

## **The Crucifixion Was Not on Friday**

*Easter Sunday does not commemorate the resurrection! Christ did not die on Good Friday! Here's proof of the true dates of the crucifixion and the resurrection.*

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### **THE CRUCIFIXION WAS NOT ON FRIDAY**

EITHER the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition is a fable, or you have no Savior! Jesus gave only one sign to prove that he was the Messiah, and that sign was the length of time he would be dead and buried.

Notice Jesus' own words concerning the only sign that would prove his messiahship: "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39-40).

If Jesus did not fulfill that sign, then he was an impostor and you are without a Savior!

Of course, theologians and scholars deny that Jesus fulfilled this sign. They say he was in the heart of the earth only one day and two nights—half as long as he said he would be!

In so doing they deny the only proof Jesus gave that he is the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

### **It Was Prophesied**

Did you know that it was prophesied that many would deny this sign—would deny that Jesus actually is the very Christ?

Turn to the scriptures:

"But there were also false prophets among the people [in Old Testament times], even as there will be false teachers among you [Christians], who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them ... and many will follow their destructive ways..." (II Pet. 2:1-2, *New King James Version* throughout, unless otherwise noted).

The "many" are today denying their Savior by believing a tradition that rejects the only sign Jesus gave to prove he is the Messiah. Did you know that it was not until after the death of John, the last of the 12 apostles, that the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition began to spread through the churches?

### **How Long Dead and Buried?**

Let's examine Jesus' own words, recorded in the gospels, to find out if he meant what he said about the sign of Jonah. Did Jesus really expect to be buried in the earth for three days and three nights? Notice Mark 8:31: "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things,

and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again [from the grave]."

Did you grasp that? Jesus did not say "after a day and a half." Jesus said "after three days."

Consider: If Jesus were crucified and buried late on Good Friday, then one day after would be Saturday evening, two days after would be Sunday evening and three days after would be Monday evening. But Jesus rose long before Monday evening. Either Jesus was not crucified on Good Friday, or he did not fulfill his sign and he is therefore an impostor and not the Messiah.

Did Jesus fulfill his sign? Turn to Matthew 28:6. Here is the testimony of the angel: "He [Jesus] is not here; for He is risen, *as He said*." Jesus did fulfill his sign exactly. He is the Savior. Then he could not have been crucified on Good Friday!

But this is not all. Turn to John 2:19, 21: "Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.'...But He was speaking of the temple of His body."

If Jesus had been crucified and had died on Friday afternoon and had been resurrected on Sunday morning, the temple—his body—would have been raised in a day and one half. But Jesus did not say it would occur in a day and one half. Not even in two and one half days, but in three days' time—72 hours.

In other words, three 24-hour days after his death, he would be made alive again as immortal spirit by a resurrection. Jesus meant exactly what he said.

But Jesus also declared he would rise the third day. Let us suppose again that Jesus was crucified on Friday. If he were to rise on the first day after his crucifixion, he would be raised on Saturday—if on the second day after his crucifixion, he would rise on Sunday. But if he were to rise on the third day, he would have been raised on Monday.

But Jesus was already resurrected by Sunday morning. Plainly, Friday was not the day of the crucifixion!

### **How the Bible Counts Days**

Adam Clarke, for example, in his commentary on Matthew 12:40, quotes the Talmud in support of the idea that three days and three nights supposedly mean one day and two nights. The *Seventh-day Adventist Commentary* implies the same.

But the Bible is not interpreted by the Talmud or by a commentary.

*The Review and Herald*, the official publication of the Seventh-day Adventists, listed several texts that, it is claimed, indicate three days means no more than a day and one half. Let's look to see if Scripture supports these claims.

Here is the first text they offer as "proof" that "after three days" does not mean after three days.

King Rehoboam told the people who came to meet him, "'Come back to me after three days.' And the people departed" (II Chron. 10:5). The same event is quoted in I Kings 12:5: "Depart for three days, then come back to me." The story continues with verse 12: "So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king directed, saying, 'Come back to me the third day.'" The people left "for three days" and did not return until "after three days," as the king had appointed.

Let us suppose they had first met the king sometime on Friday. As they were ordered to return at the end of three days, they would not have returned before the same time of day the following Monday. Now was Monday "the third day" from the day they had originally met with the king? The first day from that Friday was Saturday, the second day from that Friday was Sunday and the third day was Monday—exactly the time the king expected them to return.

