

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #10

The Day Jesus Died

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Welcome to another Lord of the Sabbath Program! Last Sabbath we discussed why Christians ought to be keeping the LORD'S Feast of Unleavened Bread. After all, Jesus is the Passover Lamb; not an Easter Ham.

We know from the Bible that Jesus kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread, also called the Passover. All three Passovers which Jesus kept during His three and a half year ministry are described in the Gospel of John.

We know that Paul implored the Gentile church of God at Corinth saying, "Let us keep the feast." But, as time passed, the worship practice of the disciples of Christ began to change. After a few hundred years, the celebration of Easter Sunday had become the standard in the Christian Church.

In future programs, we'll investigate just how, and why, the celebration of the LORD'S Feast of Unleavened Bread was changed to a celebration of Easter. However, today we will begin looking at what was the greatest week in the history of man since creation week itself. We will look at the last days of Jesus as the Son of man.

Most Christians I have met believe that Jesus was crucified and died on "Good Friday" afternoon. Almost every Christian believes that Jesus was raised from the dead on Sunday morning. I certainly would have said so too a couple of decades ago.

However, when some avid Bible students, whom I respected, told me this just wasn't true, I had to check it out myself. What I discovered, I will share with you over the next couple of weeks.

Anyone interested in the Truth of God's revelation to man will want to convince themselves of what is true and what is false teaching about the death and resurrection of our Lord. When I realized my own error in understanding, I had no choice but to change what I thought, said and did in terms of my worship of God concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus, my Savior and my Lord.

Where should we start our journey through the last days of Jesus as the mortal Son of Man? Perhaps the best place to start is with the last trip that Jesus made to Jerusalem for the Passover: the one where Jesus would become our Passover Lamb.

We see this in John 12: 1:

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

Many Jews who would make the springtime pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover feast would come early to cleanse and purify themselves at the Temple. As we track the days and activities of Jesus during his final journey to Jerusalem, I shall use the Hebrew calendar from Scripture; the same method of keeping time that Jesus would have used. The Roman Empire used what was called the Julian calendar but it is not used in the Bible.

The Hebrew calendar IS the one used in the Bible when referencing days, months and years. Thus, to make any sense of the last week of Jesus before His death and resurrection, we need to have a basic understanding of this Hebrew method for reckoning time. It is the sacred calendar introduced by God in His Torah to Moses for Israel.

In God's sacred calendar at the time of Jesus, the days of each week were numbered from one through seven, the seventh day being a holy, weekly Sabbath to the LORD. The start of a new month was tied to the appearance of a new crescent moon. A new year started in the springtime in the month called Abib, the new moon when the barley was in its abib stage of development. Names for the days of the week, like our Monday through Friday, were not used at the time of Jesus. So, our Bibles can't give us any references for events in the life of Jesus based upon the Gregorian calendar which we all use today.

One other important note, a Biblical (Hebrew) day ended at sunset, not at midnight as in our current Gregorian calendar. At the end of this study, we will carefully convert these Hebrew days of the last week of Jesus to the days of the week we currently use. That is when the astonishing Truth about the death and resurrection of Jesus will be revealed.

When Jesus came to Bethany, to the town of Lazarus whom Jesus had previously raised from the dead, it was six days before the Passover. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover (feast), begins the 15th day of Abib. We know that Jesus came to Bethany six days earlier. Therefore, He came to Bethany on Abib 9.

So, we will keep a log of key events and activities involving Jesus day by day using the Hebrew calendar.

Abib 9 (six days before the Passover)

On Abib 9, six days before the Passover, Jesus arrives in Bethany, presumably during the day time, and with His Apostles.

Abib 10 (five days before the Passover)

In the morning, which is now Abib 10, John 12: 12 describes the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem:

The NEXT DAY (my emphasis) a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and

went out to meet Him, and cried out: Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! The King of Israel!

This day in some Christian Churches is still celebrated as “Palm Sunday.” Of course, there is no indication in the Bible that this day, Abib 10, was a “Sunday” or even the corresponding first day of the Hebrew week.

At this point, John’s Gospel departs from a strict chronology. John goes on to describe some additional accounts concerning things Jesus had said that week, but the timing is not specified. By Chapter 13, John has already skipped ahead in time by several days, describing the events of the last supper of Jesus with His apostles.

Fortunately, all three other Gospels mention the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. They go on to tell us what additional things Jesus did on Abib 10, AND on the other days leading to His last supper and crucifixion.

In Mark 11: 11, we find how Abib 10 ended:

And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So, when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He WENT OUT TO BETHANY (my emphasis) with the twelve.

Abib 11 (four days before the Passover)

In Mark 11: 12, we see what happened the next day which would be Abib 11, that is four days before the Passover:

Now, the NEXT DAY (my emphasis), when they had come from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, “Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.”

So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But, you have made it a den of thieves.”

