

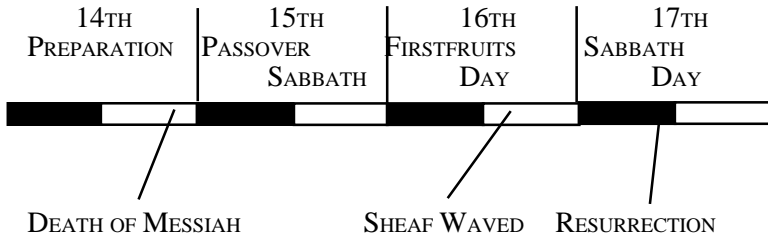
The First Fruits Day

- §145 It is said that the Messiah rose from the dead on the day of first fruits: **But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at His coming** (I Cor. 15:23). First it is necessary to point out that this text does not say that Christ rose on the day of firstfruits, or the day the sheaf was waved in the Temple. It only means that Christ was among the first to be raised from the dead. Paul calls Stephanas **the firstfruits of Achaia** (I Cor. 16:15; cf. Rom. 16:5), which only means that he was among the first converts, not that he was converted on the Day of Firstfruits. To call someone, or something the "firstfruits," is only to say that it is the first and best part. The emphasis is on the best part more than on the first part. For, often the first part of the crop with respect to time is not the best part.
- §146 In fact, Christ was not the first one raised from the dead with a glorified body. Moses was raised before Christ, and is seen with His on the Mount of Transfiguration with Elijah (Mt. 17:1-8). So the reference to Christ as the "firstfruits" only means He is among the first and best part, or that He is the best part in the Resurrection.
- §147 Nevertheless, the Christian world teaches that Christ was raised on the Day of Firstfruits, in spite of the fact that the Scripture does not say as much. But let us see just how far the Sabbath Resurrection can accommodate this gratuitous assumption.
- §148 First, the Day of Firstfruits is after the Passover Rest Day (Lev. 23:11), which is called **the Sabbath**, meaning the first day of unleavened bread or the 15th of Aviv. The Christians and Sadducees have confused this special high day Sabbath (John 19:31) with the weekly Sabbath, but the Pharisees and Rabbis of the Temple Period held the correct view and vigorously prevented the Sadducees from corrupting the calendar. Yeshua, of course, instructed us to follow the Pharisees teaching (Mt. 23:1-3).
- §149 So, the Day of Firstfruits was the day after the Passover Sabbath. Now the Passover Sabbath was from sunset Wednesday to sunset Thursday (3/24/34 c.e. to 3/25/34 c.e.). So, the day part of firstfruits would be sunrise Friday to sunset Friday, but the question remains as to which night we may associate with firstfruits. According to tradition, the sheaf was cut just after sunset beginning the 16th of Aviv, however, the sheaf was not waved until the next morning.
- §150 On, the other hand, Yeshua was raised less than 12 hours after the close of the standard Firstfruits Day, viz. Saturday morning

before sunrise, before the day part of Sabbath had begun (though the Sabbath had begun), so clearly the Resurrection is at least associated with the night following the standard Firstfruits Day.

§151 Josephus also informs us that the Firstfruits Day was the day after the Passover Rest Day, and not the weekly Sabbath, "But on

Figure 21: THE FIRST FRUITS DAY



the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them. ... They offer the first fruits of their barley" (*Ant. 3.10.5*).

§152 So, this is as close as we can come in associating the actual time of the Resurrection with the standard Firstfruits Day, but it must also be recognized that the Scripture does not say that Yeshua rose on the actual Day of Firstfruits. What the Scripture does say is that He rose "On the first of the Sabbaths," making the Sabbath a type of redemption as well as a type or remembrance of creation.

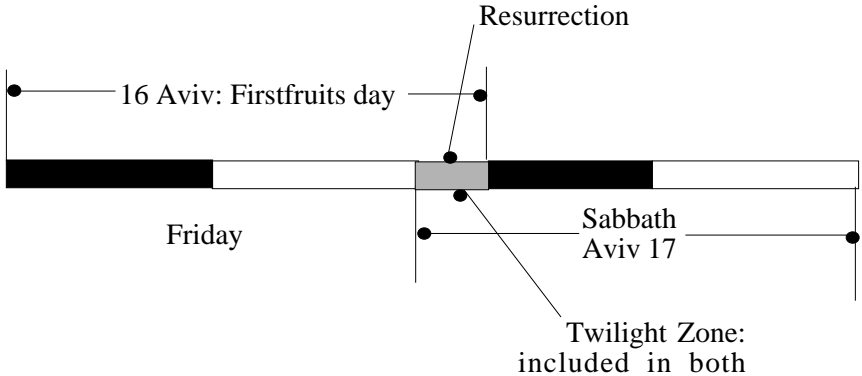
§153 The Day of Firstfruits, or the Wave Sheaf, is the first day in the counting of the omer (the 50 days) to Pentecost. In the second Temple period, this was always the 16th day of Aviv [Nisan].