Monday, not Sunday, was the third day from Friday.

The next text offered as "proof" that "three days and three nights" means only one day and two nights is Esther 4:16 and 5:1. "Fast for me," said Queen Esther, "neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king." "Now it happened on the third day that Esther put on her royal robes" and went to the king.

Which day was this? The third day of the fast. Suppose Queen Esther had requested the Jews late Friday evening, shortly before sunset, to fast. The first day of their fast would have been Saturday, the second day would have been Sunday and the third day, Monday, the queen would have entered the king's palace. Isn't that plain? The Jews did not fast parts of three days, but three days, night and day.

Notice that in each of these examples, three days means three days, not parts of three days or only a day and one half.

### **Which Day Was the Crucifixion?**

Jesus died some three hours before sunset on the day of the crucifixion (Luke 23:44-46). Since Jesus said that he would rise the third day after his crucifixion and death, it is obvious that he was made alive by a resurrection precisely at the completion of the third day following his death.

When the women came to the tomb early Sunday morning, Jesus had already risen. The angel said: "He is risen! He is not here" (Mark 16:6). Of course, Jesus had been resurrected the previous evening.

Jesus Christ arose from the dead late Saturday afternoon—he was not at the sepulcher Sunday morning. Three days before Saturday afternoon would place the crucifixion on Wednesday, the preparation day for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thursday of that year must have been an annual Sabbath, the first annual Sabbath in the Days of Unleavened Bread.

So that we would know that the Sabbath that followed the crucifixion was not necessarily the weekly Sabbath, John was inspired to call it a "high day" (John 19:31), which, according to Jewish usage, means an annual Sabbath that may occur any day during the week, not just on the weekly Sabbath.

Mark picks up John's account by adding that after that Sabbath, which was a high day, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the women bought sweet spices to use in anointing the body of Jesus (Mark 16:1). This purchasing of the spices could not have been on Thursday, the annual Sabbath. It must have been Friday. Having made their purchases, the women prepared these ointments and "rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56). This was the seventh-day Sabbath upon which, near its close, Jesus was raised from the dead.

Thus the Bible proves that the resurrection was not on Sunday morning, the crucifixion not on Friday. There were two separate Sabbaths that week, one an annual Sabbath, the other a weekly Sabbath.

Now look again at Mark 16:9. This verse makes clear that the resurrection and departure of Jesus from the grave was not on a Sunday morning. In the original Greek the phrase "early on the first day of the week" refers to the early part of the day—the evening—for a day began at sunset.

Jesus had risen from the tomb the early evening before Sunday morning. That is, he was already risen Saturday night. That was three days and three nights after his burial and the closing of the tomb.

We read in the *Revised Standard Version*, which has the correct translation of Luke 23:54: "It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning." That is, it was very late on the preparation for the Feast, or first annual Sabbath, and the new high day Sabbath had just begun as Joseph of Arimathea finished the burial and closed the tomb.

## How It All Began

It is the so-called apostolic fathers, steeped in traditions, who first began to teach that the crucifixion occurred on Friday. Yet they admitted that the ancient custom of fasting on Wednesday—the actual day of the crucifixion, as we have seen—was derived from "the day on which Jesus was betrayed" and "on which the Sanhedrin decided to kill him" (*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, "Fasting")!

These same men soon attempted to change the year of Jesus' birth—the year that he began his ministry—the length of his ministry—the days of his death and his resurrection from the dead.

Astounding proof exists of these attempts to change the days of the resurrection and of the crucifixion. James A. Walther, in an article entitled "The Chronology of Passion Week," in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (June, 1958), mentions that numerous Catholic writers for centuries maintained that Jesus ate the Passover Tuesday night—that early Wednesday morning he was taken by the Jewish mob.

Mr. Walther declares: "References in the *Didascalía*, in Epiphanius, in Victorinus of Pettau...support the Tuesday [night] Passover dating and the subsequent arrest of Jesus in the morning hours of Wednesday."

