
THE TYPOLOGY OF JESUS OUR PASSOVER

The opening article (by Mitchell Smith) appeared in the newspaper *The Journal: News of the Churches of God* on March 30, 2001. A reader, perplexed at some of the conclusions reached by the author, asked me to write and submit an article in reply. I have posted both the original article and my reply here, as well as on [this site](#). (Regrettably, Mr. Smith died in an accident on March 16.)

A SUNDAY-MORNING RESURRECTION FITS THE FACTS AND THE TYPOLOGY

By Mitchell Smith

LINDALE, Texas--The proof Jesus gave to the scribes and Pharisees that He was the Messiah is that He would be three days and three nights in the "heart of the earth."

Many Church of God members have long recognized this: that Jesus, or Yeshua, lay in His grave for three full days and three full nights (Matthew 12:40).

But problems with the chronology in the Gospel accounts have led people of various religious persuasions, including the Church of God, to promote beliefs and theories that vary from a Wednesday-afternoon-to-Saturday-afternoon burial and resurrection to a Friday-Sunday burial and resurrection.

Each of these two scenarios has serious problems in reconciling with the biblical account. Each also has grave problems with typology: the symbolic significance of biblical events, especially those that surrounded the life and death of the Messiah.

But another chronology does, in fact, fit all the facts. It harmonizes the Gospel accounts and allows for a full three days and three nights in the tomb. It also beautifully fits the typology of the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah and His role as the wave-sheaf offering revealed in Leviticus 22:11-15.

The keys to unlocking the mysteries and seeming contradictions of the chronology of the three days and three nights are an understanding of:

- * The typology of the burial and resurrection.
- * The burial customs of first-century Jews.

They don't add up

Church of God members have long had a problem with Mark 16:9 and related verses: "Now when [the Messiah] rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons."

Since many Church of God students of the Bible recognize that Jesus died the afternoon of Wednesday at the precise moment of the slaying of the Passover lamb, they have believed they could not accept Mark 16:9 as plainly showing that the Messiah rose from the dead early in the morning on Sunday, the first day of the week.

Their reluctance to accept Mark 16:9 at face value has been the result of their attempt to reconcile a Sunday-morning resurrection with a Wednesday-afternoon death on the cross. From Wednesday afternoon to Sunday morning is three days and four nights; it is 84 hours rather than 72.

Another reason Church of God folks have been reluctant to accept a Sunday-morning resurrection is that some Protestants cite a Sunday-morning resurrection as justification for observing the "Lord's Day," which they think is Sunday, rather than keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, from Friday evening to Saturday evening.

Many Protestants, as well as Roman Catholics (and some Church of God members), believe Jesus died Friday and arose Sunday morning. Their arguments to support such a belief include reliance on "idioms" in Greek that allow parts of days to count as full days. Friday to Sunday includes parts of Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Thus, they say, the three-days-and-three-nights requirement is fulfilled in the Friday-Sunday scenario.

But both scenarios, both explanations, leave much to be desired. Both have serious problems reconciling passages in the Gospels and Acts that do not add up if either scenario is assumed to be the correct one.

12 extra hours

So what is the correct scenario? What do the Scriptures support? Which scenario

answers the questions and reconciles the problem scriptures?

How can Jesus have lain in the tomb for three days and three nights, have arisen on Sunday (which a plain reading of Mark 16:9 supports) and have undergone the customary 12 hours the Jews spent preparing a body for burial?

With Passover 2001 fast approaching, let us examine once again the death, burial and resurrection of Yeshua HaMaschiach, Jesus the Christ.

Valid sacrifice

Exodus 12:1-11 reveals the death of Messiah as the death of the redemption lamb. To be a valid sacrifice, Messiah had to have been killed on the 14th day of Nisan "between the two evenings," which the New Covenant scriptures uphold by showing that His death was at 3 o'clock on the afternoon of Nisan 14.

(Three o'clock was the time of the main afternoon oblation in the temple in ancient Israel. It was almost precisely between the two "evenings." The first evening was from noon to 3, called "evening minor." The second was from 3 to sundown, called "evening major" or "evening proper." "Between the two evenings" meant 3 o'clock in the afternoon.)

Sound carries so well in the environs of Jerusalem that Messiah probably heard the chanted prayers of the temple priests from where He was hanging on the stake while He died.

From Exodus 16 we can conclude that the original Egyptian Passover was carried out on a Wednesday. Then came the Israelites' three days' journey to the Red Sea to escape the pursuing Egyptian army. This would have carried the children of Israel chronologically to the Sabbath.

That night, Saturday night, the descendants of Israel passed through the Red Sea, and in the morning watch (Exodus 14:24) they emerged on the other side, just as day was breaking on the first day of the week.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 Paul confirms that the crossing of the sea amounted to an immersion, a baptism, of the Israelites. The Israelites leaving Israel and passing through the sea were a type of Messiah and His death, burial and resurrection. They were the firstfruits back then. Messiah is the firstfruits of the resurrection to everlasting life.

Daniel 9:27 depicts the Messiah's being cut off in the midst of the week. It says He "shall confirm a covenant with many for one week," but the sacrifice and

offering will end "in the middle of the week."

Sequence of events

From a computerized study undertaken by the Worldwide Church of God years ago concerning the timing in antiquity of the feast days, I conclude that the Passover in both A.D. 30 and 31 fell on a Wednesday.

Assuming Messiah died on Wednesday at the "ninth hour"--that is, 3 p.m.--let us consider the sequence of events that followed concerning His preparation for burial and His burial.

Jesus was numbered among the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12; Mark 15:28; Luke 22:37), and the Romans sentenced Him to death. They consigned His body to a common grave, an unmarked hole in the ground. His mother and brothers would have collected His body for burial had they been allowed to, but they were not.

But God had prepared Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the council, or Sanhedrin, to intervene and ensure that Jesus would be buried in a cave carved from stone.

Notice the time of day of Joseph's first overtures to retrieve Jesus' body:

"Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed" (Matthew 27:57-60).

Evening, as used here by Matthew, and another Gospel writer in Mark 15:42, is *opsios*. Categorized as No. 3798 in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, it is used 15 times in the New Testament. In all but one instance it means "sundown" or "after dark."

Heavy mixture

When Joseph of Arimathea viewed Jesus' body on the stake, according to these two passages of Scripture, it was almost dark. But then Joseph had to ask for a meeting with Pilate, the governor. One didn't just walk in unannounced and say, "I want to talk to you, Pilate." This kind of meeting took a certain amount of time to set up; it did not happen instantaneously.

After Joseph met with Pilate, the governor summoned a centurion to testify to the fact of the Savior's death (Mark 15:44). This also took time.

Yet Church of God chroniclers claim Joseph and friends had time to prepare Jesus for burial before sundown, even though it was already growing dark by the time Joseph asked for custody of the body.

John 19:39-40 mentions the burial customs of the Jews, which included binding a body with strips of linen and applying spices. Verse 39 specifically mentions that Joseph's friend Nicodemus brought a "mixture of myrrh and aloes" that weighed "a hundred pounds."

Even though the "hundred pounds" spoken of here may not be the same as 100 modern pounds, it was still a heavy mixture that would take at least several hours to administer to the body.

Today's burial customs among Orthodox Jews are almost identical to those of the first century, with the exception that nowadays they do not wrap a corpse with linen strips. The burial-preparation procedures in those days meant applying the strips and a mixture of myrrh and aloes, which would quickly harden and form a sturdy cast around the body.

This explains why Peter immediately realized Jesus had been miraculously revived when he reached the dimly lit tomb early in the morning on the first day of the week. He saw the cast, uncut and unbroken, of linen strips fused together with the solidifying agents. He also saw the face cloth folded and laid neatly to one side (Luke 24:12).

Peter instantly recognized that no one could pass out of that body cast and leave it intact. No physical body, dead or alive, could be removed from such a rigid burial dressing without destroying it. Yet there it lay neatly intact where minutes earlier Jesus' body had lain.

Not unlawful to bury

The Scriptures state that Jesus' friends prepared His body and then placed it in the tomb. The preparation would have taken approximately 12 hours. That was the normal time allotted by the Jews, and we have no good reason to believe the preparations in this case were other than the customary ones.