§153.1 Many of the Messianic Jewish Congregations hold to a Sabbath afternoon Resurrection, which I should point out does not place the Resurrection on the Day of Firstfruits by any computation. But there two ways to do it, retain the first of the Sabbaths, and eat your cake too. The first, which I do not favor, requires a bit of Rabbinic reasoning:

The Sabbath began with the evening. For the Rabbis too, this was self evident; a day began with nightfall and ended prior to the start of the next night. However, the point of transition between two days was not clear and unambiguous: separating two successive days was a period called 'twilight' (*בין השמשות*) or 'perhaps darkness, perhaps not'. The Rabbis were uncertain whether this period should be considered part of the day or part of the night, and they thus did not know to which of the two days it should be attributed (and, consequently, for some halakic purposes they considered this period as if it were part of both" (*The Jewish People in the First Century*, edited by S. Safrai and M. Stern with D. Flusser and W.C. van Unnik, Vol. 2

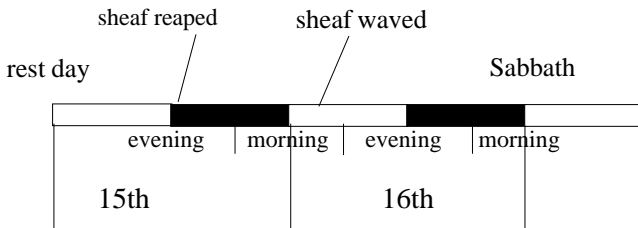
So the Rabbinic solution for those who want to maintain that the Resurrection was on the *Day of Firstfruits* is to place the Resurrection

Figure 21.5: Eating the Firstfruits Cake



just after sunset Friday night, which is the tail end of the 16th of Aviv or Firstfruits day, yet is still on the *first of the Sabbaths*, after three days, and on the third day, and includes three nights. Such a scenario is possible if we allow the Rabbinic reasoning sometimes called the *three star rule*, which I must point out is a valid definition of "day," since God "called the light 'day'", and that would last from dawn to dusk, viz. some time before sunrise and after sunset until

Figure 21.6: Common Days



full dark.

However, as I have pointed out, none of this is really necessary, and this solution, I do not favor, because it requires us to define the

ambiguous portion of the day as "day" in the case of the Firstfruits Day, and as "night" to satisfy "three nights." At least some Rabbis can be satisfied, even if I am not.

§153.2 A better solution requires the use of the common day (cf. §40). The common day may not have been popular with the Rabbis, who were busy maintaining the sanctity of the Sabbaths, but it was probably the norm for the common people. The first common day after the Passover Sabbath would have begun at sunrise on Friday, and it would end at sunrise on the Sabbath, thus encompassing the Resurrection.

§153.3 Firstfruits is not a rest day, and could, therefore be reckoned by the common day. The sheaf could be reaped on the common 15th at the end of the Passover Sabbath, and then on the next morning, the common 16th, it could be waved in the Temple (see Fig. 21.6). It can definitely be said that Yeshua rose on the Day of Firstfruits according to the common day. The only question is, did the people in fact reckon the Day of Firstfruits in this way?

The evidence is, in fact, that the Jewish people did count days by the common day, except where the Scripture prevented such a reckoning, as in the case of Sabbaths. Therefore, we find Yeshua saying He would rise on the third day much more often than after three days. There is at least one solid case of the 15th of the month being reckoned by the common day. This is when the Israelites entered the wilderness of Zin on the 15th day of the second month, after they had traveled at night after the Sabbath (cf. §523).

Anointing the Dead on a Sabbath Day

§153.9 It might be supposed that for the women to go to the tomb on the Sabbath was a violation of the commandment for rest on the Sabbath. In order to understand their action, we must go back to Luke 23:56b. Luke 23:56b should really be the first verse of chapter 24, that is, the beginning of chapter 24 should read like this:

And, on the one hand, they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment, but on the other hand, on the first of the Sabbaths, at deep dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared.^{§160}

§154 You will remember that there were two Sabbaths in the last week of our Lord's public ministry, the Passover Sabbath, which was called "The Sabbath" (Lev. 23:11), and the weekly Sabbath. Also, there were commandments for resting on both of these days.^{§161}

§155 What Luke is saying, is that the women rested according to the strict letter of the Law on the Passover Sabbath, but they had a reason to violate the weekly Sabbath. It was the custom to go to a grave on the third day to pay last respects before it was permanently sealed up.^{§162} The Mishnah even allows for this procedure to be done on the Sabbath day:

They may make ready [of the Sabbath] all that is needful for the dead, and anoint it and wash it, provided that they do not move any member of it. They may draw the mattress away from beneath it and let it lie on sand that it may be the longer preserved; they may bind up the chin, not in order to raise it, but that it may not sink lower. So, too if a rafter is broken they may support it with a bench or with the side pieces of a bed that the break may grow no greater, but not in order to prop it up. They may not close a corpse's eyes on the Sabbath; nor may they do so on a weekday at the moment when the soul is departing; and he that closes the eyes [of the dying man] at the moment when the soul is departing, such a one is a shedder of blood" (Shabbath 23.5).

