

The Date of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

1. Relevant biblical timing references:
 - a. Daniel 9:26, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself."
 - b. Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
 - c. Matthew 16:21, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."
 - d. Matthew 17:23, "And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry."
 - e. Matthew 20:19, "And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again."
 - f. Matthew 26:2, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed [given over] to be crucified." Mark 14:1, "After two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death." Luke 22:1, "Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover."
 - g. Matthew 26:5, "But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people." Mark 14:2, "But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people." [This problem was solved when Judas agreed to betray Christ.]
 - h. Matthew 26:17-20, "Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve." Mark 14:12, 14-16, "And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the Passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the Passover? . . . And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover." Luke 22:7-8, 11-15, "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat. . . . And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."
 - i. Matthew 26:30-32, "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee." Mark 14:26-28, "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended

because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee."

- j. Matthew 26:34, "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Mark 14:30, "And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."
- k. Matthew 27:63-64, "Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first."
- l. Matthew 28:1 (ISV), "After the Sabbaths [note the plural], around dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to take a look at the burial site."
- m. Mark 15:25, "And it was the third hour [Jewish time, i.e., 9am], and they crucified him."
- n. Mark 15:42-43, "And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus."
- o. Mark 16:1, "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him."
- p. Mark 16:2, "And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." Luke 24:1, "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them."
- q. Mark 16:9, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils." John 20:1, "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre."
- r. Luke 23:52-56, "This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment."
- s. Luke 24:7, "Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."
- t. Luke 24:21, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done."
- u. Luke 24:46, "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."
- v. John 13:1-2, "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended [or finished in the sense of fully prepared; i.e. prior to eating but after all had reclined at table], the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him."
- w. John 13:29-30, "For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night."

- x. John 18:28, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover [AT Robertson, 282, the phrase *eat the Passover* in John means celebrate the seven-day feast."
 - y. John 19:14, "And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour [Roman time, i.e., 6am]: and he [Pilate] saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!" [Note that AT Robertson believes Friday is here referred to because "preparation" was a technical term for the day before the Saturday Sabbath; but it could equally be the term for the day before the high sabbath if it was on a day other than Saturday; John is clear in v. 31 that he is referring to the preparation for the high sabbath.]
 - z. John 19:31, "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."
 - aa. John 19:42, "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."
 - bb. 1 Cor. 15:4, "And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."
2. In support of Wednesday as the day of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ:
- a. Daniel 9. Dr. David Reagan's convincing study of Daniel 9 puts the crucifixion of the Messiah in A.D. 31, a year in which Passover fell on a Wednesday (6pm Tuesday evening to 6pm Wednesday evening), making Thursday (6pm Wednesday evening to 6pm Thursday evening) a high sabbath (John 19:31) in addition to the weekly Saturday sabbath (Friday 6pm to Saturday 6pm).
 - b. "After two days." Jesus completes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Saturday and lodges overnight in Bethany (Matt. 21:17, Mark 11:11). He returns to Jerusalem Sunday morning, cursing the barren fig tree on the way (Matt. 21:18, Mark 12:1), endures heightened controversy with temple authorities after His cleansing of the temple, who were unwilling to seize Him for fear of the crowd (Matt. 21:45-46). Jesus departs from Jerusalem, spent the evening on the Mount of Olives, as was His custom while teaching in Jerusalem (Luke 21:37-38). He speaks of the future on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 21). Later, He made His way back to Bethany for sleep (Mark 14:3), and returns on Tuesday morning, by which time the fig tree has dried up (Mark 11:19-20). That Tuesday Jesus tells His disciples, "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed [given over] to be crucified" (Matt. 26:1-2, Mark 14:1, Luke 22:1). Day one is the rest of Tuesday (Monday 6pm to Tuesday 6pm) that evening until 6pm, and day two is Wednesday (6pm Tuesday evening to 6pm Wednesday evening). A. T. Robertson, "The well-known custom of the Jews was to count a part of a day as a whole day of twenty-four hours" (*A Harmony of the Gospels*, 290).
 - c. Mark 16:1 vs. Luke 23:56 – Women purchase spices. According to Mark 16:1, women purchased spices for the body of Christ after the sabbath was over, and according to Luke 23:56, they did so prior to resting on the sabbath. Reconciling these texts requires a day between two sabbaths, the day on which the spices were purchased, after one sabbath and prior to the other. If Wednesday is the Passover, Thursday the high sabbath, and Saturday the weekly sabbath, the spices were purchased on Friday, prior to the weekly sabbath according to Luke, but after the high sabbath according to Mark. Note that the word sabbath in Matt. 28:1 is plural (see ISV,

“After the Sabbaths, around dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to take a look at the burial site.”).

