Matthew 21:19:

. . . and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward

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for ever. And presently [immediately] the fig tree withered away.

This second fig tree withered immediately while the previous one died overnight. The first fig tree had amazed Peter. Notice how this one startled the disciples.

Matthew 21:20:

And when the disciples saw *it*, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!

Once again Jesus began to teach the law of believing.

Matthew 21:21 and 22:

Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

For the second time that Sunday morning, Jesus demonstrated to his followers how he manifested the law of believing. He established this law to his disciples that day with two similar miracles.⁴ The first miracle involved cursing a fig tree on Saturday and finding it dried up by the next morning. The second miracle

4. Genesis 41:32 tells us that when God says something twice, it is established.

involved cursing another fig tree on Sunday morning and seeing it wither away before their eyes. This completely established for his followers the law of believing, a law which would be so crucial for the disciples to operate in their walk with God.

The incidents of two unfruitful fig trees are good examples of *similar* events being mistaken as *identical* by the casual reader. Scriptures must complement and corroborate one another; never can they contradict. Only when private interpretation and theology try to make the two cursed fig trees identical do problems arise. The two records of the fig trees will never be understood if the details are not carefully compared. That is why God's Word must be allowed to interpret itself. Time, place, and circumstances must be carefully noted, for the Scriptures cannot be broken. Nor can we manipulate them to fit our theology. They are not to be tampered with to make them say what a reader has preconceived in his mind. When God's Word is allowed to speak for itself, we see its great, wonderful, matchless perfection.

Leaving the withered fig tree behind, Jesus and his disciples entered the Temple once again. Remember, it was still the morning of Sunday, the eleventh of Nisan.

Mark 11:27:

And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there came to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders.

Matthew 21:23:

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?

With this, Jesus began a discourse in the Temple with the religious leaders. As he had done so often, he confronted their craftiness with boldness, wisdom, and the use of parables.⁵ His discourse this day was a penetrating and courageous presentation in the presence of his critics and those who were seeking to put him to death. They tried to undermine and intimidate him with tempting questions, but Jesus continually responded to them in such a way as to unmask their hypocrisy.

Jesus also gave several parables which included unmistakable references to the religious leaders present. Much of what he said was for the benefit of his many disciples present. Jesus was being confronted by Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians—three groups which normally had very little to do with each other, in fact they usually opposed each other. However, on this rare occasion, these three groups had a mutual point of agreement: to trap, humiliate, and destroy Jesus of Nazareth, who was a threat to each of their religious and political positions and followings. Jesus spoke the two great commandments and finally denounced the religious leaders in front of all. He completed his discourse with a

5. See Matthew 21:23–23:39 for the complete discourse in the Temple. It is also recorded in Mark 11:28–12:44 and Luke 20:1–21:4.

prophecy concerning Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. Then he arose and left the Temple.

Mark 13:1 and 2:

And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*

And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Luke 21:5 and 6:

And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said,

As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

The disciples wanted Jesus to admire the magnificence of the Temple. Yet, Jesus saw beyond its outward appearance and prophesied of the Temple's destruction. The Temple at this time, though beautiful and immense, was still under construction in its outer courts. The building of Herod's Temple and its courts had begun around 20 B.C. It was finally finished in 64 A.D. Six years later, in 70 A.D., the Roman general Titus destroyed the grand structure. This destruction by the Romans was the event of which Jesus prophesied.

Leaving the Temple area, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives where four of his disciples privately asked him to explain his statements.

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Mark 13:3 and 4:

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

In answering them, Jesus began another discourse which included items directly relating to the apostles as well as future events recorded in the Book of Revelation.⁶

Biblical students must constantly remind themselves that these teachings and prophecies from the Gospels deal basically with Israel. They do not relate to the Church of the Body to which you and I belong. The Church of the Body was a mystery, hid in God until revealed to the Apostle Paul.⁷ This discourse on the Mount of Olives is *for* our learning; but it is not addressed *to* us. The Church of the Body and Christ's return to gather it were not the subject of Jesus' teaching here, for they were revealed later in the Church Epistles. Not realizing this fact has caused great confusion in the Christian church. Portions of the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation give further details on what Jesus was expounding.