§156 From this we can see that the women who went to anoint the body on the Sabbath were allowed to do what they did according to the Jewish interpretation of the Law. Furthermore, to check on the body on the third day was almost considered a legal requirement. For death did not legally occur until the third day among the Jews. For this reason, the traditional Friday-Sunday chronology does not satisfy the Jewish legal definition for death.^{§163}

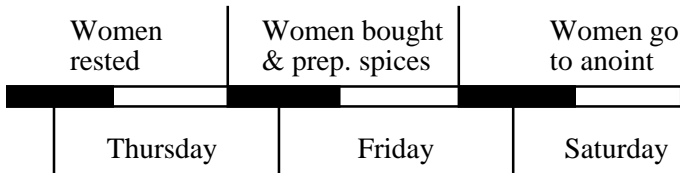
§157 We know from Mark 16:1-2 that the spices were bought and prepared on Friday:

When the Sabbath was over, Miryam Magdalene, and Miryam the mother of Ya'akov, and Salome bought^{§164} spices, so that they

might go and anoint Him. And very early on the first of the Sabbaths they came upon the tomb, the sun having risen.

§158 So the women bought the spices when the Passover Sabbath

Figure 22: The Spices



was over, that is, on Friday, the weekly preparation. They prepared them, and then on the weekly Sabbath they took them to the tomb to anoint the body (see Fig. 22).

§159 In the traditional view, the women must prepare their spices in the dark in order to have them ready from Sunday morning.^{§165} This is the only way for it to satisfy Mark 16:1. On the other hand, the question arises, "Why did the women not wait for Monday morning?" Monday morning would be the proper time to pay last respects on the third day if Christ died on Friday.

END NOTES

§160 The Greek here is typical of **μεν ... δε** constructions. The usage contrasts the two Sabbaths.

§161 Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 23:7.

§162 The legal justification for this would be the law of mercy, i.e. "I desire mercy not sacrifice;" grieving friends and relatives must be allowed to pay last respects.

§163 This is why the two witnesses lie dead for 3 1/2 days.

§164 Sometimes mistranslated "brought."

§165 It would be highly unusual for women to work at night, or to buy anything at night in this culture.

The Passover Sabbath

§166 We have already stated that the Passover holy day was called "the Sabbath." But anyone who is familiar with the typical responses given by traditionalists knows that this is met with dogmatic denials. For example, one chronologist states,

"The argument that since Nisan 15 is a holy convocation on which no one works and thus conclude that it was a Sabbath is a *non sequitur*. There is no evidence for this anywhere.^{§186} This is a creation of those who hold this theory only to fit their theory" (Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, pg. 69).

§167 The underlines in the above quotation are mine. To this we must say that Hoehner is grossly misinformed. Before we proceed to rebut this, another quote is in order to show that Hoehner is not the only misinformed traditionalist:

A Ceremonial Sabbath. The reasons given in support of this conclusion rest on three major mistaken assumptions. First, it is assumed that since certain annual feasts such as the Day of Atonement are designated as "Sabbath" (Lev 23:24, 32, 39), then all the references to the Sabbath found in the Passion narratives must refer not to the weekly Sabbath but to the annual ceremonial Passover Sabbath.

This assumption is discredited by the fact that the day of atonement is designated by the compound expression *shabbath shabbathon*, meaning "a Sabbath of solemn rest" (Lev 23:32; 16:31). But this phrase is rendered in the Septuagint by the compound Greek expression "*sabbata sabbaton*," which is different from the simple "*sabbaton*" used in the Passion narratives. It is therefore linguistically impossible to interpret the latter as a reference to the day of the Passover or to any other annual feast day, since these are never designated simply as "*sabbaton*." (Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection*, pg. 43)

§168 It is obvious that Bacchiocchi has not taken the time to understand the position he argues against. Sabbath Resurrectionists do not claim every reference to "Sabbath" (**σαββατων**) means the Passover Sabbath.^{§187}

§169 Both of these men are implying that there is no debate about a debate that just happens to be one of the oldest theological arguments in history: on one side of the debate stand the Rabbis (ancient and modern), the Targums, the Septuagint, Philo of Alexandria, and Josephus, and on the other side of the debate stands the Sadducees, the Karaites, and the Catholic Church.

§170 Is the Passover holy day called "Sabbath" in the word of God? The general answer given by Jewish scholars is a resounding yes! In fact, it is called "The Sabbath," with the definite article, viz:

After the Sabbath the priest shall wave it (Leviticus 23:11b).

§171 Where we have underlined the words "the Sabbath," the Hebrew text has "the Sabbath." This Sabbath was believed by the Rabbis, by those who translated the Septuagint, by Josephus, by Philo of Alexandria, and by those who wrote the Targums, to be the Passover holy day, and not the weekly Sabbath. The Sadducees tried to differ with them, saying it referred to the weekly Sabbath.

