



March 7, 2025

### **When Did Jesus Leave the Tomb?**

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Last time we discussed the Chronology around Christ's Crucifixion, Burial and Resurrection.

(I need to correct a statement from last week's letter. I had quoted from another source that stated "Only Ferrar Fenton's version has this point correct." [two Sabbaths in the translation of Matthew 28:1] There are other translations that translate *sabbaton* as "sabbaths." Young's Literal Translation and the International Standard Version both translate the Greek as "sabbaths." I apologize for this error.)

So, let's continue this evening with more details and focus on the events around the time of Christ's crucifixion.

First, let's quickly summarize the details we examined last time, with the following sequence of events:

\* Tuesday evening - Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples after sunset and was later arrested.

\* Wednesday - Christ was condemned and scourged, and then crucified and died around 3 p.m. (Matthew 27:46-50). This was the preparation day for the annual, not weekly Sabbath, which began that evening (Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31). Jesus' body was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea at evening or twilight (Mathew 27:57-60).

\* Thursday - this was the high-day Sabbath, i.e. the first day of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31). It is described as the day after the Day of Preparation (Matthew 27:62). On this day the tomb was both made secure and fixed with a seal and a watch of guards was put in place to stop any attempt by the disciples to steal the body and then claim that Jesus rose from the dead. (Matt 27:62-66) This was an important event because it further proved the miraculous nature of the events relating to the resurrection of Jesus.

\* Friday - after the high-day Sabbath, the women bought and prepared spices for anointing Jesus' body before resting on the weekly Sabbath day, which began at sunset (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56).

\* Saturday - The women rested on the weekly Sabbath according to the Fourth Commandment (Luke 23:56). Jesus rose from the dead late Sabbath afternoon before sunset, *exactly* three days and three nights after His death and subsequent burial or entombment, fulfilling the sign of Jonah.

### When Did Jesus Leave the Tomb?

The next question often arises, "When did Jesus leave the tomb then?" Jesus had predicted, "*the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" (Matt 12:40).

He was placed in the tomb shortly before sunset, late on the Passover day. Notice that Mathew records that it was "*Now when evening had come*" (Matt 27:57) that Joseph went to Pilate and requested the body of Jesus.

The Online Bible Greek Lexicon presents a range of meanings for the word translated evening. "#3798 *opsios* from 3796; late; feminine (as noun) afternoon (early eve) or nightfall (later eve)" Mark's account describes this event: "*Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day*" (Mark 15:42) It was still the Preparation Day or Passover so it has to be late in the afternoon, but not after sunset when Joseph asked for the body of Jesus and prepared it for burial.

Luke's account makes it very clear that the body of Jesus was placed in the tomb late on Passover day and just before sunset that began the high day Sabbath.

*"Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near."* (Luke 23:53-54) Therefore, Jesus must have left the tomb shortly before sunset the end of the weekly Sabbath that week.

The assertion that Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday morning at sunrise is an error that is refuted by the Scriptural record. The women who observed how Jesus body was placed in the tomb bought and prepared spices on the day after the annual Sabbath. (Luke 23:55-56) Luke goes on to describe the return of the women to the tomb. *"Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared."* (Luke 24:1) The timing is very early in the morning of what we term Sunday. They *"found the stone rolled away from the tomb and then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus."* (Luke 24:2-3)

Of course they did not find Jesus! He had already been resurrected hours before they came. The women then saw two angels who appeared as men and the women were told, *"He is not here, but is risen!"* (Luke 24:6)

Interestingly, there were several visits of the women to the tomb. *"Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb."* (John 20:1) She was evidently the first one to return to the tomb and she came while it was still dark. This is before sunrise. The stone blocking the entrance to the tomb is already rolled away. Jesus did not need to have the stone rolled away to leave the tomb. He was restored to His spirit existence and could leave the tomb and reappear wherever He wanted. Mary assumes that someone has stolen the body of Jesus and runs to tell Peter and John what she has seen. Peter and John ran to the tomb, went in, and found the linen burials cloths but no body of Jesus.

Mary returned to the tomb following after Peter and John. She looked in this time and saw two angels sitting where the body of Jesus had lain. The she turned and saw Jesus, and at first did not recognize Him. Then Jesus spoke to her and she reached out to embrace Him. Jesus told her, "*Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'*" (John 20:17)

This clearly implies that very shortly Jesus was going to ascend to His heavenly Father. He was going to fulfill what was symbolized by the wave sheaf ceremony that was done on the first day of the week. (Lev. 23:10-12)

The timing of when the group of women came to the tomb as recorded in Luke's Gospel is a little unclear, but it is definitely after Mary Magdalene goes alone to the tomb.

It may have been right after Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and then they reported to the disciples along with the other Mary what they had seen. (Luke 24:9-10) But, by the time the group of women come to the tomb, the sun had risen. (Mark 16:2) Mark confirms that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. "*Now after his resurrection, early on the first day of the week he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had driven out seven demons.*" (Mark 16:9 MNT) This translation has the comma in the correct place.

Perhaps the most perplexing account is found in Matthew where it is recorded that both Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" came to the tomb. Then it is described how "*an angel of the Lord rolled back the stone from the door and was sitting on it.*" (Matt 28:2) This rolling back the stone had taken place before Mary first arrived. The angel (one angel here) told them to look in the tomb and to "*go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead.*" (vv.6-7)

Then we have another puzzling statement. "*But as they were going to report to His disciples, behold, Jesus also met them, saying, Hail! And they came and held*

*Him by the feet and worshiped Him."* (v.29) In harmonizing all of the accounts recorded, and establishing the exact sequence of who did what when, is a challenge that takes some thorough studying, and I still am pondering to understand it perfectly...but, the pieces of the puzzle do fit...

I hope you'll study these events to better understand the rich history recorded within the pages of God's Word for our edification and inspiration.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Scott Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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