By the time Jesus became involved in this discourse with these four men, it was probably afternoon. When

6. This discourse is recorded in Luke 21:7-38, Mark 13:3-37, and Matthew 24:3-25:46.

7. Victor Paul Wierwille, "The Church: The Great Mystery Revealed," *God's Magnified Word* (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1977), pp. 171-211.

Jesus finished telling his disciples about the future events relating to Israel, he told them of his imminent death, and the method by which he would die.

Matthew 26:1 and 2:

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* [omit the italicized words] the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

The italicized words are inaccurate additions by the translators and should be deleted. "After two days" means "after two days have passed." Since he was speaking very late on the eleventh, the "two days" must have been Monday the twelfth and Tuesday the thirteenth. That correctly places the Passover after these days on the fourteenth. Jesus knew his death was imminent and would take place sometime after Passover began on the fourteenth, though he did not yet know the exact hour. The specifics of Jesus' death become important later.

So Jesus told his disciples of his impending crucifixion. After witnessing his powerful deeds and the miracles of the past few days, to think of their bold and powerful lord dying such a demeaning death must have overwhelmed his followers. To the apostles, Jesus' statement must have seemed unbelievable, puzzling. But God's adversary, Satan, was using the religious leaders as they conspired together to capture and kill Jesus.

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Matthew 26:3-5:

Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,

And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty [seize by guile], and kill *him*.

But they said, Not on the feast *day* [omit "day"], lest there be an uproar among the people.

Imagine the fury of the priests, scribes, and elders after Jesus had rebuked them before the people earlier in the day. Now these leaders gathered to consider ways of killing him. It is interesting that God's Word shows Jesus having this knowledge revealed to him before the religious leaders even began their scheming. God always has His people a step ahead of the Adversary. The priests, scribes, and elders wanted Jesus Christ dead before the fifteenth, the day of holy convocation, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They feared the reaction of the people if they were to have Jesus killed during the Feast. A record of this identical situation is found in Mark 14.

Mark 14:1 and 2:

After two days was *the feast of the passover*, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put *him* to death.

But they said, Not on [during] the feast *day*, lest there be an uproar of the people.

Once again, the italicized words must be omitted. The word "of" preceding "unleavened bread" should be "the." Mark 14:1 reads, "After two days was the passover and the unleavened bread. . . ." The known events of the eleventh of Nisan conclude with the conspiracy of the religious leaders.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Victor Paul Wierwille, moving into his fourth decade of Biblical research and teaching, has witnessed countless occasions when Christians as a united body could stand together as the light of the world. But, because of multiple, divisive doctrines believers have decimated their message. "The Church will not again have the power and influence God intended," Dr. Wierwille believes, "until the born-again believers stop fighting each other and fight the Adversary."

In his search to strip modern Christianity of twenty centuries of tradition and take a pure look at God's revealed Word, Dr. Wierwille founded and is currently president of a research, teaching and training ministry called The Way International. This rapidly expanding diverse group of people believe that the Bible in its original, first text is the Word of God; it alone can set men free and bring unity to God's people.

In his many years of research, Dr. Wierwille has studied with such men as Karl Barth, Stanley Jones, Glenn Clark, Bishop K.C. Pillai and George Lamsa. His formal training includes a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Mission House (Lakeland) College and Seminary. He studied at the University of Chicago and at Princeton Theological Seminary from which he received a Master of Theology degree. Later he completed his work for the Doctor of Theology degree.

"When we as workmen rightly divide the Word of God," Dr. Wierwille stresses, "then the Christian Church will not only have the power demonstrated by the first century Church, but even more importantly, we will stand approved before God as faithful and good workmen." This research work, *Jesus Christ Our Passover*, is another contribution toward rightly dividing God's Word and thereby being able to live the more abundant life which Jesus Christ made available.