Some object and cite sources that say it was unlawful to bury someone on the Sabbath or on the Day of Atonement. This is true. A study of history and Jewish

customs does reveal that it was unlawful to leave a body hanging on a stake of crucifixion an entire night, but it was not unlawful to bury him on the high days other than the Day of Atonement. (See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, "Burial.")

I think it is likely that Joseph, Nicodemus and others took Jesus' body to someone's house to prepare it. In accordance with the customs of the day, His mother and brothers may even have helped in the preparation. Surely the preparers didn't lay the body out in the open on the ground. The process is a solemn, dignified and unhurried ritual of mourning.

Most people apparently assume Joseph rushed Jesus' body off the cross and ran with it to the tomb. This simply could not be what happened.

The procedures

Jesus' friends and family cleansed and cooled His body with at least four and one-half gallons of water. This was the law of the day as evidenced in the *Mishnah* (the oral law). They no doubt laid it on a stiff board and continuously rinsed it with cool water until rigor mortis set in.

If they had formed the linen cast around Messiah's warm body too soon and too hastily, it would eventually have swollen and popped the wrappings wide open.

After washing and cooling Jesus' body, which would have taken several hours, they would have anointed Him with oil, then methodically wrapped Him in the coated cloth strips. His head would have been the only part of His body not wrapped. The preparers would have placed a removable linen cloth over His face so mourners could view it (John 20:7).

The next step would have been to place Him in the tomb. When would this have happened; that is, what day and what time of day?

Pertinent circumstances

First let's review some more facts and circumstances of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

Death on the stake took place specifically as a result of suffocation. In the case of Jesus' execution, the Jews had requested of Pilate that the legs of Jesus and the two others who were crucified alongside Him be broken to hasten their demise by suffocation so they would not remain on their stakes on the "high day," the annual Sabbath.

But the soldier found Jesus had already died and so did not break his legs. If a bone was broken or if Messiah had suffocated, he would not have been a valid sacrifice, because the sacrificial lamb could not have a broken bone.

This Sabbath was the first day of the annual Feast of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31). This particular high day began Wednesday evening and lasted 24 hours until Thursday evening.

Luke 23:54 states that the day was "the preparation, and the sabbath drew on" (King James Version). The phrase drew on, here, is a mistake in the KJV. It is translated from *epiphosko* in the Greek, which Strong's classifies as No. 2020.

In *Wigram's Englishman's Greek Concordance*, on page 289, we find that the word is used only twice in the Bible. The other instance is in Matthew 28:1: "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."

Here the same word is translated "dawn," which is the correct meaning.

Also, the *Interlinear Greek Bible* (J.P. Green Sr.) translates Luke 23:54: "And it was preparation day, and a sabbath was dawning."

I've often wondered why in Luke 23:54 the Greek word is translated "drew on" when it should be "dawn" or "dawned." I believe we can trace the error to the translators of the King James Version, who believed, as professing Christians, that Messiah was executed on Friday and resurrected Sunday morning at daybreak.

If the translators had said that "it was beginning to dawn on the [annual] Sabbath" (that is, early Thursday morning), this would have removed any ambiguity concerning the time Luke was referring to.

In other words, if dawn were breaking when Jesus was buried, He could not have been buried Wednesday evening (or Friday evening, for those who believe in a Friday-Sunday scenario). That would not have fit with the King James translators' preconceived notion that Jesus lay in the tomb from Friday evening to Sunday morning.

But it also confuses the chronology for Church of God people who study the subject. Reading that the "sabbath drew on" means to them that Jesus was buried late Wednesday.

The correct translation, however, that "dawn" was approaching on that Sabbath

indicates that His body didn't arrive at the tomb until the next morning about dawn.

The sign of Jonah

But what about the sign Jesus cited: that He would be in His grave three days and three nights? (Matthew 12:38-40).

He meant His prophecy of His entombment quite literally. He knew He would be in the grave three days and three nights, even though the time between His death and His resurrection would be three and one-half days, or approximately 84 hours. He lay in the tomb exactly three days and three nights: 72 hours.

We can find the phrase "three days and three nights" other places in the Scriptures. It always means literally three daylight periods attached to three nighttime periods (see 1 Samuel 30:12; Jonah 1:17; and Matthew 12:40).

Jesus' friends and family committed His body to the tomb just as the sun was coming up on Thursday morning. He lay in the tomb through Thursday daylight, Thursday night, Friday daylight, Friday night, Saturday daylight and Saturday night. Then He came back to life on the first day of the week just before the sun rose.

What about typology? What about the symbolism of events surrounding Jesus' death, burial and resurrection? Does the Wednesday-Sunday death-and-resurrection scenario fit the biblical and prophetic symbolism?

The typology fits

Let's look at a few instances of types that fit like hand in glove.

Paul says the crossing of the Red Sea was the equivalent of the baptism of every man, woman and child who came out of the land of Egypt in the Exodus.

The ancient Israelites entered the sea while it was still dark, but it was right at daylight--at the "morning watch" (Exodus 14:24) -- when they emerged on the other side.

Another important type involves the wave sheaf. In Israel in the time of the Messiah, three priests would walk to a certain field just outside of Jerusalem, where it was customary to dump ashes from the temple altar. They would have already prepared a wave sheaf to be cut in the field.

The waving of the sheaf was a big event each Passover season in Israel, with thousands of people watching the priestly ritual.

The three Levites would begin by crying out to the crowd: "Has the sun set?"

They asked this question because it was not lawful to cut the grain on the Sabbath. The crowd, at first, would respond that, no, the sun had not set.

The priests would ask again, several times. The crowd would answer each time that the sun had not yet set.

Then, when the sun had slipped below the horizon, the crowd would shout that the Sabbath was over. Then the priests would cut the sheaf.

The wave sheaf consisted of enough grain to prepare two huge loaves of unleavened bread. The three priests would take the grain from the sheaf -- and I believe the sheaf represented the Messiah -- into the temple compound and thresh the grain out with canes, being careful not to damage it.

From antiquity the sheaf had been waved annually on the morning that is properly called the Feast of Firstfruits.

The Church of God has said that the Feast of Firstfruits is a synonym for the Feast of Pentecost, but Scripture does not support this terminology. The Feast of Firstfruits is the Sunday after the Sabbath that falls within the Days of Unleavened Bread. The wave-sheaf Sunday may lie outside the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The sheaf is a direct type of the Messiah, and it was always waved on the first day of the week.

This is another reason that Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week perfectly fits the typology: The priests always waved the sheaf early on the first day of the week as the sun was coming up.

Just as 50 days later the Feast of Pentecost would fall on the first day of the week and mark the beginning of the New Covenant church, so Jesus' resurrection marked a new beginning in the events of God's plan.

Just as God's creation of the heavens and the earth began on the first day of the week (Genesis 1:1-5), so Jesus' resurrection marked a new phase of God's plan of salvation for mankind.

No biblical typology fits with the concept of Messiah's resurrection being on a Sabbath.

The clincher

Here is what I consider to be the clincher to my argument that Jesus was buried early Thursday morning rather than Wednesday afternoon or evening (and rather than Friday afternoon).

Note Matthew 28:11. Here we read about Jesus walking with some of His disciples after His resurrection and counseling them. "Do not be afraid," He encouraged them. "Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

So the disciples began the journey to Galilee. When they were well on their way, some Romans soldiers reported to the chief priests in Jerusalem news of the events concerning Jesus, His disciples and the empty tomb.

Notice verses 12-15: "When they [the chief priests] had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, 'Tell them, "His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept." And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure.' So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

If these events -- the soldiers taking a bribe to lie about the resurrection and say that the disciples stole Messiah's body -- occurred the way the Churches of God say, then a troop of Roman soldiers was paid to fabricate a story that nobody would have believed.

Why would no one have believed it? Because the notion of soldiers falling asleep during broad daylight on Saturday just before a Saturday-twilight resurrection would have been simply unthinkable. That's what would have been required if Jesus were buried Wednesday just before sundown. He would have risen Saturday just before sundown; therefore the soldiers would have fallen asleep in broad daylight on Saturday shortly before sundown.

