

Three Days and Three Nights

a short study

by Jeff Richmond

Genesis 1:1-5 (KJV)

¹In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. ²And the earth was without form, and void; and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

³And God said, Let there be **light**: and there was light. ⁴And God saw the light, that *it* was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵And God called the light **Day**, and the darkness he called **Night**. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

In scripture, the days begin at sunset. A new day, or the next day will begin at sunset. First there was darkness, then there was light. (...*the evening and the morning were the first day.*) This continues to be observed in the sacred calendar of the Jewish people today.

To keep it simple, this study will refer to a day as scripture does. We will also refer to the days of the week without using the italicized word "day". (see comment 1, page 12)

So that... The first *day* of the week...
would be read... The first of the week...

In this study, when we say first of the week, second of the week, etc, we are referring to the day of the week used in scripture. The only "day-of-the-week" that carries a name is the seventh of the week, the Sabbath.

Let's start with an easy one. What "day-of-the-week" did Jesus rise from the dead?

Matthew 28:1-2 (KJV)	Mark 16:1-2 (KJV)	Luke 24:1 (KJV)	John 20:1 (KJV)
<p>¹In 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. (see comment 2)</p> <p>²And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.</p>	<p>¹And 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. ²And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.</p>	<p>¹Now 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.</p>	<p>¹The 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.</p>

All four gospels together make clear that they came to the sepulchre very early in the morning, on the first of the week. As it began to dawn, when it was yet dark. Matthew says there was a great earthquake.

God's Word says that Jesus was risen on the first of the week. Or, Sunday morning. No problems so far, right? (*Hey wait! Was it dark or light? - see page 4*)

When was Jesus crucified and buried?

Let's look at what Jesus said.

Matthew 12:40 (KJV)

⁴⁰For 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.

Was he talking about three 24 hour periods and three nights? Of course not. He said, *three days and three nights*. So what could he mean? And why did he say it like that? He could have just said three days? Or, since the days start with darkness, why didn't he say three nights and three days? I suspect there is a specific reason.

And [Jesus] called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night...
Genesis 1:5

Three days and three nights. Three periods of light and three periods of darkness.

darkness	light	darkness	light	darkness	light	darkness	light
fifth of the week		sixth of the week		sabbath		first of the week	

So...reckoning from the first of the week in reverse order...

The darkness of the first of the week (**night 3**) - 17 Nisan
The light of the seventh of the week (**day 3**) - 16 Nisan
The darkness of the seventh of the week (**night 2**) - 16 Nisan
The light of the sixth of the week (**day 2**) - 15 Nisan
The darkness of the sixth of the week (**night 1**) - 15 Nisan
The light of the fifth of the week (**day 1**) - 14 Nisan

(More on the calendar dates later.)

Jesus died and was buried on the fifth of the week. Or, as we identify it, Thursday.

Can it be any more complicated than that? Well, yes and no.

Remember, man is the one who makes things more complicated. Man changed the "days of the week" to begin and end at midnight. Man even named these new days. Kinda makes it complicated to think in Biblical terms.

SECTION TWO...

Jesus was recorded many times speaking of the third day:

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
<p>16:21 (KJV) From that time forth began Jesus to show 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.</p>	<p>8:31 (KJV) And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.</p>	<p>9:22 (KJV) Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.</p>	<p>2:19 (KJV) Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.</p>
<p>17:23 (KJV) And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.</p>	<p>9:31 (KJV) For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.</p>	<p>13:32 (KJV) And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.</p>	
<p>20:19 (KJV) And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.</p>	<p>10:34 (KJV) And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.</p>	<p>18:33 (KJV) And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.</p>	
		<p>24:46 (KJV) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:</p>	

Note: "after three days" and "the third day" are not the same thing. We will talk more about that in a minute.

Even his enemies remember he said it:

Matthew	Mark
<p>26:61 (KJV) And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.</p>	<p>14:58 (KJV) We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.</p>
<p>27:40 (KJV) And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.</p>	<p>15:29 (KJV) And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,</p>
<p>27:63-64 (KJV) ⁶³Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. ⁶⁴Command 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.</p>	

And the two men in shining garments:

Luke 24:7 (KJV)

Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and **the third day** rise again.

In this context, was Jesus talking about a day, as in "a day-of-the-week", and not a "period of light" ?

John 20:1 (KJV)

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.

Jesus rose "when it was yet dark". Jesus is the Light.

(My personal belief is that Jesus rose right at the moment the light shined into the darkness.)

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying,
I am the light of the world:... (John 8:12)

And the light shineth in darkness;... (John 1:5)

Cleopas and the other on the road to Emmaus...