§172 But can the Sadducees, who denied the Resurrection of the dead, be trusted to interpret Scripture reliably? Not at all. In fact, they were a minority who had to comply with the Law as the Pharisees interpreted it.

§173 Even the best Christian Hebraists agree with this conclusion. For example Keil and Delitzsch write on Leviticus 23:11:

The "Sabbath" does not mean the seventh day of the week, but the day of rest, although the weekly Sabbath was always the seventh or last day of the week; hence not only the seventh day of the week (Ex. xxxi. 15, etc.), but the day of atonement (the tenth of the seventh month), is called "Sabbath," and "Shabbath shabbaton" (ver. 32, chap. xvi. 31). As a day of rest, on which no laborious work was to be performed (ver. 8), the first day of the feast of Mazzoth is called "Sabbath" irrespectively of the day of the week upon which it fell; and "the morrow after the Sabbath" is equivalent to "the morrow after the Passover" mentioned in Joshua 5:11 (Keil, C.F., and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament - The Pentateuch*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rp. 1981, Lev. 23:4-14).

§174 The underlines are mine. The first day of the feast of *Mazzoth* is the 15th of Aviv (Nisan), i.e. the Passover holy day. The commentary calls it "Sabbath." To this we add yet another witness:

The better view is that found in the LXX, Philo, Josephus, the Targums, and the Rabbinical writers generally, and which seems most in accordance with the text itself, that the Sabbath was simply the festival Sabbath, the 15th of Abib [Nisan], on whatever day of the week it might happen to fall (Lange, J.P. *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960, vol. i, "Lev. 23:11ff," pg. 175).

§175 The underlines are mine. Again, the 15th of Aviv, the Passover holy day, is called "the Sabbath," regardless of what day of the week it might fall on. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, pg. 848, vol. M-P) states:

Jews of the 1st cent. A.D. other than Sadducees identified the day of the Passover feast as a "Sabbath" (cf. Lev. 23:11).

§176 Keil and Delitzsch mention Joshua 5:11 above, which also teaches us to call the Passover "The Sabbath":

And they ate of the produce of the land after the Passover, unleavened cakes and parched grain on that very day.

§177 The Israelites were forbidden to eat the new grain until the sheaf was waved "after the Sabbath" (Lev. 23:14). Since the Israelites ate the grain in Joshua 5:11, we know that it was "after the Sabbath" of Leviticus 23:11. But Joshua 5:11 informs us that it was the "after the Passover" equating the Passover and the "after the Sabbath." Hence, we can only conclude that the Passover holy day is "the Sabbath."

§178 Now some may suppose that the Passover fell on the weekly Sabbath in Joshua 5:11 negating our argument. There is only a 1/7 chance of this not knowing the actual case, but even more fatal to this suggestion is the fact that the manna ceased on the day they ate the new grain (Joshua 5:12). If the day before was a weekly Sabbath, then no manna would have fallen since the Friday before. How, then could the manna be said to have "ceased" on that day (the 16th)? Rather it would have been said to "cease" on the weekly Sabbath. Our case requires manna to fall the day before it is said to "cease," otherwise it would be inaccurate to say it "ceased" the day after it already "ceased."

§179 But in reality manna fell on the 15th of Aviv, the Passover Sabbath, as they were allowed to prepare food that day (Exodus 12:16), and then it ceased on the 16th of Aviv. Therefore, the 15th of Aviv was not the weekly Sabbath.

§180 In light of the foregoing, "the Sabbath" mentioned in Mark 15:42, 16:1; Luke 23:54, 56; and John 19:31 is the Passover Sabbath, the 15th of Aviv, while "the Sabbath" mentioned in Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; and John 20:1, 19 is the weekly, seventh day Sabbath, otherwise known as the "first of the Sabbaths" between Passover and Pentecost.

§181 Another text that calls the Passover rest day "The Sabbath" is Leviticus 23:15:

And ye shall count unto you after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete:^{§188}

§182 The underlines are mine. Goudoever claims that "The word Sabbath in Greek can in fact only mean the seventh day of the week, or the week, but not [a] festival day," and then he explains its occurrence in Leviticus 23:15 as "a literal and vague translation of the Hebrew word" (Goudoever, J. Van, *Biblical Calendars*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, c. 1961, rev., 2nd ed., pg. 18). Of course, the Jews who made the Septuagint translation of Lev. 23:11, 15 would not agree with Goudoever, who calls their translation "literal" but appends "and vague" as if it was unclear; but that is not the point. The translation was not "vague" to the Jews, who called the Passover holy day "the Sabbath."