Jewish and Roman leaders and the common people were milling around Jerusalem at that time of day and week, including the environs of Jesus' tomb. The soldiers could not have fallen asleep at that time of day, especially considering that everyone knew that nodding off on the job meant a soldier would face the death penalty.

The story would have been much more believable if the soldiers were supposed to have fallen asleep early in the morning, in the darkest hour before the dawn, on Sunday after having guarded the tomb all night.

In any case the story was a blatant lie, but the chief priests were clever enough to tell a lie that people would believe. This is a strong indication that the resurrection occurred early on a morning rather than just before sundown the previous day.

Answer to another objection

Another objection to a Sabbath (high-day) burial has it that Yeshua's friends would have had to place Him in the tomb before dark so they would not be considered ceremonially defiled for the Passover.

The problem with that argument is that anyone who touched a dead human body was considered unclean for seven days. So, if this argument is valid, they would not have been able to keep the Passover anyway. (See Numbers 19.)

Joseph of Arimathea, as a member of the Sanhedrin, helped to make the laws of the day. Laws of burial were strict and strictly adhered to. If a person died in the morning, he was prepared and buried in the late afternoon. If a person died in the afternoon, he was prepared and buried the next morning. An annual Sabbath was no exception to this rule.

Jesus died about 3 o'clock Wednesday afternoon. So, following the customs of the day, He would have been buried early Thursday morning after a customary and extensive preparation, and He would have arisen from the grave early on a Sunday morning.

(A Sunday-morning resurrection, by the way, does not give authority to professing Christians to change the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday. No authority for this change is given anywhere in the Bible.)

One of many

This is but one example of how a study of the mind-set and customs of first-century Jews can help in a study of Scripture. Israelites wrote the New Testament as well as the Old. If we can determine what the writers meant when they chose the words they wrote--as we can do by studying their history, beliefs and customs--we can gain an immeasurably greater understanding of Scripture.

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THE TYPOLOGY OF JESUS OUR PASSOVER:

In reply to Mitchell Smith

By John Wheeler

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HOUSTON, Texas - "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign," said Jesus, "but no sign shall 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 whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39-40, RSV throughout unless otherwise indicated).

This verse is a major stumbling block to those who would hold that Jesus died on a Friday and was resurrected on Sunday. Yet it is also a major foundation stone of the truth about Jesus' death and resurrection. When combined with Jesus' other statements as to the timing of His resurrection - "after three days", "on the third day", "in three days" - this "sign of Jonah" makes clear that Jesus spent no more and no less than 72 hours in the tomb ("the heart of the earth").

Another foundation stone is laid by comparing the accounts of Mark and Luke. "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdelene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go an anoint him" (Mark 16:1). "The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid; then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment" (Luke 23:55-56). The only self-consistent explanation is that there were *two* Sabbaths

that week. The first "sabbath" was the first Day of Unleavened Bread, the "high day" mentioned in John 19:31. (The Greek phrase found here and in John 7:37 actually signifies "a great day"; in both cases, it refers to a Holy Day.) The second "sabbath" was the weekly Sabbath within Unleavened Bread. Thus, Jesus died on a Wednesday Passover (Nisan 14).

The sources of misunderstandings

One can understand why, in the face of nearly two millennia of argument from authority to the contrary, most professing Christians would fail to grasp these biblical basics. Why then does it seem so difficult for some who claim to be part of God's true Church to accept these basics - let alone to move beyond them to *perfect understanding*? Is it because the technical details are so difficult? If the latter, then why do some so readily allow their reach to exceed their grasp? We're warned that the "ignorant and unstable" twist the "difficult" things of Scripture to their own destruction - which implies one must be both *learned and stable* to understand them (2 Peter 3:16-18).

Consider: Only "those taken from the breast" (those who understand the Bible's basic teachings) can understand what God teaches "line upon line" in more difficult matters. If moral self-will is involved (as it is with most of Israel, humanity in general, and "heretics" within God's Church - compare Galatians 5:20), then "the word of the LORD will be to them...line upon line...*that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken*" (Isaiah 28:9-13). The fact God has forced most people to work with the Bible *in translation* has only made the problem worse (compare verses 11-12). Many sincere people find the mere language barrier a stumbling block to testing the ideas of others, let alone coming to proper conclusions themselves.

To state this plain truth is not to deny the existence of technical problems; it is to put them in perspective. Whether as teacher or as student, one needs to "take his shoes off" when approaching the Bible, being fully aware of the holy ground on which he stands.

A reply by request

The late Mitchell Smith, in an article for *The Journal* (March 30, 2001), has sought to resolve some of the technical problems surrounding the chronology and typology of Jesus' birth and resurrection. His article attempts to apply the science of *hermeneutics* (Scriptural interpretation as founded in the cultural and historical context) to the problems, as he himself explains: "Israelites wrote the New Testament as well as the Old. If we can determine what the writers meant when they chose the words they wrote - as we can do by studying their history, beliefs

and customs - we can gain an immeasurably greater understanding of Scripture."

Because of my background in the biblical languages, Hebraica and Judaica, a reader of *The Journal* asked me to write a reply to Mr. Smith's article. My analysis of that article follows.

Faulty hermeneutics

Upon review, I find that there are several not merely serious, but *insurmountable* problems with Smith's approach. First, it fails to take into account the very passage of Isaiah quoted above. *Israel itself - and in particular, Judaism in Jesus' day - failed to understand the word of the LORD, because it was unwilling to obey that word!* Another passage of Isaiah makes clear that this Israelite and Judaic misunderstanding came from their obedience to "commandments of men" (Isaiah 29:13-14). Jesus stated that Isaiah prophesied specifically of the scribes and Pharisees, and (by implication) the Jews who followed their example, in this passage (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13).

Second, the article *fails to take into account all the relevant passages* of both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. It is true that some of the Old Testament passages have been disputed since even before the fall of the Second Temple. This is because a vital element of the Hebrew "reading tradition" - the musical accentuation, preserved by the Herodians (*not* the scribes and Pharisees) and transcribed in our present Masoretic Text - has not been taken into account. Most relevant passages, though, are unambiguous, and they allow us to give precise definitions to certain important terms. Those passages that have been heretofore ambiguous may now be clarified, thanks to the accentuation that supports them.

Third, the article makes a fundamental hermeneutical error: *it uses unclear passages to shed light on clear ones rather than vice versa*. This error not only extends to matters of semantics and chronology, but to the application of God's law and the typology and theology that application implies. One question in particular (among others) is left completely begging: It is *unthinkable* that Jesus and His disciples would have killed and eaten the Passover lamb at any time other than that dictated by the Law (cf. Luke 22:7-16). Had Jesus done so, He would have *sinned*, and therefore could not have been our Savior and fulfilled the typology of the Passover lamb! Yet this obviously meant *He could not have kept the Passover lawfully and died for our sins at the same time*. Therefore, the typology of the Passover did *not* demand that Jesus needed to die at the *same time* that the Passover lamb was killed according to biblical law. It was enough that Jesus died on the *same calendar day*: Nisan 14. All that remains is to explain the reference (in John 18:28 and Judaic sources) to a Jewish "Passover" service later than the one Jesus and His disciples kept. Thanks to the musical accentuation mentioned

above (and some Judaic history), such an explanation is now possible.

Fourth, the article ignores a generally admitted reality: *Rabbinic sources commonly read post-Second Temple ideas and practices back into biblical and Second Temple times.* Thus Rabbinic sources cannot be given an unmitigated benefit of the doubt; still less should they be given priority over the Bible's own indications (the claims of Rabbinic Judaism itself notwithstanding).

Finally, the article is flawed at its very logical foundation, because *the Bible must be interpreted first and foremost by the Bible - not by outside sources.* Hermeneutics and related disciplines have their place; but if the Bible is the Word of God, then the only fully reliable source on the culture, history and even semantics of biblical times is the Bible itself (compare John 10:35).