One of the first post-biblical attempts to explain the day of the resurrection from the dead late Saturday to the hours of Sunday morning occurred in the spurious "gospel of Peter," which was probably circulated from Rome about the time of the death of the apostle John. This "gospel" reads as follows: "And then they drew out the nails from the hands of the Lord, and laid him upon the earth... and the Jews rejoiced, and gave his body to Joseph that he might bury it....And he took the Lord, and washed him, and rolled him in a linen cloth, and brought him into his own tomb....And I with my companions were grieved; and being wounded in mind we hid ourselves...and upon all these things we fasted and sat mourning night and day until the Sabbath.

"But the scribes and Pharisees and elders being gathered together one with another...came to Pilate, beseeching him and saying, Give us soldiers, that we may guard his sepulchre for three days, lest his disciples come and steal him away....And with them came elders and scribes to the sepulchre, and having rolled a great stone together with the centurion and the soldiers, they all together who were there set it at the door of the sepulchre; and they affixed seven seals...and guarded it. And early in the morning as the sabbath was drawing [dawning], there came a multitude from Jerusalem and the region round about, that they might see the sepulchre that was sealed.

"And in the night in which the Lord's day was drawing on...the tomb was opened"—and Jesus was already risen— he was not there (from the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, volume 10, pages 7-8).

Notice! Between the crucifixion and the Sabbath, the disciples and Peter are said to have fasted "night and day until the Sabbath." This alone is a candid admission that the crucifixion was not on Good Friday! You can't fit "night and day" between Friday afternoon and Friday sunset! It was decades later before the idea of a Friday crucifixion and a Sunday morning resurrection was widely believed.

The apostle Paul called Jesus Christ our Passover (I Cor. 5:7). According to the gospel records, Jesus was crucified on the Passover day—Abib (or Nisan) 14—immediately before the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

## Which Day Was the Passover?

On the eve of that 14th of Abib, at nightfall, Jesus instituted the New Testament Passover. By custom the 14th was also a day on which all leaven was finally removed and only unleavened bread

was to be seen in the homes (Luke 22:7-8). See also John 18:28 as proof that day was Passover, Nisan 14.

The Jews and Jesus and the apostles agreed as to which day it was. There is no question about the date. But how did the Jews know which day it was? How did Jesus and the apostles know that this was the day on which the passover lambs were to be slain?

By the Hebrew solar-lunar calendar, of course! The Passover was the 14th day of the first month according to the calendar used by Jesus and the Jews. By that calendar we can know precisely which day the Passover was in the year of the crucifixion!

### **Jews Kept the Calendar**

It is the Jews to whom God committed his revelations or oracles. Paul declared: "What advantage then has the Jew?...Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:1-2).

The oracles of God included the Old Testament Scriptures, the knowledge of the week and of the sacred calendar. The Jews preserved for the world the knowledge of which day the seventh day of the week is. Without a knowledge of when a week begins and ends, we could never have told from the Bible alone which day the seventh day actually is. No nation preserved the week properly until they learned it from the Jews!

And in the same way the Jews have preserved the solar-lunar calendar. "But," you ask, "what if some Jews did not believe in the oracles of God—including the calendar—that were committed to them? Did they lose them or corrupt them?" The Bible gives us the answer plainly in verses 3 and 4: "For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar."

If the Jews did not believe in the oracles God committed to them, they must preserve them nevertheless or God has failed to be God!

If the Jews have not preserved the solar-lunar calendar since the crucifixion, then Christians would not know when to observe the Passover annually, or any of the other Holy Days of God commanded for New Testament times (I Cor. 5:8; 16:8; Acts 18:21; 20:6).

God has required the Jews to preserve the solar-lunar calendar! Even the great Jewish calendar expert Maimonides, who lived centuries ago, declared that the Jews preserved the calendar "transmitted by the Sages from one generation to another on the authority of Moses, our Teacher...on the basis of calculation" (from Sanctification of the New Moon, chapter 18, 7).

Only two matters are needed to prove when the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred. One is to determine the calendar dates of the Passover during the years of Christ's ministry. The other is to determine the exact year of the crucifixion.

### **The Hebrew Calendar Tells When**

Here is a chart verified by works on the "Jewish calendar"—actually God's sacred calendar—correct according to computation preserved since the days of Moses!