§183 Consider this Jewish comment on the matter:

On the morrow after the Sabbath. Better, on the morrow after

the day of rest; ... The interpretation of this phrase was the subject of heated controversy in early Rabbinic times between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The latter took the word "Sabbath" in its usual sense, and maintained that the Omer was to be brought on the morrow of the first Saturday in Passover [week]. The Pharisees argued that "Sabbath" ... here means, "the day of cessation from work"; and the context shows that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is intended: therefore, the Omer was to be brought on the 16th of Nisan. This is supported by the Septuagint, which renders "on the morrow of the first day", and by Josephus. "The offerings of the sheaf took place on the 16th, the first busy work-day of the harvest, in relation to which the preceding day might well be called a *Sabbath* or rest-day, though not all labour was prohibited. This is alone compatible with the context, and is free from the objections to which all the other opinions are open" (Kalisch). (*The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, London: Soncino Press, 1972, Lev. 23:11).

- §184 According to this comment, the word "Sabbath" means "rest day," on the 15th of Aviv, not the seventh day of the week.
- §185 Therefore, we may conclude this chapter by saying the Passover holy day was called "Sabbath" by the Jews irrespective of the day of the week it happened to fall on.

END NOTES

- §186 Hoehner contradicts himself though. He also writes, "The Pharisees would interpret the term "Sabbath" to mean "festival" (i.e., Passover) and would count from the day following the Passover regardless of what day it was in the week (ibid., pg. 83-84). Hoehner is referring to Lev. 23:15 here, where the God calls the Passover festival "The Sabbath."
- §187 The references to the Sabbath in Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; and John 20:1, 19 refer to the weekly Sabbath (e.g. Greek: **μία των σαββατων**, one of the Sabbaths). Even the usual Saturday afternoon Resurrection view considers the Sabbath of Matthew 28:1a, "Late on the Sabbath" the weekly Sabbath.
- §188 The remainder of this passage should be translated, "Until after the Sabbath, the seventh, counting fifty days, and then you shall present a cereal offering of new grain to Yahweh" (Lev. 23:16).

The Preparation

§189 The word "preparation" (Greek: **παρασκευη**) is used six times, in reference to the day Christ died, that is, in Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; and John 19:14, 31, and 42. Sunday Resurrectionists argue that this word proves Christ died on Friday. However, Friday was not the only "preparation." The day before the annual Passover Sabbath was also called "preparation," regardless of the day of the week.

§190 But, before we show "preparation" was used for the day preceding the Passover feast day, let us examine each of its uses. First, in Matthew 27:62, the text reads:

And on the morrow, which was after the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate.

§191 In this case, "preparation" refers to the work in preparing for the Passover on the preceding day. Passover preparations were more extensive than the regular Friday preparations. The lamb had to be slaughtered and cooked. Unleavened bread had to be made ready along with bitter herbs, and the houses had to be given the most thorough cleaning of the entire year. Hence, the eve of the Passover was a day of preparation.

§192 A day of preparation is any day devoted to preparations. For example, in English, the day before a camping trip might be called a day of (for) preparation. In Judea, it was customary to devote the day before the Passover to preparation. It was the most important day of preparation in the entire year.

§193 Mark 15:42 also refers to preparation:

Since it was a preparation, which is before a Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea ... asked for the body of Yeshua.

§194 Mark adds "before a Sabbath."^{§240} He means the Passover holy day, which is called "the Sabbath" (cf. Hebrew text, Lev. 23:11)^{§241}. The Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint, also calls the Passover rest day "the Sabbath," (Greek: **των σαββατων**) in Leviticus 23:15. That this Sabbath is the "first day of unleavened bread," and not the weekly Sabbath, is also indicated by the Septuagint in Lev. 23:11. Thus, Mark's reference "before a Sabbath" means the eve of the Passover, which would have been a Wednesday.

§195 Luke 23:54:

And a day, it was, of preparation, and a Sabbath^{§242} was beginning.

§196 Luke refers to "a day of preparation," that is, the 14th of Abib,

which was devoted to preparations until sunset.
John 19:14, 31, 42:

And it was a preparation of the Passover (John 19:14). ..., since a preparation, it was, ... (John 19:31). ..., because of the preparation of the Jews ... (John 19:42).

§197 John leaves little room for ambiguity. He explicitly calls it "a preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14). Traditionalists wish to render this "Friday of Passover [week]." Such a rendering requires them to assume that the word Passover (Greek: **πασχα**) means Passover week, and not the Passover Seder. The meaning of "Passover [week]," however, is secondary to its other meanings, and in the context, there is nothing to suggest that John means "Passover [week]," hence we must defer to the more common understanding of the term "Passover," i.e. the lamb.

§198 The foregoing makes the rendering "Friday of Passover [week]" extremely awkward; in fact, the circumstance of extensive preparations on the eve of the Passover makes it certain that at every uttering of the words in common Greek, the listener's attention will be drawn to those preparations.

§199 Moreover, John mentions "the preparation of the Jews" (John 19:42). Again "preparation" refers to making ready all the elements of the Passover meal. Traditionalists would have this refer to "the Friday of the Jews," which is a bit awkward. And if "preparation" is a technical word, why the definite article? "The preparation" sounds like a reference to a specific type of preparing.

§200 Nevertheless, some Christian Scholars persist in the unfounded claim that "preparation" is only a technical term for Friday:

The fact must be faced that no example of the use of **παρασκευη** is cited for any day other than Friday. (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, 1971, pg. 777).