Timing of the Old Testament Passover

Unquestionably, Jesus kept the Passover at the right time. (The timing also happened to be that of the Galilean Jews generally, who were reputed among their fellow Jews for their *punctual observance* of the Festivals and Holy Days. These all kept the Passover at the beginning of Nisan 14, not during the afternoon of Nisan 14.) If we truly believe that Jesus is the Messiah, then we must conclude the biblical phrase "between the two evenings" *cannot* mean at 3:00 PM on Nisan 14! Smith's citation of rabbinic opinion on this matter is simply that - *rabbinic opinion*, post-imposed because of a *fundamental error* in understanding the Scriptures and the resulting *distortion* in Second Temple practice.

Ben ha`arbayim ("between the two evenings") and *ba`erev* ("in the evening", "at even") come from the same root word: `erev ("[sun]set, evening"). The Semitic root itself, `r-b, gives rise to related meanings in a number of cognate languages (see the *Brown-Driver-Briggs-Genesius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon*, henceforth BDBG, page 787b). Absolutely *nowhere* in the Bible do any of these words or phrases demonstrably refer to the afternoon! Rather, *ben ha`arbayim* and *ba`erev* refer to the time when one day ends and another begins, at sunset -- yet with a special distinction.

Ben ha`arbayim is found in Exodus 12:6; 16:12; 29:39, 41; 30:8; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:3, 5, 11; and 28:4, 8. It refers to the keeping of the Passover, to events during the Exodus, and to the "evening sacrifice" and the lighting of the *menorah* in the Tabernacle service. Once (in Exodus 16:12) it is parallel with *ba`erev* (Exodus 16:8, 13), which is used in many places. The two phrases are also *indirectly* parallel in 2 Chronicles 13:11, where the "evening sacrifice" and the burning of incense are described as occurring "*every morning and every evening*" (*baboqer baboqer uva`erev ba`erev*). In the Law of Moses, the evening sacrifice is

performed "between the two evenings". In Daniel, the daily sacrifices are in the "evening" (*erev*) and in the "morning" (*boqer*), in that order (Daniel 8:11-14, 26).

Ba`erev specifically refers to sunset at the end of the day and the beginning of another (Exodus 12:18; Leviticus 23:32; Deuteronomy 16:6). So then, do *ben ha`arbayim* and *ba`erev* mean exactly the same thing? *Not at all!* We know that "the fifteenth day of the second month", in the year of the Exodus (Exodus 16:1), was a weekly Sabbath, because God started the weekly cycle of manna the next day (verses 4-5, 12-13). Israel camped at the beginning of the Sabbath (v. 2) and murmured against Moses and Aaron. "At evening (*erev*)," said Moses, "you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning (*boqer*), you shall see the glory of the LORD" (verses 6-7). After this, God would give them flesh "in the evening" (*ba`erev*) and bread "in the morning" (*baboqer*) (verse 8). Sure enough, the LORD appeared in the cloud on Sabbath morning (verse 10); the quail arrived "in the evening", that is, *ba`erev* (verse 13). But Israel ate the flesh afterwards, "at twilight" (in the RSV) or "between the two evenings" (*ben ha`arbayim*) at the beginning of the day following the Sabbath (verse 12). The weekly cycle of manna began next morning (verse 13).

We have seen that the priest offered the evening sacrifice *ba`erev* as well as *ben ha`arbayim*. Does this prove that *ben ha`arbayim*, like *ba`erev*, is at the end of the day? Of course not. If one begins an action at a time that (by definition) marks the end of one day and the beginning of another, then obviously that action will carry over into the beginning of the next day. So the priest began his offering at the end of one day (*ba`erev*) and finished it during the period beginning the next day (*ben ha`arbayim*).

Again, "evening and morning and at noon" (*erev vavoqer vetsachorayim*) David prayed for deliverance (Psalms 55:17). "Morning" (*boqer*) is always a point in time, never a period of time (compare BDBG, p. 133b). "Evening", which is opposed to "morning" and not at all close to "noon", should likewise be a point of time, not a period of time. Most certainly there is no such thing in Hebrew Scripture as "evening minor" (noon to 3:00 PM) and "evening major" (3:00 PM to sundown)! Logically, then, "between the two evenings" is simply an idiom for "between sunset and dusk", just as the BDBG confirms (even as it acknowledges other points of view in its commentary sources). Then - not in the afternoon - is when ancient Israel offered the evening sacrifice and the Passover lamb.

The source of Judaic confusion

How then did the Jews of Jesus' day get so confused on when the Passover lamb was to be killed? The answer lies in Deuteronomy 16:1-8 and the narratives in Joshua 5, 2 Chronicles 30 and 35, and Ezra 6 which depend on that passage. Here

is where the musical accentuation (which is designed to clarify ambiguities in the Hebrew verbal syntax) gives its invaluable aid. (Space forbids an analysis of the narrative passages here; in time, I hope to post the analysis on my own Web site.)

According to Moshe ben Asher, next-to-last of the Masoretes (fl. 895 A.D.), the musical accents (*te`amim*) were not a Masoretic innovation but were "established" by the "Elders of Bathyra", a family of priests of the Second Temple period. (Jewish scholars often identify this family with the *Herodians* of the New Testament.) The accentuation itself (found in every verse of the "pointed" Masoretic Text) transcribes a system of conducting music via hand- and finger-gestures; the music took the place of the normal vocal inflection (and thus gave the punctuation, emphasis, indications of antecedents, and so on). The long-lost original musical and exegetical meaning of this notation was published in 1976 by the late Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura, and may be found in her book *The Music of the Bible Revealed* (available via [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) and other sources). More information may be found on my Web site [updated by this author for this Web page], **King David's Harp, Inc.**

We find in Deuteronomy 16 that the Passover (which occurred on the night of Nisan 14) is linked to the Exodus itself (which began on the night of Nisan 15). Most puzzling is the reference in 16:2: "And you shall sacrifice Passover to the LORD your God, [of the] flock and herd" (literal Hebrew). "Flock" refers to sheep and goats; "herd", to beef cattle. These words do not refer to the offerings made on the altar during Unleavened Bread as some imagine. They refer to the Passover service itself, as the syntax makes clear.

The key to this reference (and to the following verses) lies in the accentuation of verse 2. The accent *munach* (used on *tson*, "flock") indicates a *suspensive or continuous* verbal state; the accent *atnach* (on *uvaqar*, "and herd"), a *divisive or definitive* verbal state. In other words, the sacrifice from the *flock* was to remain *unchanged*. It is the sacrifice from the *herd* (the sacrifice now being added) which is *defined* as the antecedent of the following verses. Both sacrifices were to be offered "in the place which the LORD your God shall choose" - not merely the Tabernacle or Temple courts, but the whole sacred precinct where God's sanctuary was found. However, the sacrifices were to be offered at *different times*. As previously explained in the Law, the Passover lamb or goat was to be killed and eaten at the beginning of Nisan 14 ("between the two evenings"), and in a "domestic" service. This new sacrifice (of a bullock), *likewise called "Passover"*, was to be killed and eaten in the sacred precincts, beginning precisely when Nisan 14 ended and Nisan 15 began (*ba`erev*, verses 4, 6). In other words, this addition to "the Passover" was a clarification of *how to keep the Night to be Much Observed*, the observance of which is nowhere else described in Scripture. Apart from a knowledge of the accentuation (which was kept rigorously secret, like other

sacred music notations in antiquity), the inference I have just stated is all but impossible to make (at least by English readers unused to the way biblical Hebrew can handle antecedents).

Not surprisingly, many of the Jews (confused by the conciseness of Deuteronomy 16, 2 Chronicles and Ezra) later concluded that the lamb and the bullock were to be offered *at the same time on the same day*. This immediately posed practical problems, for it took a great deal of time and effort to kill all the Passover lambs and the bullocks at the altar for the people. (The bullock was then called *Chagigah*, "Festivity", as well as *Pesach*, "Passover", by the Jews - proving that some knowledge of its purpose was retained. An entire treatise of the Talmud, *Chagigah*, relates to that sacrifice and others of its kind.) This explains why the biblical references to "between the two evenings" were reinterpreted to mean (in effect) "between noon and sunset", and "in the evening at the going down of the sun" (Deuteronomy 16:6) to mean "in the afternoon". But were the instructions on the Passover (and how they were carried out according to 2 Chronicles and Ezra) properly understood, the practical problems would never have arisen. The lambs would have been eaten in homes or (as in the wilderness) in tents at the beginning of Nisan 14, while the bullocks would have been sacrificed all at once (and *not* at the altar) at the beginning of Nisan 15, then cooked and eaten that night.