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Passover</i>
A.D. 27	Wednesday, April 9
A.D. 28	Monday, April 26
A.D. 29	Saturday, April 16
A.D. 30	Wednesday, April 5
A.D. 31	Wednesday, April 25

A.D. 32     Monday, April 14  
A.D. 33     Friday, April 3

To place the Passover on a Friday in A.D. 30 violates one of the rules of the fixed calendar—that no common year of the sacred calendar may have 356 days. Common years of 12 months may be only 353, 354 or 355 days long, a fact you can verify in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

Some theologians place the Passover of A.D. 30 on Friday, April 7, 356 days after the Passover of A.D. 29. Count it for yourself! This date is two days late. Others place it on Thursday, April 6. But the Passover in A.D. 30 was, by computation, only 354 days after that of A.D. 29.

The 14th of the month Nisan of the fixed solar-lunar calendar occurred on Wednesday in A.D. 30, as well as in A.D. 31. Thus, if you want to believe that the crucifixion was in A.D. 30—which it was not—you would still have to admit that Friday could not be the day of the crucifixion!

For the year A.D. 31 a few references, unacquainted with the rules of the Hebrew solar-lunar calendar, mistakenly give the Passover, Nisan 14, as Monday, March 26. But this is one month too early. The year A.D. 30-31 was intercalary—that is, it had 13 months—thus placing the Passover 30 days later in A.D. 31, and on a Wednesday.

### **The Decree of Artaxerxes**

There are several basic dates from which the exact year of the death of Jesus Christ may be determined. These dates are so precise that there can be no doubt that the Passover upon which Jesus was crucified occurred on Wednesday, April 25, in A.D. 31.

The first date is the year in which Artaxerxes issued his decree to restore and build Jerusalem (Ezra 7). Daniel 9:25-26 records that there would be 69 prophetic weeks till the Messiah would come, after which he would be "cut off"—crucified—"not for Himself" but for the sins of the whole world.

Sixty-nine prophetic weeks equals 483 years (69 x 7). This decree was first issued by Cyrus, king of Persia, in 538 B.C. It was set aside and reissued by Darius I, king of Persia, and again set aside and reissued by Artaxerxes I.

When we determine the year in which this decree was issued, we can locate the exact year, 483 years later, when Christ, the Messiah, began his ministry.

Records have been found that were written in the very month that Artaxerxes, under whose reign the decree was issued, came to power. The death of Xerxes occurred in late December, 465 B.C., and his son, Artaxerxes, came to the throne in that month. According to the Persian spring-to-spring reckoning of regnal years, as recently translated business documents clearly show, Artaxerxes' first year extended from April, 464, to April, 463 B.C. These same documents show that the Jewish autumn-to-autumn mode of reckoning placed the first year of Artaxerxes from September, 464, to September, 463 B.C.

The period of time from the day the new king ascended the throne to the first year of his reign was called his accession year and was regarded as completing the last regnal year of the previous king.

Astronomical tablets containing more than a dozen precise records of eclipses prove that the first year of Artaxerxes, according to the Jewish reckoning, was from 464 to 463 B.C.

The seventh year of Artaxerxes the year in which he issued his decree (Ezra 7:8), since it is a Jewish record, would extend from about September, 458 B.C. to September, 457 B.C.

From the first month to the fifth month of the calendar—from the latter part of March to the latter part of July, 457 B.C.—Ezra journeyed to Judea in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, at which time the decree went forth to build Jerusalem as the capital of the revived Jewish nation.

And just 483 years later would bring us to the autumn of A.D. 27—the year when the Messiah would appear.

## Age of Jesus at His Baptism

Jesus, according to Daniel's prophecy, was anointed the Messiah in A.D. 27, which was 483 years after the decree of Artaxerxes to restore Jerusalem. The next fact that we need to understand is the age of Jesus when he was baptized and entered upon his ministry.

The only historical account of this was written by Luke to Theophilus (Luke 11-4). In this account it is plainly stated that when Jesus began his ministry he was "about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23).

Luke did not say, "about 29," or "about 31". He records that Jesus was "about thirty"—and he meant it, for he was an inspired historian. Either this record is true or you might as well discard the Bible.

As Jesus was about 30 years old in the autumn of A.D. 27, then he must have been born in the autumn of 4 B.C.

## The Death of Herod

The time of Jesus' birth is important. Jesus was born before the death of Herod the king (Matt. 2:15). When did Herod die? Again the critics are in confusion because they refuse to weigh all the facts.