And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. When EVENING HAD COME (my emphasis), He went out of the city.

Thus, we see that Abib 11 had ended and that Jesus left Jerusalem and seemingly returned to Bethany for the night.

Abib 12 (three days before the Passover)

Mark goes on to describe what happened on Abib 12 in Verse 11: 20, which is now three days before the Passover, as they returned to Jerusalem seemingly from Bethany:

Now, IN THE MORNING (my emphasis), as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."

This observation by Peter makes it clear this is the second time Jesus walked past this fig tree on His way back to Jerusalem. It is clear according to Luke that Jesus taught each morning in the Temple. Jesus taught in parables and continued to anger the chief priests, scribes and elders. They had asked Jesus a number of questions fashioned to trap Him into teaching against the Law of Moses or against the government of Rome so that they might bring capital charges against Jesus.

In Mark 13: 1-3, we see Jesus leaving the temple and going to the Mount of Olives:

Then, as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answered and said to Him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when these entire things will be fulfilled?"

Jesus answered them giving some of His strongest prophetic statements of His ministry. In Luke 21: 37 we read that Jesus taught at the Temple in the daytime but went to the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem for the night. This does not mean He slept outside on the mountain. We must understand that Bethany was at the base of the Mount of Olives.

Abib 13 (two days before the Passover)

After sunset ending Abib 12, Jesus returns to Bethany for a supper at the house of Simon the Leper who lived in Bethany. It is now two days before the Passover. This account is found in Matt. 26:6 and in Mark 14: 3. This is the night when Mary, the sister of Lazarus, pours perfume on the head and feet of Jesus, a type of anointing.

In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, neither the woman, nor the disciple who complained about this anointing of Jesus, is identified. But, John reveals the woman was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and that the disciple who spoke up was Judas Iscariot. This sharp rebuke to Judas fits with his action described in Matt. 26: 14-16:

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said,

“What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought the opportunity to betray Him.

The next day, still the daylight of Abib 13, we find the disciples with Jesus back in Bethany asking where He wants them to make preparations for Him to eat the Passover. Jesus sends Peter and John back into the city of Jerusalem to meet a man carrying a water pitcher. They are to follow him into a house with a large upper room and make ready the Passover.

It is likely that Jesus kept the place of His last supper a secret from Judas so that Judas could not prearrange to have Him arrested before this essential supper was ended.

Abib 14 (one day before the Passover)

When evening came, we find Jesus gathering on the night of Abib 14 at the upper room in Jerusalem with the twelve apostles. It is now only one day before the Passover. They all reclined around a table to eat. Jesus washed their feet. He explains that they should remember Him when they eat the broken, unleavened bread and drink the wine at Passover. For the bread would be His broken body and the wine His shed blood as the Passover Lamb of the New Covenant.

During this last supper, Jesus reveals that Judas will betray Him. Judas leaves the supper in the night to go to the high priests and tell them he knows where Jesus is within the city. Judas agrees to take them to Jesus and to show them who He is by kissing Him.

Jesus also warns Peter, who was professing his loyalty to Jesus, that he would deny Him three times before the rooster would crow the next morning. They sang a closing hymn and left the upper room that evening to go to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Later that same night, Judas returns with armed officers and finds Jesus and His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, a place known by Judas where Jesus often met with His disciples. Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss but Jesus willingly goes with the officers sent by the chief priests after asking that His disciples be allowed to leave. The captain arrested Jesus, had Him bound and took Him first to the Annas, father-in-law of the Caiaphas the high priest, and then afterward to Caiaphas. It was a busy night for Jesus with no sleep.

The next morning, still on the daylight portion of Abib 14, Jesus was taken before Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, as recorded in John 18: 28:

Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves [meaning the priests] did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.

Here we see confirmation that the Jewish Passover was yet to come. It would be after

sunset later that night. It would be on the night of Abib 15 that the lambs slain on the afternoon of Abib 14 would be eaten by the Jews. Going into the Roman government building would defile the priests. They remained outside. Scripture records that Pilate actually came outside of the building to ask them what they accused Jesus of having done.

From the Gospels, we know that on the morning of Abib 14, Jesus appeared before Pilate, then King Herod, and finally Pilate again who found no fault in Jesus. Pilate actually tried to release Jesus as being innocent. It was a Roman custom to release a Jewish prisoner to the priests at the Passover. But the crowd asked for the release of a robber named Barabbas instead and called for Jesus to be crucified.

You probably know the rest of the story. Jesus was crucified and died at about the ninth hour of the day. That would be about 3:00 PM in the afternoon of Abib 14. This is the same time when the Passover lambs would be taken by the families of Israel to the temple to be slain by the priests. The sacrificed lambs would be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs that night, which would now be the Abib 15 by Hebrew calendar reckoning. It was the night to be much observed in honor of the exodus from Egypt. Abib 15 is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread; a high, annual, holy Sabbath day requiring a holy convocation but no servile work could be performed.