It is worth noting that the apocryphal *Book of Jubilees* (considered by some a Pharisaic document) insists *vehemently* that the Passover must be offered within the sanctuary, and from the last third of the day (of Nisan 14) to the first third of the night (on Nisan 15). This statement proves that many Jews were *not* observing the Passover in this fashion. In fact, many were still keeping the domestic service of the Passover as originally ordained (Jesus and His disciples being among them). Whereas the Jewish authorities and many others were keeping the combined service in the Temple (compare John 18:28). As Alfred Edersheim notes in his *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (pages 865-866), citing the tractate *Chagigah* in both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, the entry of the authorities into Pilate's praetorium would not have disqualified them from eating the Passover lamb (TB *Pesach* 92a); but it *would* have disqualified them from offering and eating the *Chagigah* (which, once again, was likewise called "Passover").

Two words translated "firstfruits"

Smith writes: "The Church of God has said that the Feast of Firstfruits is a synonym for the Feast of Pentecost, but Scripture does not support this terminology. The Feast of Firstfruits is the Sunday after the Sabbath that falls within the Days of Unleavened Bread. The wave-sheaf Sunday may lie outside

the Days of Unleavened Bread."

Smith makes a *triple error* here. First, there are *two* Hebrew words translated "firstfruits" or "first fruits" (depending on the version) in Leviticus 23. The first word is *reshit* (simply "first"), which is found in Leviticus 23:10. It refers in this case to the "wave sheaf" (*omer*), which was offered "on the morrow after the Sabbath". The second word is *bikurim*, which is found in Leviticus 23:17. There it refers to the "wave loaves" (literally, "waved bread": *lechem tenufah*), which were waved fifty days after the *omer* was waved. We find *bikurim* mentioned again in Exodus 23:16; 34:22; and Numbers 28:26. Exodus 23:16 refers to "the feast of harvest, of the first fruits (*bikurim*) of your labor", while 34:22 refers to "the feast of weeks, the first fruits (*bikurim*) of wheat harvest". All these refer to the day called *Chag ha-Shavu'ot* ("the Feast of Weeks", that is, Pentecost) in Exodus 34:22 and Deuteronomy 16:16. So while "the Feast of Firstfruits" is not given as a name in so many words, the concept is definitely stated as applicable to Pentecost. By contrast, *nowhere* is the Day of the Wavesheaf Offering called "the Feast of Firstfruits" (whether *reshit* or *bikurim*), either directly or indirectly.

Second, there are *two* words translated "feast" in Leviticus 23 and elsewhere. The first is *mo'ed*, "appointed feast" (RSV: literally "appointed time"), which is found in Leviticus 23:2, 4. The second is *chag*, which refers to a *seasonal festival*; it is used only for Passover (Exodus 12:14), the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Day of the Wavesheaf Offering is technically a *mo'ed* (as are the seven Festivals, the seven Holy Days and the weekly Sabbath), but it is not a *chag*. Moreover, it is not a Holy Day or a day of commanded assembly. It is simply a day within the Feast of Unleavened Bread; and it may fall on the first Holy Day (as we will see) or on a weekday. Aside from its direct typology, it acts a benchmark for the counting to Pentecost; and its calendar date changes from year to year. (Were these last features of the day part of God's means of hiding the mystery of the Gospel until the proper time? It appears so.)

Third, Israel was forbidden to eat bread or green or parched ears of grain taken from the new harvest until the *omer* had been offered on "the morrow after the sabbath" (Leviticus 23:9-14). Yet we find in Joshua 5:10-12 (after the second "Passover" service involving the bullock) that Israel *did* eat of these things (as reaped from the Canaanites' own crops), "on the morrow" after the Passover (Nisan 14). That year, as this year, Passover must have fallen on the weekly Sabbath, and the Day of the Wavesheaf Offering must have fallen on the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. At all other times, there is always a "morrow after the (weekly) Sabbath" which falls between the first and last Holy Days of Unleavened Bread, on which the *omer* may be offered. The fact the Day of the Wavesheaf Offering fell on the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread in *that* year is

consistent with the need for it to fall in *all* years within the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. Moreover, one may confirm that in the year of the Exodus (as in the year Jesus died), Passover was on a Wednesday, the Day of the Wavesheaf Offering on the following Sunday (but not on a Holy Day), and Pentecost fifty days later.

Now we are ready to deal with what the New Testament says about the chronology of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.

The date of Jesus' death

Unquestionably, and despite Smith's equivocation on the matter, Jesus died on Wednesday, April 25, 31 A.D. The year before Jesus' death, the Last Great Day was on a weekly Sabbath (compare John 7:37-9:16). The year before that, the last Day of Unleavened Bread (the "second-first Sabbath") was likewise on a weekly Sabbath (Luke 6:1 and parallels). Moreover, Peter refers obliquely not only to *the sun turning black* (which happened at Jesus' death), but to *the moon turning to blood*, as signs which his audience had seen recently (Acts 2:20). There was a penumbral lunar eclipse high over Jerusalem on the Night to be Much Observed in 31 A.D., of a sort that would indeed have "turned the moon to blood". This combination of events would only be possible if the calculated calendar we use today (*postponements and all*) was in effect. The only real difference would have been in the one-year shift of the leap year sequence within the regular 19-year cycle, necessary to keep the Festivals in line with the seasons at that time.

Now let's put in order the events of Jesus' death and burial.

A burial in haste

"Since it was the Day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that [the legs of Jesus and the thieves] might be broken, and that they might be taken away" (John 19:31). *The Day of Preparation, by Judaic definition, is and always has been the day before the Sabbath.* It is based on the Jewish understanding of the principle behind Exodus 16:22-23. This will become important later.

"After this Joseph of Arimathea...asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also...came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight. They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was...a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. So *because of*

the Jewish Day of Preparation" - not "*despite the Sabbath*" - "as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there" (John 19:38-42). The Day of Preparation can only be mentioned (as is universally acknowledged by commentators) because the pair did not wish to bury Jesus on the Sabbath (whether it was allowable by Jewish law or not). The burial (despite Smith's description of the *normal* Jewish burial process) must have been in haste, and conducted at the tomb, for "the tomb was close at hand" to where Jesus was crucified. Nothing is said about the pair taking Jesus' body to someone's home, washing and anointing it before wrapping. It was simply wrapped with myrrh and aloes. Smith's statement that Jesus' mother and brothers would have helped in the wrapping and burial is likewise completely unfounded. It may have been the normal custom, but this was not a normal death and burial.

Edersheim, deeply knowledgeable of Jewish customs himself, comes to the same conclusion regarding the haste of the embalming ("if such it may be called", in his words) and burial (*op. cit.*, pp. 898-899). "It seems as if the 'clean linen cloth' in which the Body had been wrapped, was now torn into 'cloths' or swatches, into which the Body, limb by limb, was now 'bound', no doubt, between layers of myrrh and aloes, the Head being wrapped in a napkin" (p. 899). (This would be consistent with the statements in Luke 23:53 and 24:12 concerning Jesus' wrappings.) Others, however, have different opinions as to the exact binding process in Jesus' case. In any event, Smith's argument begs the question of whether "according to the custom of the Jews" refers to the entire normal embalming process, or (as the context in John strictly indicates) the mere use of spices and linen cloths in burial.

The New Testament gives us still more testimony about Jewish burial customs in Jesus' day. Notice what happened at the resurrection of Lazarus. After four days of burial in a sealed tomb, he "came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go'" (John 11:44). But Lazarus' binding would have been the result of the *normal* burial process. Let us examine more closely what happened in Jesus' case.