According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, Herod died, "having reigned, since he had procured Antigonus to be slain thirty-four years; but since he had been declared king by the Romans, thirty-seven: (*Antiquities*, XVII, viii 1).

The two dates for the beginning of Herod's reign are not disputed, but given as 37 B.C. and 40 B.C., respectively. Reckoning as Josephus does, the last year of Herod's reign extended from about April, 4 B.C. to April, 3 B.C.

Josephus, in *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVII, vi, 4, mentions an eclipse of the moon before the death of Herod. That eclipse, as calculated, occurred about March 13, 4 B.C. Yet it was some time after this that Herod went beyond the river Jordan to be cured of his diseases. Finding that the physicians couldn't cure him, he still revived sufficiently to return to Jericho. There, he gathered together and contrived the death of the principal men of the entire Jewish nation. And as if this were not enough, Herod had his son Antipater killed five days before his own death.

Since these and other events occurred after the eclipse mentioned by Josephus, and since Herod died prior to a Passover, according to Josephus, that Passover must have been 13 months after the eclipse and not one month later. A traditional date on the Hebrew calendar for the death of Herod places it on Kislev 7 (November 26), late in the year 4-3 B.C., the only date that agrees with all the known facts of history.

As Jesus was about 30 years old in the early autumn of A.D. 27, then he must have been born in the early autumn of 4 B.C., shortly before the death of Herod.

Clearly, Jesus could not have been born before this time, or he would have been more than 30 years old at the beginning of his ministry. Neither could he have been born later in 2 B.C., as some assume, for he would have been only 28 years old at the beginning of his ministry. But Luke plainly said that he was about 30 years of age.

## When Did the Wise Men Arrive?

But what are we going to do with the statement recorded in Matthew 2:16 that just before his death Herod had all the children in Bethlehem killed "from two years old and under"? This would appear to indicate that Jesus may have been born one year earlier than he really was born.

Most people carelessly read this account by assuming that Herod knew the date of Jesus' birth. They assume he had the children killed because Jesus must have been between 1 and 2 years old. Think for a moment how illogical this would be. Would a murderer like Herod wait for at least one whole year after the wise men left before attempting to kill the child Jesus? Of course not.

The truth is that Herod did not know the time of Jesus' birth. Notice what the Scripture states: As soon as Herod saw that the wise men didn't return to him he became very angry, ordering all those little children butchered "from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men" (Matt. 2:16).

Now what was the exact time that he learned from the wise men? Was it the date of Jesus' birth? No! Notice verse 7 of this same chapter: "Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared."

Of course!

The wise men or magi had come a great distance from the east. The star had appeared around the time of the conception by Mary of Jesus, in order for them to prepare to make their journey to Bethlehem while he was still very young.

Since the star appeared about one year previously, Herod took no chances, but had every infant killed up to 2 years of age.

Jesus was about two months old at the time of the death of Herod. The latest possible date for the birth of Jesus was the early autumn of 4 B.C. before winter arrived (Luke 2:8). This places the commencement of the ministry of Christ 30 years later in the autumn of the year 27.

### **The Reign of Emperor Tiberius**

One of the most vital keys to the chronology of Christ's ministry—and yet one of the most universally misunderstood dates—is the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. Luke tells us that John the Baptist began to preach in his 15th year (Luke 3:1).

When was this 15th year?

The trouble arises because it has been assumed there were several possible dates from which the reign of Tiberius Caesar was counted. Tiberius indeed was made coruler with Augustus Caesar at the very end of A.D. 11 or the beginning of A.D. 12. The exact month is not known, but it is not essential anyway, as the emperor did not count his official years from his joint rule with Augustus.

Tiberius reckoned his reign from his sole rule in August, A.D. 14. Tiberius' 15th year commenced Oct. 1, A.D. 27.

In the Near East, where Luke lived, the first year of Tiberius extended from August to the end of that calendar year—Sept. 30, A.D. 14. The second year of Tiberius began on Oct. 1 and extended through Sept. 30, A.D. 15. The official Syrian calendar then in use began with the autumn month of October.

At the beginning of this 15th year John the Baptist began to preach repentance, around the Jordan River, before Jesus was baptized by him. John's ministry occupied several weeks before the baptism of Jesus.

Notice how this dovetails with the next proof.