§201 This statement is certainly misleading, since the Septuagint uses **παρασκευη** in such contexts as **παντα τα εργα της παρασκευης** in Exodus 35:24 where the word refers to preparations involving work on the Tabernacle. It translates, "... all the work of preparation ..." where clearly it does not mean any Friday. Other examples, where it is equally plain that Friday is not meant, are found in Judith 2:17, 4:5; 1 Mac. 9:35; and 2 Mac. 15:21. These passages show that "preparation" is a completely generic word.

§202 We should recognize that Morris' argument is, at best, an argument from silence. It does not prove that **παρασκευη** cannot refer to the eve of the festival days. It does not prove that it never was used that way either.

§203 Furthermore, Morris, and others who share his opinion, are quite presumptuous^{§243} to say "preparation" cannot refer to the eve

of the Passover so many hundreds of years after the fact; to absolutely assert such a claim runs counter to a basic law of language. This law, or rule of thumb, says that any meaningful combination of words is possible. Is referring "preparation" to the eve of a festival meaningful? Very much so, and especially in the case of the Passover, when the most involved preparations are necessary.

§204 The traditionalists, therefore, cannot claim proof for their position, because we lack an example. On the other hand, would they change their position if an example were found? Probably not. Since neither side can prove its position at this point, the case must be decided upon other evidence, i.e. Yeshua rose "after three days," He was in the grave "three nights," and He rose "on the first of the Sabbaths." These are facts which we can explain, but they cannot.

§205 In spite of this, an appeal is made to Mark 15:42 for a definition of **παρασκευη** as being the day "before [the] Sabbath." The Greek, however, is **προ σαββατον**, which means literally "before a Sabbath." Also, it is sometimes forgotten that **προ σαββατον** can just as easily be two words as one compound word, in which case it would not be a technical term for Friday, but simply a day before any rest day, which would include all the feast days. The Passover holy day is called "the Sabbath," so by this definition, the day before it would also be a "preparation."

§206 Failing to prove their case from the Greek of Mark 15:42, some scholars resort to Aramaic. One example is C.C. Torrey of Yale University who tried to prove that "preparation" always means Friday. But he was thoroughly refuted by Solomon Zeitlin. Zeitlin says:

The word **παρασκευη** is not a Jewish technical term at all (pg. 268). Rather, the word **παρασκευη**, which has in Greek the meaning of preparation, became a *pagan* technical term for the Eve of Sabbath, as well as for the Eve of other holidays (pg. 269), (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 51-52, 1932-33, pp. 263-271, my underlines.)

§207 Not only does he say it is not a technical term, but he says that it can refer to the "Eve of other holidays," which can fall on any day of the week. Most reputable lexicons do admit this truth. For example, Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich say:

παρασκευη ... lit. *preparation*, in our lit. only of a definite day, as the *day of preparation* for a festival;

§208 Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich go on to expand on the traditional definition, but they do note "Against Torrey, SZeitlin, JBL 51, '32, 263-71."

§209 Other scholars are also willing to say that Zeitlin has refuted Torrey:

Torrey's theory (JBL 50 [1931], 227-41) that Passover should be understood as the festival period of seven days and that John is speaking of Friday within Passover week has been refuted by S. Zeitlin, JBL (1932), 263-71 (Brown, Raymod E. The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1970, John 19:14, pg. 882).

§210 Zeitlin also pointed out that Passover referred to the sacrifice of the lamb, or the Seders, not to the whole feast. The rest of the feast was called the "feast of unleavened bread" before the destruction of the second Temple. The use of "Passover" to designate the whole feast, or Passover "week" was a later innovation. This renders the interpretation of John 19:14 as "Friday of Passover [week]" exceedingly tenuous.

§211 Thayer also admits the truth:

παρασκευη, ... 1. a making ready, preparation, equipping. 2. that which is prepared, equipment. 3. in the N.T. in a Jewish sense, the day of preparation, i.e. the day on which the Jews made the necessary preparation to celebrate a sabbath or a feast (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Zondervan).

§212 The underlined portion is mine. Zeitlin is correct when he says that "preparation" is equivalent to "the eve of the Sabbath," but he is incorrect in calling it a only a pagan term. Rather we may say that the term was occasionally used by Greek speaking Jews in the first century for the "eve of the Sabbath."

§213 E. Lohse, in *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, writes: "The day of preparation is *erev shabath*, "the evening before the Sabbath" (pg. 6, Vol. VII).

§214 My reason for the above can be deduced from a decree by Augustus Caesar:

... and that they be not obliged to go before any judge on the Sabbath-day, nor on the day of preparation to it, after the ninth hour; (*J. Ant.* 16.6.2).

§215 The intent of this decree, no doubt, included the seven major Biblical festival Sabbaths. If the Hellenistic Jews were not in the habit of using the word "preparation" before these holidays yet, they now had a motive to, at least when talking to the pagans, so as not to let the Romans forget that Augustus' decree also covered the eve of the festivals. On the other hand, Josephus wrote this after A.D. 70, which means he may be translating Augustus' decree and not quoting it, eliminating even this text as an example of "preparation." Augustus may have used **προσαββατον**.