- d. “three days and three nights” (Matt. 12:40). Wednesday provides enough time for Jesus’s body to be in the earth three days (from 6am to 6pm) and three nights (from 6pm to 6am) as follows:
 - i. Night 1: Wed 6pm to Thurs 6am (high sabbath #1)
 - ii. Day 1: Thurs 6am to Thurs 6pm (high sabbath #1)
 - iii. Night 2: Thurs 6pm Fri 6am
 - iv. Day 2: Fri 6am Fri 6pm
 - v. Night 3: Fri 6pm Sat 6am (weekly sabbath #2)
 - vi. Day 3: Sat 6am Sat 6 pm (weekly sabbath #2)
- e. “Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve” (Matt. 26:20). With the coming of evening on Tuesday after 6pm, Passover Wednesday began, and Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover meal that night. Note that when John’s Gospel says, “Now before the feast of the Passover” he is referring to the moment identified as “and supper being ended [or *finished* in the sense of *fully prepared*] (John 13:1-2). There is no contradiction between John and the Synoptics. The later supposition about buying for the feast (vv. 29-30) refers to the continued feasting of the seven-day festival. Similarly, the refusal of the priests to enter Pilate’s judgment hall, “lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover,” also refers to the seven-day festival. Here *eat the Passover* means *celebrate the seven-day festival* (Robertson, 282). The reference to “the preparation of the Passover” in John 19:14 refers to the preparations for the high sabbath, the first day of the week of Passover feasting, the day after the Passover (see v. 31). *Preparation day* is a technical term for the day before a sabbath.

3. Challenges for Wednesday as the day of the crucifixion.

- a. A number of passages seem to say that Jesus would rise on the third day:
 - i. τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθῆναι/ἐγερθήσεται/ἀναστῆναι (Matt. 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, Luke 24:7, 24:46, 1 Cor. 15:4);
 - ii. μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἐγείομαι/ἕως τῆς τρίτης ἡμέρας (“after three days shall I rise”; Matt. 27:63-64, Mark 8:31);
 - iii. τρίτην ταύτην ἡμέραν ἄγει ἀφ οὗ ταῦτα ἐγένετο (“it [time?] spent three days from when these things were done”; Luke 24:21).
- b. While a crucifixion on Wednesday with a burial Wednesday prior to 6pm allows for Thursday to be the first day, the resurrection is still four days away with Friday the second day and Saturday the third day (6pm Friday to 6pm Saturday). This fits well with the statement that the body would be in the ground for three days, but less well with a resurrection “on the third day.” Answer: The dative τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ translated *on the third day* is expanded with the help of prepositions in three other passages, Matt. 27:63-64 and Mark 8:31 where we have *after three days*, and Luke 24:21 where we have *three days have been spent since these things [the events of the crucifixion] were done*. In addition, consider references to *the third hour* in Scripture (Matt. 20:3, Mark 15:25, Acts 2:15, Acts 23:23). Although never in the dative case, it is clear that what is meant in each of these hour-passages is that three hours have elapsed from a starting point prior to the occurrence the passage describes (i.e. *after the third hour*). Note also that the dative phrase in John 20:1, τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων, referring to the first day of the week, literally means *after one of the two Sabbaths*, referring I believe to the second Sabbath that week, the weekly Sabbath on Saturday. This seems to be another instance of the dative of time meaning *after*, rather than *on*. Therefore, we may have a parallel understanding with the dative phrase *the third*

day, namely that three days had elapsed before the day of the resurrection. For these reasons, it is easier to understand the dative phrase as *after the third day* rather than *on the third day* than it is to overturn the other evidence above for Wednesday.