### **When Was Pilate Governor?**

Luke names Pontius Pilate as governor of Judea when John received his call: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea...the word of God came to John" (Luke 3:1-2). Pilate ruled for 10 years.

Pilate was deposed a few months before the Passover near the close of his 10th year. He hurriedly sailed for Rome to appeal to Emperor Tiberius. On his way news came that Tiberius died. You will read this in Josephus' *Antiquities*, XVIII, iv, 2.

Since Pilate was in a great hurry to reach Rome, he must have left shortly before the death of the emperor, which occurred in March, A.D. 37.

Ten years before this is about the beginning of A.D. 27, at which time Pilate began his procuratorship. Here is what the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says in its article "Pilate": The assumed date for Pilate is usually "from 26 to 36 A.D....Tiberius died on March 16, 37 A.D. Such a delay [in Pilate's journey to Rome] is inconceivable in view of the circumstances; hence...the period of his procuratorship [is] 27-37 A.D."

The *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* states, under the article "Pilate": "He probably succeeded Gratus 27 A.D. and ended his procuratorship early in 37; it is not likely that Pilate required more than a year for his return journey to Rome...and he arrived there after Tiberius' death, which took place March 16, 37."

The appointment of Pilate may have occurred as early as November, A.D. 26, and he entered his office in Judea early in A.D. 27. As Pilate did not begin his governorship in Judea till about the commencement of A.D. 27 and as Tiberius' 15th year did not begin till October that year, John the Baptist must have begun his ministry in the first few days of October in A.D. 27.

Jesus, therefore, must have begun to preach in the autumn of A.D. 27. There is no other date that would be consistent with all the provable facts.

To find the date of the crucifixion, we now need only find how long the ministry of Jesus lasted.

### **How Long Was Jesus' Ministry?**

The prophet Daniel foretold that the length of Christ's ministry at his first coming, to confirm the New Covenant, would be one half of a prophetic week of seven years.

In the midst of that prophetic week he caused the need of sacrifices for sin to cease by offering himself for the sins of the world. He was "cut off" in the midst of the week, making the ministry at his first coming three and one-half years (Dan. 9:25-27).

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks"—69 prophetic weeks or 483 years in all.

In Hebrew, as in some other languages, the smaller number may appear first—"seven weeks and sixty-two weeks"—even when the larger number refers to an historic or prophetic event that precedes the event referred to by the smaller number.

It was 62 prophetic weeks or 434 years (62 x 7) from the decree of Artaxerxes I in 457 B.C. to the decision to prepare the stones for rebuilding the Temple. That occurred in the 15th year of Herod, 23 B.C. And it was seven prophetic weeks or 49 years (7 x 7) to A.D. 27.

"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself...then he shall confirm a covenant with many for a week"—this prophecy of confirming the covenant is not yet completely fulfilled.

Why? Because "in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering"—Jesus died for the sins of the world in the middle of the week. It was in the middle of the last prophetic week, *after* the 62 weeks, as well as *after* the seven weeks, that Jesus died.

In a sense this is a dual prophecy. Christ died in the midst of the prophetic week of seven years, after three and one-half years of ministry, but he also died in the midst of the week—Wednesday!

Now let's turn to the gospels to find the proof that Jesus Christ's ministry was exactly three and one-half years. There would have to be three Passovers during the three years of his ministry, and a fourth on the last day of his earthly life—the crucifixion.

The first Passover occurred in 28 and is recorded in John 2:23. During the following weeks Jesus spent time baptizing in Judea (John 3:22).

The next note of time is found in John 4:35, a reference to four months till the next harvest season at Passover in A.D. 29. So this time reference is to the ninth month or Keslev in December, A.D. 28, only days before Jesus began to publicly announce the gospel in the synagogues of Galilee after John the Baptist was imprisoned (Acts 10:37; John 4:43-45).

In Luke 6:1 is the next time reference—"the second sabbath after the first" an awkward translation of the Greek *deuteroproton sabbaton*. This is a reference to the second of seven Sabbaths that were counted from Passover to Pentecost. So here we see a second Passover, A.D. 29, in Jesus' ministry.

In John 6:4 is another Passover, which brings us to a Wednesday in the year A.D. 30: "Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near." This was the third Passover in Jesus' ministry.