§216 Nevertheless, we may suppose that the Greek speaking Jews referred to the day before a Sabbath as "preparation," when they wished to speak with a pagan, while the Hebrew speaking Jews called it the "Eve of the Sabbath." They could not call it the 6th day

of the week with pagans. For pagans often numbered the days differently. Nor could they call it "Friday." For the planetary week was idolatrous, and hence it was not used by the Jews. Zeitlin does point out that the Hellenistic Jews did call the 6th day *prosabbaton*, that is the day before the Sabbath, among themselves (Jud. 8:6; Mark 15:42).

§217 Torrey, who argues that the Aramaic *arubta* is equivalent to "preparation," does admit that *arubta* (eve) can apply to the Passover:

... but the possibility may be admitted that it was given an equally early application to the principal festal days. It is thus used frequently in the later rabbinical Aramaic, sometimes in the construct relation ..., sometimes after the pattern of *arubta deshabbatha*. There is in the *Midrash Ruth* (one of the latest of the midrashim), near the end of the section "*qaton wegadol*," an example of *arubta pesacha* meaning, "the day before the paschal feast" (pg. 237, JBL 50, '30).

§218 Hence *arubta* does not always mean "Friday." It simply means "evening" of a given day, no matter what day of the week it might precede (except in the Church's ecclesiastical Aramaic). However, Torrey argues that *arubta* was not used this way in the first century. How convenient for him!⁸²⁴⁵ He escapes into Aramaic to prove his case; however, that the Hebrew equivalent *erev* did apply to the "eve of the Passover" is attested in the Mishnah, and *arubta* was most certainly a generic word equivalent to *erev* in the first century, before the Church saw fit to corrupt its meaning. Torrey's exclusion of the first century, therefore, is invalid. (And it is certain that John did not write his gospel in Aramaic).

§219 Since, "preparation" (*arubta*) can refer to the "eve of the passover," we are justified in interpreting "preparation of the Passover," (John 19:14) as the day on which preparations were made for the Passover meal. I remind the reader that to say this means "Friday of Passover [week]," sounds terribly strained, when it more naturally means "Passover preparation."

§220 Zeitlin replies in another place:

The words in verse Mark 15.42, "And when even was now come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath" do not prove at all that the word *parasque* was used to designate Friday only, but not the eve of holidays. We clearly see from John 19.14, "and it was the *parasque* of the Passover" that the word *parasque* may refer also to the eve of the holidays. (*The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. XLII, 1952.)

§221 Church scholars justify their equation of "preparation" with Friday based upon the Church's use of the word from the second century on. This is because before this time no evidence exists that the word was used only for Friday. And in fact, there are almost no examples of "preparation" used for Friday before the second cen-

ture (A.D. 100).

§222 It is said that the earliest attested use of the term for Friday is in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*. F.F. Bruce states:

The first clear occurrence of Gk. παρασκευή in the sense of "Friday" is in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 7.1 A.D. 156 (pg. 381, note 12, *The Gospel of John*).

§223 However, even in this source the word does not necessarily mean "Friday." Polycarp was Martyred just before the "Great Sabbath" of Passover. "Great Sabbath" may refer to the Passover holy day, and not the weekly Sabbath (John 19:31; Lev. 23:11). In addition, there are other notes of time in the *Martyrdom* which show that the account is unreliable.

§224 The term "Great Sabbath" has been equated with the weekly Sabbath falling within Passover week by the Church. Later, even the Jews picked up this usage from the Church. They are known to have called the weekly Sabbath in Passover week "The Great Sabbath."

§225 However, the equation of "Great Sabbath" with the weekly Sabbath is unknown before the second century. (Some Christian scholars argue that when the 15th or 16th of Aviv falls on the weekly Sabbath, it becomes "Great." This may have been the case after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., but not before.)

§226 The truth is "The Great Sabbath" is the 15th of Aviv regardless of which day of the week it falls on. For the Jews (except the Sadducees and Essenes) call the Passover holy day "The Sabbath," (Lev. 23:11, 15) and this Sabbath was "Great" on account of the Passover feast which was held on it (John 19:31).

§227 On the other hand, the Sadducees wished to exalt the weekly Sabbath in Passover week, because they held that Lev. 23:11, 15 referred to the weekly Sabbath. They would have been quite happy to call that Sabbath "The Great Sabbath," for this would detract from the Pharisees' interpretation of Lev. 23:11. Naturally, the Pharisees would react to this and refuse to call the weekly Sabbath in Passover week "The Great Sabbath."

§228 Yeshua said "the scribes and Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses" (Matthew 23:1-3). He did not mention Sadducees. In spite of the fact that Yeshua recognized the authority of the Pharisees (when subject to the Scripture), He did not recognize the Sadducees as any kind of authority at all.