In the interest of time, as this program is almost over, I have left out many of the interesting details about the death and burial of Jesus. My main purpose is to review the timing of the key events that took place. It is very difficult to understand what took place in this last week of the life of Jesus and why without being familiar with the feasts of the LORD which Jesus was observing perfectly. In the remaining time, let me point out some major things that explain why Jesus was deemed our Passover lamb.

First, the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem, was Abib 10. Did you realize that God commanded that the Passover lamb be selected on Abib 10 in Ex. 12: 3?

Speak to the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month [Abib] every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for the household.

Do you get it? Can you see this application to Jesus as the Passover Lamb of God? Can you understand how Jesus was selected for all the household of God? Yes, even you and me. That is why we eat His body and drink His blood as a symbolic Passover meal observance on the night of Abib 15. It was no coincidence that Jesus showed up in Bethany on Abib 9 and that on Abib 10 Jesus was acknowledged and selected as the King of Israel by the people who believed in Him as the Son of God and Messiah. They laid down their own coats or palm branches in the road as Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on the colt for the Passover, just as Zechariah had prophesied!

Now, read further in Ex. 12: 5-6:

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now, you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.

And, that too is exactly what happened to Jesus! The word “twilight” here is a poor English translation from the Hebrew text that would incorrectly lead you to think the lamb was to be killed after sunset. This is NOT correct. It is in the afternoon that the lambs were to be killed. The religious leaders of Israel called for the crucifixion of Jesus in the morning of Abib 14 and He died at 3:00 PM in the afternoon of Abib 14 just as the Passover lambs were being slain in the temple! Isn’t that amazing? Praise God!

And note that during this period from Abib 10 until Abib 14 that Jesus was in the temple daily being examined for any blemish. He was scrutinized by the Pharisees, Sadducees, chief priests, scribes, elders, high priest, governor and king looking for a blemish, looking for any flaw in His words or deeds. No blemish of guilt before the Law of Moses or against the government of Rome could be found. Even trumped-up charges were not convincing. Yet, Jesus, as the innocent and spotless Lamb of God, was arrested, tried, convicted and crucified as a criminal! What an amazing story to tell to our children about God and His Son at the Feast of Unleavened Bread!

Well, I pray this day by day study has convinced you that Jesus died, and was buried, on the afternoon of Abib 14. But, was this the day that we now call Friday? No, my friends. And, only by understanding the Passover and the LORD’S Feast of Unleavened Bread can we understand why this is a false teaching and make sure our children know the Truth.

Why would any responsible teacher of the word of God teach that Jesus died on Friday? Well, it is an easy mistake to make. And, it is a forgivable mistake. The reason even popular Bible scholars make this mistake is that it is clear the day Jesus died was the preparation day for a Sabbath. Indeed, Friday is a preparation day for the weekly Sabbath.

So, what is the mistake? Men who assume that Jesus died on Friday have not understood what the Apostle John plainly said. And, they do not understand the Holy Days of the LORD. But, you can understand! Do you wish to know the Truth?

First, the Sabbath that was about to begin that caused Joseph of Arimathea to bury Jesus in haste was NOT the weekly Sabbath. It was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which is on Abib 15, a holy ANNUAL Sabbath day. These annual Sabbaths of rest from work with holy convocations, like the weekly Sabbaths, were called high holy days.

If you have any doubt, look at John 19: 31:

Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain

on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

In the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, there is ALWAYS one weekly Sabbath. There is also ALWAYS a high Sabbath on the first of these seven days. John is trying to prevent confusion about which of these Sabbaths immediately followed the death of Jesus. It was the high Sabbath day of Abib 15 according to John. His parenthetical is there in the word of God for your knowledge and proper understanding.

Notice that the words Preparation Day are capitalized in the New King James Version I just quoted from John's gospel. Why? Is every Friday, which is the sixth day of the Hebrew week, capitalized when mentioned? Of course not! This was a special day of the year which preceded Abib 15. Abib 14 is called the day of Passover by the LORD. Abib 14 was NOT the Friday before the weekly Sabbath day. For proof, read John 19: 13-15:

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place called the Pavement, but in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!"

Yes, indeed, the Preparation Day was FOR THE PASSOVER feast, not for the weekly Sabbath. It was the day the Passover lambs were commanded to be killed in preparation for the eating of the Passover lamb that night on what would then be Abib 15.

With these two proclamations by John, we can see that Abib 14 was not the day before the weekly Sabbath. It was NOT a Friday. Well, on just what day was it then that Jesus died?

Next Sabbath, we will determine not only on what day of the week the Lord of the Sabbath died, but what day of the week He rose from the dead. If you think that was the first day of the week, now called Sunday, you better tune in and find out what the Bible ACTUALLY says about the day of the resurrection of Jesus. Until then, this is Brother Kenny wishing you a productive six-days of work