The fourth and final Passover is recorded by all the gospel writers. Notice John 11:55: "And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves."

This last Passover completed a ministry of three and one-half years, from autumn of A.D. 27 to the spring of A.D. 31, when the Passover upon which Christ was crucified fell on Wednesday.

Since Jesus began his three and one-half year ministry not later than A.D. 27, he could not have been crucified so late as A.D. 33. There was, therefore, no Passover that occurred on a Friday during his entire ministry!

Yes, history proves false the tradition that Jesus was crucified on Friday and rose on Easter Sunday!

## Part Two

### FEAST OF TABERNACLES DATES CRUCIFIXION

ALMOST everyone has overlooked the fact that the *Bible* dates the ministry of Christ and the year of the crucifixion. How?

By preserving the story of the last Feast of Tabernacles during the ministry of Jesus! The apostle John spent almost one fifth of his gospel account on it. The episode we are about to read begins in John, chapter 7, and continues through chapter 10, verse 21. Turn to it in your Bible and see how the Bible dates the event.

#### What John Records

The background of this historic Festival is found in John 7:1: "After this Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of Tabernacles was at hand" (*Revised Standard Version*).

It was seven months before the Passover and crucifixion, and already the leaders in Judea were looking for a chance to kill Jesus. Even Jesus' brothers were upset with him. They said sarcastically to Jesus:

"Surely no one can hope to be in the public eye if he works in seclusion. If you really are doing such things as these, show yourself to the world" (verse 4, *New English Bible*). Jesus in fact was not attempting to be in the public eye—but his brothers did not know that.

Jesus said to his brothers, "Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come" (verse 8, *Authorized Version*). Modern translations erroneously omit the first *yet* in Jesus' words, "I go not up *yet* unto this feast." With this answer Jesus remained behind in Galilee.

To continue: "But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private" (verse 10, RSV). The apostle John refers to this impending Festival in 7:2 as the "Jews' feast of tabernacles." The Festival is also *God's* Feast of Tabernacles. He ordained it.

But since the Jews were a nation as well as a congregation, it had become a national festival, celebrated with special temple ceremonies and national customs. "About the middle of the Feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. The Jews marveled at it, saying, 'How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?'" (verses 14-15, RSV).

Of course Jesus studied! But he had not studied as a student of the Pharisees or Sadducees. At the age of 12, Jesus had been found by his parents "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:46-47, RSV).

Jesus answered his critics that fourth day of the Feast by saying: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself...Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?" (John 7:16, 17, 19, AV).

Jesus' teaching came from God. He appealed to the law as the basis of true character. He challenged those who harbored murderous thoughts contrary to the law. They, in turn, to justify themselves, accused Jesus of being demon possessed (verse 20).

For the next two days the people discussed among themselves whether Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Messiah. "When the Christ appears," they said, "will he do more signs than this man has done?" (verse 31, RSV).

## The Controversy Heightens

John continues, "The Pharisees heard the crowd thus muttering about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him" (verse 32). When the officers came into the presence of Jesus and heard him speak, they were immensely impressed. It was now the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

(The Feast of Tabernacles is a seven-day festival. It is followed by an eighth day, which is an annual Holy Day. This eighth day—see Leviticus 23:36, last half—has no specific name in the Old Testament.)

On this seventh day or last day of the Feast of Tabernacles a great closing celebration occurred in the temple ceremonies. Quantities of water were drawn in public view, and poured out, in anticipation of the final or eighth day of the Festival season.

The ceremony commemorated an event recorded in I Samuel 7:5-6. There we read that Samuel the prophet, apparently at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, gathered the people to Mispah. (This was before the temple of Solomon was built at Jerusalem.) Samuel then "drew water, and poured it out before the Lord."

The Jews had repeated this traditional ceremony, amid great celebration on the seventh day of the Feast. Jesus stood up about the end of that day to expound on the meaning of the pouring out of the water (John 7:37). He proclaimed: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"

The apostle John explains to his readers what Jesus meant—and what, in fact, this joyous ceremony signified, "Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (verse 37, last half, to 39, RSV).

Jesus' gospel reveals the way of salvation, the way to eternal life. Man is born mortal, fleshly. He has no eternal life naturally abiding in him. He needs the Spirit of the immortal, ever-living God.