Henry Latham (cited at length by Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, 1972 edition, p. 215) believes that the spices Nicodemus brought were dry. "The Lord's body...was prepared for the tomb in great haste...I suppose it to have been wrapped in three or four lengths of linen cloth, with abundant spices between each fold...What is here called 'aloes' was a fragrant wood pounded or reduced to dust, while the myrrh was an aromatic gum, morsels of which were mixed with the powdered wood. It was also the practice...to anoint the body with a semi-liquid unguent such as nard. One effect of this would be to cause the powder immediately about the body to adhere to it, but the great bulk of it

would remain dry. The head and the hair were also anointed with this unguent....When, however, our Lord's body was hurriedly prepared for the tomb, there would be no time for anointing the body or for any elaborate process, because sunset was fast approaching and with it the Sabbath would come. The body would be simply embedded in the powdered spice. It may have been that the women desired to repair this omission as far as they could, and that what they brought on the Sunday morning was nard, or some costly unguent, in order to complete the anointing. S. John speaks only of myrrh and aloes [brought by Nicodemus], but S. Luke says that the women prepared spices and *ointments*, and in S. Mark we have 'they brought sweet spices that they might come and *anoint* him' (chap. xvi.I). Possibly they did not intend to disturb the graveclothes, but only to anoint the head and neck with the unguents."

Smith writes (again on the assumption that the normal, full embalming process was used): "If they had formed the linen cast around Messiah's warm body too soon and too hastily, it would eventually have swollen and popped the wrappings wide open." He also notes that a hundred pounds of spices was a considerable weight. How much? A *litra* or Roman pound (the kind John mentions) was twelve ounces (in our terms, 11.55 ounces) or 327.45 grams. A hundred Roman pounds, then, was just over 72 modern pounds. (Compare the *Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon* -- henceforth BAG -- page 475b.)

However, Nicodemus had obviously foreseen the need for those spices (as well he might, since he knew of the Sanhedrin's plans) and brought them "on site" with no trouble. Edersheim and other authors likewise find no stumbling block here; Latham notes that the spices would have been distinguished chiefly by their bulk (*ibid.*). But why would Nicodemus (as is evident from the context) carry these spices to the crucifixion site, only to have to carry them to an unmentioned home for the full embalming process? Moreover, as Latham implies, if Jesus had been buried "correctly", *there would have been no need for the women to prepare their own spices and ointments to anoint Jesus* (Mark 16:1-3; Luke 23:55-24:2). Everything about the narratives - what they say as well as what they omit - suggests *haste* on the part of those burying Jesus. How natural, then, for the women to try to finish the job that the men had started. Since Jesus' body had not yet seen corruption (Acts 2:31), and since the wrapping was hastily done (without the usual "glue" for the dry spices), this would not have posed a problem - provided the women could get into the tomb! There would have been no insuperable barrier posed by a hard casing of cloth and spices; it was *the stone at the door* that posed the problem!

Finally, there is the psychological state of the men who buried Jesus. They were disciples of His, but secretly, "for fear of the Jews". Their Friend had just been condemned by a kangaroo court of their own peers and crucified contrary to the

norms of Roman justice. Such men would not (as Smith supposes) made "a solemn, dignified and unhurried ritual of mourning" out of the burial process. They would have sought to save themselves from getting caught and the body of their Friend from abuse. No doubt they disliked the idea of preparing Jesus' body in the courtyard of the tomb (which is likely what happened, according to Edersheim) as much as Smith does; but this was not the time for such niceties. Nor were they concerned (as Smith alleges) with the strict observance of the laws regarding burial; the biblical testimony indicates the exact opposite, both by statement and by silence. Besides, being secret disciples of Jesus, they certainly knew how to put first things first; to them, ceremonial law took second place to love of God and neighbor, even in death (compare Mark 12:28-34).

So Smith notwithstanding, we *do* have good reason to believe Jesus' burial was not "customary". Indeed, we should be the more surprised if one "despised and rejected of men", who "made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death" (Isaiah 53:3, 9), was given what His fellow Jews would have considered a "decent burial". The use of the large quantity of spices indicated that His friends held Him in high esteem, however (compare McDowell, *op. cit.*, p. 213). The packing of the dry spices in the cloths would have been disrupted had the body been pulled upright; but neither could anyone have escaped from within it without disturbing it, save by a miracle. When Jesus' body vanished at the resurrection, the tube of cloth and dry spices containing it collapsed, and the napkin over His head lay rolled by itself (John 20:6-7). Again, nothing in the account demands that the full embalming process had been used.

The timing of the burial

Mark writes, "And when evening (Greek *opsios*) had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea...went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. And Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph." The next several verses summarize the burial process (Mark 15:42-47). I will have more to say about the significance of "evening" further on.

Luke tells us more about the timing of the burial. "It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning" (Luke 23:54). The Greek root word is indeed *epiphoskoo*; the RSV notes in the margin that the Greek says literally "was dawning". However, "was beginning" (Smith notwithstanding) is *not* a "mistake". Here, as with *opsios* above, Smith fails to reckon with the Three Laws of Semantics, notably the Third Law: *words mean what people want them to mean!* All other semantic considerations must bow before "the tyranny of the context" *unless other passages of Scripture show otherwise - and especially if other passages of*

Scripture confirm the local context. This usage of *epiphooskoo* is apparently unique - which is why even the BAG is somewhat uncertain about its significance. (It cites the word as used in early Christian literature, not merely in the New Testament.) However, the BAG (p. 304b) renders the Greek phrase in Luke 23:54, *sabbaton epephoosken*, as "the Sabbath dawned or drew on", and the meaning of the root itself as "shine forth, dawn, break; *perhaps draw on*" (in obvious reference to the passage in Luke).

Thanks to the tyranny of the context (as well as the "line upon line" method), we need not be in doubt on the matter. Clearly, this usage of *epiphooskoo* is figurative, in the sense of "draw on". How do we know? Because biblically, the Sabbath and Holy Days begin at sunset, not at sunrise (compare Leviticus 23:32). But also, *the Day of Preparation and the Sabbath are distinct days*. If day is literally dawning on the Sabbath, then the Day of Preparation is already twelve hours past! One *cannot* fit the twelve hours normally used to prepare a body for burial within that time, for "it was the day of Preparation, *and* the sabbath was beginning" (or rather, "was drawing on") *at the very same time*. The Day of Preparation and the Sabbath *cannot coincide* - certainly not by twelve hours!

What then is the solution? The answer lies in the significance of "evening" - the time Joseph of Arimathea came to Pilate. As even supporters of the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition recognize, "evening" refers to the Jewish usage Smith himself cites - the "evening major", from 3:00 PM (that is, the time of Jesus' death) until sunset. We find the reference to "when evening had come" following hard on the heels of Jesus' death, which is consistent with this conclusion. Smith notes that *opsios* "is used 15 times in the New Testament. In all but one instance it means 'sundown' or 'after dark'." He neglects to mention Strong's definition of the word: "*late; fem. (as noun) afternoon (early eve) or nightfall (later eve)*". This is consistent with the very Jewish usage Smith cites, as well as with New Testament usage. Of course, the word also (and usually) means "sunset" or "after dark" - but in all cases, it translates the various ways the Hebrew *erev* was being used by the Jews at the time. In exegesis, it is simply a matter of picking the usage that fits the local and larger contexts correctly. We thus are left with up to *three hours* for Joseph to meet with Pilate, get the body of Jesus, wrap it with dry spices (hastily!), and place it in a tomb near the crucifixion site.

How then could Jesus be laid in the tomb just before the first Day of Unleavened Bread began, yet rise just as the Sabbath ended and fulfill the typology of the cutting of the Wavesheaf Offering? The answer lies in the real significance of "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth". Until the earth had closed its mouth over Him, so to speak, Jesus was not in "the heart of the earth" -- no more than Jonah was "in the belly of the whale [great fish]" until the fish closed its mouth and swallowed him! The burial process, *including the closing of the tomb*,

must have ended at sunset, as Nisan 14 was ending and Nisan 15 was beginning. So Jesus rose and left the tomb precisely 72 hours later, at Sabbath sunset, after spending "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth".