Luke 24:21 (KJV)

²¹But 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.

(This conversation took place, after daybreak, on the first of the week.)

Therefor, the day before, would it then not be appropriate to say:

"to day is the second day since these things were done."(the seventh of the week)

...and the day before that:

"to day is the first day since these things were done."(the sixth of the week)

(It wouldn't be logical to say "first day since" on the DAY these things were done.
They would say...)

...on the day before that:

"to day is the day these things were done."(the fifth of the week)

In Luke 24:21, application of the word "day", fits either context: three "days-of-the-week" brings us back to the fifth of the week, and three "periods of light" does also.

**And the evening and the morning were the third day.
Genesis 1:13**

SECTION THREE...

Okay. How do we know Jesus died and was buried before sunset, before the sixth of the week?

Let's take a closer look...

Matthew 27:45-50 (KJV)

⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* ⁴⁷Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This man calleth for Elias. ⁴⁸And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. ⁴⁹The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. ⁵⁰Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

Mark 15:33-34 (KJV)

³³And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* which is, being interpreted, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Luke 23:44-46 (KJV)

⁴⁴And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. ⁴⁵And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. ⁴⁶And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:* and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

There was darkness over all the earth, from the sixth hour unto the ninth hour. (So at the ninth hour, it must have become light again.) And about the ninth hour Jesus gave up the ghost. There was still about three hours of light till the sabbath...

Jesus answered, *Are there not twelve hours in the day?...*

John 11:9

This is a remarkable statement, it was spoken at the time of the spring equinox!

From the following verses we learn that the sepulchre was close by. They had to take the body down from the cross and bury it before the sabbath. (see also Deut 21:23)

Luke 23:52-56 (KJV)

⁵²This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. ⁵³And 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. ⁵⁴And that day was the preparation, **and the sabbath drew on.** ⁵⁵And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶**And they returned,** and prepared spices and ointments; **and rested the sabbath day** according to the commandment.

John 19:41-42 (KJV)

⁴¹Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. ⁴²There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for **the sepulchre was nigh at hand.**

SECTION FOUR...

Okay. But, didn't we say the sabbath was the seventh of the week?

Matthew 27:62 (KJV)	Mark 15:42 (KJV)	Luke 23:54 (KJV)	John 19:31 (KJV)
<p>⁶²Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,</p>	<p>⁴²And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,</p>	<p>⁵⁴And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.</p>	<p>³¹The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for <u>that</u> sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and <i>that</i> they might be taken away.</p>

The next day, starting at sundown, was a sabbath. John says that "**that** sabbath day was an high day". It was not an "end-of-week" sabbath day. This would be the first day of the feast of unleavened bread. (The day after Passover.)

Leviticus 23:5-7 (KJV)

⁵In the fourteenth day of the first month at even *is* the LORD'S passover.
⁶And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. ⁷In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

The Feast of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread came to be observed as one holiday. The terms "passover" and "unleavened bread" were used interchangeably. How do we know that? Luke tells us:

Luke 22:1 (KJV)

Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.

Read Leviticus again. God told Moses the Passover was on the 14th of Nisan. In that year, it fell on the fifth of the week. God told Moses the feast of unleavened bread was on the 15th of Nisan. In that year, it fell on the sixth of the week. The second day of unleavened bread was the seventh of the week. THE THIRD DAY of unleavened bread was the first of the week, etc.

This was the beginning of the Spring feasts. (Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Shavuot.) If you read Leviticus chapter 23 carefully you will notice that Passover, being a holy day, was not one of the days God prohibited "servile work". Apparently, it became known as the "preparation", for the holy days that would follow. Therefore, the approaching sabbath was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread.

We know that the "end-of-week" sabbath was after that because the resurrection was on the first of the week. We also know that the "feast" sabbath and the "end-of-week" sabbath were not the SAME day because then there would not be enough days. Jesus said, "three days and three nights".

darkness	light	darkness	light	darkness	light	darkness	light
preparation		an high day		sabbath		first of the week	
passover		first day of U.B.		second day of U.B.		third day of U.B.	
Nissan 14		Nissan 15		Nissan 16		Nissan 17	

Besides the next day being "an high day", what other clues tell us that Jesus was crucified and buried on passover, or the 14th of Nisan?

Matthew 26:17-18 (KJV)

¹⁷Now 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? ¹⁸And 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.