That Spirit is made available to humans through Jesus Christ, who offered himself for the sins of the world, was buried and resurrected, ascended to God the Father, is glorified and now, as high priest and our personal advocate, ministers for us at the throne of God.

This was Jesus' message in anticipation of the eighth day, which Christians came to call the "Last Great Day." This final annual Holy Day pictures a time when the government of God is established over all the earth.

Salvation will be opened to the whole world. Those who are now called and chosen will rule with Christ not only for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4), symbolized by the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, but also during the judgment, at the time of the second resurrection (Rev. 20:11-12). This Last Great Day pictures a great event, when all who have lived and died in spiritual ignorance will come to a knowledge of the truth and to salvation. Out of the saints' innermost being will flow rivers of spiritual water, converting the world.

When the officers heard these words of Jesus, they returned that evening to the chief priests and Pharisees without having apprehended Jesus (John 7:45). "Why did you not bring him?" demanded the chief priests and Pharisees. "The officers answered, 'No man ever spoke like this man'" (verse 46).

## Attempting to Trap Jesus

Now we turn to the *Authorized Version*, beginning verse 53 of chapter 7. "And every man went unto his own house." The account continues with verse 1 of chapter 8: "Jesus went unto the mount of

Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them."

After a night's rest the people were again at Jesus' feet eager to hear him. It was the morning of the last Festival of the year, the eighth day (the day we now call the Last Great Day), which immediately followed the seven-day Festival of Tabernacles.

Hardly had Jesus begun to teach when the scribes and Pharisees entered. They hatched a plan during the night to trap Jesus so they might have cause to arrest him.

With them as they entered was a woman who had been found committing adultery. Instead of privately helping her to overcome her sin, they made a public spectacle of her. "Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned," they announced, "but what sayest thou?" (verse 5).

Jesus' discerning answer was his message of the Holy Day. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (verse 7, AV).

Humiliated, the scribes and Pharisees left one by one, beginning with the eldest. "Woman," said Jesus, "where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" When she responded, "No man, Lord," Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

This account of the woman taken in adultery is wrongly deleted, or mistakenly placed in footnote, in modern versions. It is a vital part of the story.

Then Jesus began to explain to the people who had witnessed this ugly scene, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (verse 12, AV). Those millions of human beings who throughout history have lived and died in spiritual darkness will indeed see the light of truth—after the millennium in a second resurrection.

As Jesus was explaining this, the Pharisees in Jesus' audience took offense (verse 13). They accused Jesus of bearing false testimony—that his gospel was a lie and of the devil.

"Jesus replied, 'If I glorify myself, that glory of mine is worthless. It is the Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, 'He is our God,' though you do not know him. But I know him; if I said that I did not know him I should be a liar like you. But in truth I know him and obey his word...They picked up stones to throw at him" (John 8:54-59, NEB).

We pick up the account in the *Authorized Version*: "But Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth" (John 8:59; 9:1). Jesus put clay on his eyes and healed the man. The blind man, now healed, was whisked before the Pharisees.

The apostle John takes special note of the time this healing occurred: "And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes" (John 9:14, AV). (See also verse 16.) So the day that followed the seventh or last day of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles was not only an annual Holy Day, but also the weekly Sabbath.

This pinpoints it to the autumn of A.D. 30. In that year the last Holy Day, the eighth day occurred on the Sabbath, October 7. This date corresponds with the exact date on the fixed Jewish calendar for that year. But the eighth day did not fall on a Sabbath in A.D. 29—as required by those who assume a crucifixion in A.D. 30—nor on a Sabbath in A.D. 32 as required by official Catholic tradition that presumes a crucifixion in A.D. 33.

The next spring (A.D. 31) the Passover and crucifixion fell on a Wednesday. Such a combination of the eighth or Last Great Day on a Sabbath and the Passover on a Wednesday occurred at no other time in Jesus' ministry! Nor would such a combination be possible at any time in Jesus' ministry if the *later*, temporary Pharisaic and Rabbinic custom of observation of the new moon were in force during Jesus' ministry.

John's account of this final Feast of Tabernacles' season in Jesus' ministry is vital not only in revealing Jesus' messages on these days—and therefore the meaning of these autumn Festivals in

God's plan—but also in dating precisely his ministry and the crucifixion to the very year (A.D. 31) and to the very day of the week (Wednesday).