As an aside, Joseph and Nicodemus were hardly concerned about ceremonial defilement thanks to handling Jesus' body. Numbers 19 stipulates that he who touched a dead body was unclean seven days. This would indeed disqualify the pair from keeping even the combined Temple Passover that night. However, Numbers 9 stipulates that if one were so defiled and could not keep the domestic Passover in the first month, he was to keep it in the second month. Doubtless neither man was in the mood to celebrate the combined Temple service on Nisan 15.

Next, we have the testimony of Matthew 27:57-66, which describes the chain of events from Joseph's approach to Pilate to the setting of the guard at the tomb. Joseph, after putting Jesus in the tomb, "rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and so departed" (verse 60). Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" witnessed the act (verse 61). "*Next day, that is, after the day of Preparation*" -- the day Jesus was put in the tomb -- "the Pharisees gathered before Pilate" (verse 62). This is consistent not with Jesus being put in the tomb at sunrise on the Holy Day, but at the end of the Day of Preparation. The Pharisees saw Pilate the "*next day*" -- and that "*next day*" was "*after the day of Preparation*", that is, on the first Holy Day of Unleavened Bread. How plain!

This leads us finally to Luke 24:21: "Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened" -- referring to the events surrounding Jesus' condemnation and crucifixion (verse 20). The King James Version has "and besides all this, today is the third day since these things were done." The original Greek actually has "and besides all these [things], this third day goes away today, from [the day] of which these [things] were done" (compare *Benjamin Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*, which reads "occurred" for "were done"). The sense of "from" is not "beginning with", but "away from" -- that is, Thursday is the starting point, but one counts "away from" Thursday three calendar days: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Again, three calendar days "going away" from Thursday brings one to Sunday. As Herbert W. Armstrong justly inferred (*The Crucifixion Was Not On Friday*, 1988 edition, p. 10), "Sunday truly was the third day since Thursday. But it was not the third day since Friday, so this text could not prove a Friday crucifixion." But could it prove a Thursday burial?

As Armstrong noted, "'These things' included all the events pertaining to the resurrection -- the seizing of Jesus, delivering him to be tried, the actual crucifixion, and finally, the setting of the seal and the watch over the tomb the following day, or Thursday." (While all "these things" are not explicitly

mentioned by the text, they are certainly connected to Jesus' condemnation and crucifixion.) "Study verses 18-20, telling of 'these things' and also Matthew 27:62-66. 'These things' were not completed until the watch was set, Thursday. And the text says Sunday was the third day since these things were done" (*op. cit.*, p. 10). Since the watch was set Thursday morning, it was only natural that Cleopas counted "away from" that time until the time then present, Sunday morning.

The validity of the sacrifice

Smith writes: "Exodus 12:1-11 reveals the death of Messiah as the death of the redemption lamb. To be a valid sacrifice, Messiah had to have been killed on the 14th day of Nisan 'between the two evenings', which the New Covenant scriptures uphold by showing that His death was at 3 o'clock on the afternoon of Nisan 14." Yet as we have seen, "between the two evenings" does *not* mean "at 3 o'clock in the afternoon". It means "between sunset and dusk". Moreover, Jesus kept the Passover *on time*, as did His fellow Galileans; otherwise, He would have failed in His mission at its very sticking point. *We cannot have it both ways; either Jesus kept the Passover on time, or He is not our Savior and the timing of His death is irrelevant.* Therefore, another explanation must be sought for the timing of Jesus' death.

We must remember that the New Testament Passover, which falls on the night that Jesus was *betrayed*, nevertheless proclaims the Lord's *death* until He comes (compare 1 Corinthians 11:26). Is the New Testament service any less valid than the Old Testament service? Of course not. Yet *neither* occur at the very time Jesus died. So even here, there is proof that it was not necessary for Jesus to die when the typical Passover lamb was slaughtered. If there is typology in the timing of Jesus' death, it is found here: *Just as the Jews (many of them) were observing Passover illegally, so Jesus the Lamb of God was crucified illegally.* Well before Jesus' day, the responsibility for teaching the people (the prerogative of the priests and Levites who preserved the Bible, including its reading tradition) was usurped by the scribes and Pharisees. As Jesus said of them, they had thrown away the key of knowledge; they refused to enter themselves, and hindered those who were entering (Luke 11:52). They were *blinded* to the real significance of the Scriptures, and therefore failed to acknowledge the Messiah in life or in death.

Therefore, *God used their own misunderstanding as a witness against them.* He saw to it that Jesus changed the symbols of the Passover service on the very night when the Passover lamb was originally killed and eaten. Jesus was crucified, then slain (as all acknowledge) when the combined, *illegal* Jewish Passover service (which effectively blinded most of the Jews to what was happening) began. His burial was completed when the *Chagigah* bullock was originally slaughtered, as Nisan 14 ended and Nisan 15 began. His resurrection occurred three days and three

nights later - not precisely when the Wavesheaf Offering was cut, but at the precise time of day the Wavesheaf Offering ceremony began (see below). His ascent to and return to heaven occurred next morning, as the *`omer* was actually waved before God. The typology is *perfect*.

In effect, the Passover lamb commemorated Israel's *deliverance* from Egypt; the bullock on the Night to be Much Observed, Israel's *departure* from Egypt. Even so, the New Testament Passover commemorates our *deliverance* from sin; the Night to be Much Observed, our *departure* from sin. Our deliverance begins with the acknowledgment of Jesus' death; our departure, in anticipation of His resurrection.

The Jewish Wavesheaf Offering

Smith writes: "Another important type involves the wave sheaf. In Israel in the time of the Messiah, three priests would walk to a certain field just outside of Jerusalem, where it was customary to dump ashes from the temple altar. They would have already prepared a wave sheaf to be cut in the field. The waving of the sheaf was a big event each Passover season in Israel, with thousands of people watching the priestly ritual. The three Levites would begin by crying out to the crowd: 'Has the sun set?' They asked this question because it was not lawful to cut the grain on the Sabbath. The crowd, at first, would respond that, no, the sun had not set. The priests would ask again, several times. The crowd would answer each time that the sun had not yet set. Then, when the sun had slipped below the horizon, the crowd would shout that the Sabbath was over. Then the priests would cut the sheaf.

"The wave sheaf consisted of enough grain to prepare two huge loaves of unleavened bread. The three priests would take the grain from the sheaf -- and I believe the sheaf represented the Messiah -- into the temple compound and thresh the grain out with canes, being careful not to damage it. From antiquity the sheaf had been waved annually on the morning that is properly called the Feast of Firstfruits."

Edersheim paints a rather different picture of the event. He notes that rabbinic sources point to the Wavesheaf Offering always being cut on Nisan 15 and offered on Nisan 16, regardless of the day of the week. "Already on the 14th Nisan the spot whence the first sheaf was to be reaped had been marked out, by tying together in bundles, while still standing, the barley that was to be cut down, according to custom, in the sheltered Ashes-Valley across Kidron. When the time for cutting the sheaf had arrived -- that is, on the evening of the 15th Nisan, even though it were a Sabbath, *just as the sun went down* [emphasis mine], three men, each with a sickle and a basket, went to work. Clearly to bring out

what was distinctive in the ceremony, they first asked of the bystanders three times each of these questions: 'Has the sun gone down?' 'With this sickle?' 'Into this basket?' 'On this Sabbath (or first Passover-day [the first Day of Unleavened Bread -- emphasis mine])' -- and lastly, 'Shall I reap?' *Having each time been answered in the affirmative* [emphasis mine], they cut down barley to the amount of one ephah, or about three pecks and three pints of our English measure. This is not the place to follow the ceremony farther -- how the corn was threshed out, parched, ground, and one omer of the flour, mixed with oil, and frankincense, waved before the Lord in the Temple on the second Paschal day (or 16th of Nisan)" (*op. cit.*, p. 899-900).

Here Smith may confuse the offering of two loaves of *leavened* bread on Pentecost (Leviticus 23:17) with the harvest of the *`omer* on the Day of the Wavesheaf Offering. This would be consistent with his confusion of that Day with the Feast of Firstfruits (Pentecost) itself. The loaves offered on Pentecost were each two tenths of an *ephah* each. Nothing is said by Edersheim (or the Bible) about the *`omer* being made into two large unleavened loaves.