Mark 14:12-17 (KJV)

¹²And 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? ¹³And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. ¹⁴And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? ¹⁵And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. ¹⁶And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. ¹⁷And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

Luke 22:7-15 (KJV)

⁷Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. ⁸And he sent Peter and John, saying, **Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.** ⁹And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? ¹⁰And he said unto them, **Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.** ¹¹And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, **The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?** ¹²And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. ¹³And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. ¹⁴And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. ¹⁵And he said unto them, **With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:**

This was the evening of the 14th. How do we know it was not the 13th or 15th? I believe John's Gospel gives us a big clue:

In his gospel, John calls the feast of unleavened bread (**Nisan 15**) "passover". (see Luke 22:1)

John 19:14 (KJV)

And it was the **preparation of the passover**, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

Notice in this next verse, John DID NOT call the upper-room-supper the "feast of the passover": **

John 13:1-2 (KJV)

¹Now **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. ²**And supper being ended**, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;

In chapter 12, verse 1, John says it was "six days before passover." Apparently (from John 13:1-2) John is referring to the feast of unleavened bread here (**Nisan 15**). Now this must be Nisan 9. (John 12:1, 12:12)

The next day, Jesus presented himself as the Lamb of God on "Palm Sunday", the first of the week, or Nisan 10. (Read Exodus 12:3 and John 1:29,36, 12:12)

** I'm sure that John regarded the supper as such. Jesus did. (Matt 26:18, Mark 14:14, Luke 22:8, 11, 15, etc.) However, that IS NOT what the text says here. Why? Perhaps, writing later, John knew Jesus was the real passover (lamb).

Did God really intend to offer his Son on passover?

There were many people in town for the feast.

The chief priests, scribes, and the elders, did not want to kill him on the feast...

Matthew 26:1-5 (KJV)

¹And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, ²*Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.* ³Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, ⁴And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill *him*. ⁵But they said, **Not on the feast day**, lest there be an uproar among the people.

Mark 14:1-2 (KJV)

¹After 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. ²But they said, **Not on the feast day**, lest there be an uproar of the people.

Luke 22:1-2 (KJV)

¹Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover. ²And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; **for they feared the people.**

They wanted to take Jesus quietly. But, Jesus forced their hand...

Matthew 26:20-25 (KJV)

²⁰Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. ²¹And as they did eat, he said, *Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.* ²²And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? ²³And he answered and said, *He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.* ²⁴The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. ²⁵Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, *Thou hast said.*

Mark 14:17-21 (KJV)

¹⁷And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. ¹⁸And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, *Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.* ¹⁹And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, *Is it I?* and another said, *Is it I?* ²⁰And he answered and said unto them, *It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.* ²¹The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.

Luke 22:21-23 (KJV)

²¹But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me *is* with me on the table.
²²And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! ²³And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

John 13:26-27 (KJV)

²⁶Jesus answered, *He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.* And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. ²⁷And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, **That thou doest, do quickly.**

Judas knew Jesus was on to him. Judas had to go NOW.

You see, God was, is, and always will be...In Charge.

There is a God in heaven...the great God...
and the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men,
and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

(Dan 2:28,45, 4:17)

1 - In the English text, the italic words were added by the translators to make the English "flow" better, for clarity, and/or to make it more "reader friendly".

2 - Matthew 28:1 Should be sabbaths in both instances. It is plural in the Greek.

In the end of the sabbath*s*(*holy convocations*), as it began
to dawn toward the first *day* of the *sabbath*s(weeks),...

(see Leviticus 23:15-16)

King James Text appears in this "Courier" font. Bold and underline emphasis added by writer. In the "Authorized Version" italic words are words added by the translators.

SOME MORE NEAT STUFF:

Leviticus 23:10-11 (KJV)

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the **firstfruits** of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the **morrow after the sabbath** the priest shall wave it.

The previous mentioned "sabbath" in Leviticus chapter 23 is the "end-of-week sabbath". So the "Morrow after the sabbath" in this case would be the first of the week.

Jesus is the firstfruits:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

I Corinthians 15:20

That year, "The third day" (of the feast of unleavened bread) was also the first day of fifty that God commanded be numbered in Leviticus 23:15-16. ("the Counting of the Omer") This began the feast of weeks, leading up to the day of Pentecost. A Greek word meaning fiftieth.

These two verses go together:

John 3:13 (KJV)

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Hosea 5:15 (KJV)

I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

CHECK THIS OUT:

Genesis 8:4 (KJV)

And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

Later, the seventh month became the first month:

Exodus 12:1 (KJV)

And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.

So...the ark came to rest on the anniversary
of our Lord's resurrection, in advance. Nisan 17.
A new beginning.

...how that Christ died for our sins **according to the scriptures**; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day **according to the scriptures**:

I Cor 15:3-4

Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book *it is* written of me,
Psalm 40:7, Hebrews 10:7

History, His...story, it is all about him!