

On What Day Was Jesus Crucified?

Suggested Timing of Events

- **Friday, Nisan 9th** – Jesus arrives at Bethany – John 11:55-12:1
- **Saturday, Nisan 10th** – Sabbath, Triumphal Entry – John 12:12
 - Today Jews celebrate the sabbath preceding Passover as *Shabbat HaGadol* (“the Great Sabbath”), based on traditions about Nisan 10th in Exodus 12:3.
- **Tuesday, Nisan 13th** – Plot to kill Christ – Matthew 26:2, Mark 14:1-2, Luke 22:1
- **Wednesday, Nisan 14th – Day of Preparation** – Last Supper, Betrayal, Trials, Crucifixion, Burial
 - The Last Supper is observed shortly after dark – Mark 14:12-17
 - When Christ was before Pilate, the Jewish leaders had not eaten the Passover meal yet – John 18:28
 - Jesus is crucified - Matthew 27:62, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54
 - The Passover lamb was killed in the evening/afternoon. Christ was crucified between the 3rd hour / 9:00 a.m. (Mark 15:25) and the 6th hour / noon (John 14:14), darkness covered the land at the 6th hour / noon (Mark 15:33), and Christ died at about the 9th hour / 3:00 p.m. (Mark 15:34-37).
 - Jesus is buried before sunset – John 19:42
- **Thursday, Nisan 15th – Passover** – the “high sabbath” mentioned of John 19:31
 - Guard placed at tomb – Matthew 27:62
- **Friday, Nisan 16th** – Women buy and prepare spices to properly prepare Christ’s body for burial – Luke 23:55-56
 - Note that in Mark 16:1 the women had purchased the spices. This could not have been done on a sabbath day.
- **Saturday, Nisan 17th** – regular sabbath day – Mark 16:1
- **Sunday, Nisan 18th – Resurrection Day, Feast of First Fruits**
 - The Resurrection take place after sundown, the beginning of the first day of the week – Matthew 28:2-4
 - This is the “third day” – Matthew 17:23, 20:19
 - Christ is the “firstfruits” of a vast resurrection – I Corinthians 15:20-23
 - The women come before dawn to the tomb – Matthew 28:1, John 20:1
 - Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18), the women (Matthew 28:9-10), the disciples going to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32), to the disciples around sundown (John 20:19).

How the Jews Measured Time

- Days began at sunset, based on the pattern in Genesis 1 of “the evening and the morning were the x day”.
 - Day and night would be divided into 12 hours (John 11:9), which of course varied in length based on the time of year.
 - Also used in the New Testament was the Roman system of dividing the night into four *watches*.
- Weeks followed the pattern of Genesis 1, with the days called “first day”, “second day” and so until the Sabbath day (Exodus 20:10-11).
 - *Sabbath* technically means “to cease or to rest”. It is not the name of the day (like *Saturday* or *Sunday*) but a description of what they did on that day.
 - Other days were also counted as sabbaths – See Leviticus 23:32 & 39
- Months began with the new moon, marked by the blowing of trumpets and offering sacrifices – Numbers 10:10, Psalm 81:3, Colossians 2:16
- Lunar months average 29.5 days, so to keep the calendar close to the solar year of 365 days some years have a leap month added to the end of the calendar.
- There also is a habit with Jews to use *inclusive counting*, basically counting partial divisions as whole.

Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits

- All four Gospels record that the death of Christ coincides in some way with the Passover – examples in Matthew 26:2, Mark 14:1, Luke 22:1, John 13:1.
- Nisan 10th was the day the Passover lambs were chosen – Exodus 12:3
- Nisan 14th was a day of preparation. The Passover lamb was slain, and the meal prepared to be eaten at sundown – Leviticus 23:5
- Nisan 15th, which started at sundown, began with the Passover meal and was a sabbath day (Leviticus 23:6-7). The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins.
- The Feast of First Fruits was celebrated on the day following the regular sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:9-11)
- Nisan 21st is that final day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and a sabbath day (Leviticus 23:8)

Where Did Good Friday Come From?

- Wrongly identifying the “day of preparation” and sabbath that followed the crucifixion as referring not to Passover but to the regular weekly sabbath.
- Using the inclusive counting so Friday to Sunday equal three days.
 - Matthew 12:40 then is not true – “three days *and* three nights”
- The attempts to standardize the Christian calendar and to separate it from the Jewish calendar, as seen for example at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325.