But there is a much more serious problem here. According to Edersheim, what Smith calls (incorrectly) the Feast of Firstfruits would fall on Nisan 15 every year -- not on other days during Unleavened Bread, and still less outside of Unleavened Bread. But if the *`omer* was actually offered on Nisan 15 every year, then either Jesus' resurrection did not coincide with the Wavesheaf Offering at all, or else (as Edersheim thinks) He really did die on Friday and rise on Sunday. In that case (again as Edersheim points out), the typology of the cutting of the Wavesheaf Offering would relate to Jesus' death; the actual offering of the *`omer* would relate to His resurrection (*op. cit.*, p. 900). Again, we cannot have it both ways.

This illustrates why rabbinic sources must not be given precedence over biblical testimony. In the days of Jesus, the various sects of Judaism *differed among themselves* as to how the Festivals were to be kept in their details. Some of that controversy carried over to the Church (Colossians 2:16-17). Moreover, the Talmudists (who were the heirs of the Pharisees) often read their own erroneous ideas and practices back into Second Temple and even biblical times. Yet the Talmudists in many cases differed considerably among themselves as to the details of Second Temple observance. The most we can say with certainty is that Jesus would have risen at the *time of day* when the ceremony of the cutting of the Wavesheaf Offering should have begun. *Which sect of Judaism* would have carried out the ceremony correctly, *on the right day and at the right time*, must be left for further study.

The timing of Jesus' resurrection

Now we come to the crux text (no pun intended): Mark 16:9. Smith writes: "Church of God members have long had a problem with Mark 16:9 and related verses: 'Now when [the Messiah] rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.' Since many Church of God students of the Bible recognize that Jesus died the afternoon of Wednesday at the precise moment of the slaying of the Passover lamb, they have believed they could not accept Mark 16:9 as plainly showing that the Messiah rose from the dead early in the morning on Sunday, the first day of the week."

Armstrong noted that the King James Version says: "Now when Jesus *was risen* early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene..." His argument, in effect, was that Jesus *was risen* by that time, but that He did not *rise* at that time. In *Which Day Is The Christian Sabbath?* (1976 edition, p. 84), Armstrong even put the comma after "was risen" and omitted it after "week".

However, the Greek syntax (and the punctuation it implies) sheds a different light on the problem. The literal Greek wording is: "And having risen early the first of the week He appeared first to Mary the Magdalene..." While there is no comma added even by the printed editions after "early the first of the week", all English translations insert one - and for good reason. The primary verb in this sentence is "He appeared", which begins the primary clause. "Having risen" begins a subordinate clause, which ends with "early the first of the week". In translation, a comma is required between the subordinate and primary clause. Clearly, then, Jesus' resurrection occurred "early the first of the week". The Greek vocal accentuation (using three signs versus the twenty or so used in biblical Hebrew) confirms what the verbal syntax implies.

If we are not to reject Mark 16:9-19 because it seems to contradict the rest of Scripture (and some do), or even on the grounds of pure textual criticism (and again, some do), there is only one other possibility: "early" (Greek *proi*) bears, *in this unique case*, something other than its usual meaning. What is that usual meaning? "As the fourth watch of the night...it is the time from three to six o'clock" (BAG, page 724b, citing Mark 13:35). Leaving aside Mark 16:9 for the moment, all the other biblical (and, apparently, non-biblical) references listed by the BAG fit within this time frame. Yet we find that "on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early (*proi*), while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb" (John 20:1). Luke 24:1-2 speaks of the women going to the tomb "while still very early" (literal Greek: *orthrou batheos*). So this much we know so far: *Jesus was already risen by sunrise.*

Let us review: Jesus was of necessity put into the tomb by the time the first Holy

Day of Unleavened Bread began. Three days and three nights from Wednesday at sunset takes us to Saturday at sunset - not to any part of the fourth watch on Sunday morning. Is there any other indication that "early" means something different in Mark 16:9 than it does elsewhere?

Indeed there is! The phrase "the first day of the week" is found eight times in the New Testament. Seven times (including Mark 16:2), the word translated "first" is *mia*: "one" or "first". In Mark 16:9 only, the word translated "first" is *prootos*: "foremost (in time, place, order or importance)", depending on the context and idiom involved. (Both definitions are taken from *Strong's Dictionary*.) This second word is also used to signify "the first day of Unleavened Bread", for example.

One might argue that these words are synonymous - and in a way, they are; but this argument leaves unexplained why Mark uses one phrasing (the phrasing used literally everywhere else) for "the first day of the week" in one verse and another phrasing (otherwise unattested) a few verses later. It appears that in Mark 16:9, in the phrase "early the first day of the week", we are dealing with a *unique idiom*. The local context gives us nothing to clarify the meaning further. Its meaning must therefore be determined by comparison with other biblical passages. From such a comparison, the idiom evidently refers to *the very beginning of the first day of the week*, at sunset - *not* to any time in the fourth watch on the first day of the week. Jesus therefore, "having risen early the first day of the week" (that is, at sunset ending the Sabbath), waited until morning and then "appeared first to Mary Magdelene". There is no other conclusion that does not lead the Bible to contradict itself (unless we reject Mark 16:9-19 as canonical).

The guard at the tomb

The "clincher" posed by Smith may be the weakest argument he poses; it is nothing more than circular reasoning. Smith writes: "If these events -- the soldiers taking a bribe to lie about the resurrection and say that the disciples stole Messiah's body -- occurred the way the Churches of God say, then a troop of Roman soldiers was paid to fabricate a story that nobody would have believed. Why would no one have believed it? Because the notion of soldiers falling asleep during broad daylight on Saturday just before a Saturday-twilight resurrection would have been simply unthinkable. That's what would have been required if Jesus were buried Wednesday just before sundown. He would have risen Saturday just before sundown; therefore the soldiers would have fallen asleep in broad daylight on Saturday shortly before sundown."

Such an argument completely misses the point. The story was not posed because of Jesus' resurrection *per se*, which would have been invisible to the guards in any case (compare John 3:6-8). It was posed because of the angelic intervention on

Sunday morning (thanks to which the guards fainted), the fact that the tomb was opened by that angel, and the fact that *no body* was found inside the tomb afterward. Nothing about these events proves anything, one way or another, as to *when* Jesus was resurrected. As other passages show, set in their proper order, Jesus was already *long risen* in the Spirit by the time the angel opened the tomb. There is nothing illogical in this.

The events that prompted the Sanhedrin's bald-faced lie occurred at the very end of the fourth watch of the night - the most likely time (as Smith himself admits) for guards to fall asleep. Of course, the story was self-defeating. First, who knows what happens when he sleeps? Second (again as Smith admits), a Roman guard who slept on his watch faced the death penalty for his lack of discipline. That is why the Sanhedrin had to guarantee the safety of the guards should news of the events reached Pilate's ears. Their story was not an act of *cleverness* (as Smith alleges), but of *desperation*. The only ones who would believe it would be those who would believe any naturalistic explanation (however foolish) over the supernatural truth (which is why Matthew makes no effort to counter the story). Many Jews in Jesus' day were of this sort (some of them were called Sadducees!); and there are many such Jewish and non-Jewish skeptics today.

A close shave with Occam's Razor

Any systematic explanation of an incomplete set of facts must fill in some gaps. There is, however, a logical principle (rooted in biblical example: Deuteronomy 12:32) that allows one to choose between competing hypotheses. That principle is known as *the principle of parsimony*, or "Occam's Razor" (after William of Occam, the 14th-century philosopher who stated it). In essence, Occam's Razor demands that all unnecessary assumptions be "cut away" from one's explanation of reality, lest the explanation be more complex than reality itself. In effect, the hypothesis that is at once simpler and more complete in its explanation of reality is the explanation that more accurately depicts reality.

I have done my best to give my own explanation a very close shave with Occam's Razor, based on the facts available to me. I am confident not only in its superiority over Smith's explanation, but in its superior ability to take account of new information once it is made available. If "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10), then I have no doubt that those who truly fear God will come to the same conclusion independently. ###