§229 Nevertheless, the second century Church adopted the Sadducean Pentecost from the outset. They always celebrated it on a Sunday. Since the Sadducean Pentecost was counted from that particular weekly Sabbath after Passover, it would be no surprise for them to call it "The Great Sabbath," and then to turn around and deny that the Passover holy day was called "The Sabbath." And this is the position we find in the Church to this very day.

- §230 We digressed onto the "Great Sabbath" here to show that the *Martyrdom* does not necessarily provide an example of "preparation" meaning "Friday." A more hermanuetically correct way of finding the meaning of "preparation" is to look in sources contemporary with the gospels. The later usage of the Church in the second century was a database the first readers of the gospels did not have. What it meant later had no impact on them.
- §231 Furthermore, we should observe that the number of uses of the word, for the day before a Sabbath, outside of the New Testament, found in the literature before 70 A.D., can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Not only that, the Passover preparation would occur near or on only 1/52 of those Sabbaths. This shows that the lack of an example of a Passover "preparation" is not significant. For pure statistics predicts the lack of an example without respect to the meaning of the word.
- §232 At the risk of repeating ourselves somewhat, we would like to emphasize the fact that **παρασκευη** is simply the generic Greek word for "preparation." Liddel and Scott inform us of the meaning of **παρασκευη** in contexts where it cannot possibly mean Friday; they give **παρασκευη του δειπου**, which means "preparation of the supper," and **παρασκευη σιτου**, which means "preparation of corn." Both usages are remarkably similar to John 19:14, which has **παρασκευη του πασχα**, which is simply "preparation of the Passover."
- §233 Indeed, the word is used with and without that which is said to be prepared directly modifying the word (see Exodus 35:24, LXX). When used alone, it refers to "preparation" of some item, or items in the context. For example, Liddell and Scott give **λεγειν απο παρασκευης** which means "to speak from preparation."
- §234 Furthermore, when John says "**παρασκευη του πασχα**", he means "Passover preparation," not "Friday of the Passover [week]." For the latter meaning would be secondary. Not only that, but such a secondary meaning would have to be explained again and again to Grecian Jews, who would naturally take it to mean "passover preparation." For the semantic sense of "preparation," in the generic sense cannot fail to manifest itself in the use of the word.
- §235 Having to be explained as "Friday of Passover [week]" shows that the usage would always be ambiguous, if that is what is meant. For the explanation is not necessary if the meaning is plain, and none would be sought except someone said it did not mean "Passover preparation." Yet John simply writes the phrase with no explanation, as if it is perfectly unambiguous. Therefore, one can only conclude that the phrase always was unambiguous in the time that John wrote it.
- §236 A few more usages should be noted. Exodus 39.22 (42), in the Alexandrian Codex, has **πασαν την παρασκευην**, which means "all the preparation." Judith 2:17 has **εις την παρασκευην αυτων**, which means "for the preparation of them." Judith 4:5 has **εις**

- παρασκευην πολεμου**, which means "for preparation of war."
- §237 Another passage like John 19:14 is John 19:42, which has **την παρασκευην των Ιουδαιων**, meaning "the preparation of the Judeans." Compare this to the Judith 2:17 passage above, and it will again be apparent that "the Friday of the Judeans" cannot be meant.
- §238 Traditionalists feel compelled to quote Mark 15:42 as a definition for "preparation," that is, "the day before a Sabbath." However, I must note that Zeiltin reports "Some MSS omit the words **ο εστιν προσαββατων** (*Studies in the Early History of Judaism*, New York: KTAV, 1973, vol. 1, pg. 210.), and that the *Concordant Version* notes the words are missing from SB¹. Clearly the evidence needs to be recollated.
- §239 Indeed many MSS read **προς σαββατον** instead of **προσαββατον**. See A B² L G Y f¹³ 23.33. 565. 700. 892. 1010 pm for **προς σαββατον** vs. a B* C K W D Q 0112. 0212 f1 1241. 1424 pm for **προσαββατον**. The evidence is very divided on this text, so much so that the apparatus of the *Majority Text* reads "**42 προσαββατον** M^{pt} E, TR Cr vs. **προς σαββατον** M^{pt} A. **Προς σαββατον** means "toward [a] Sabbath," so that the text would read, "since it was [a] preparation, that is, toward [a] Sabbath" (Mark 15:42). However, the definition holds for the Passover Sabbath whatever the correct reading is.

END NOTES

- §240 Although some MSS lack these words.
- §241 The proof of this is covered in another chapter. In brief, the Jewish interpretation of "the Sabbath" in Lev. 23:11 and 23:15 is that "Sabbath" refers to the Passover holy day, and not the weekly Sabbath.
- §242 I.e. "rest day," or "cessation." The word "Sabbath" does not mean "seventh day," although the seventh day is "the Sabbath," otherwise God would not have had to tell the Israelites that the seventh day was the Sabbath. God has other Sabbaths (rest days) and this one in Luke 23:54 was one of them.
- §243 Morris, and the few scholars who agree with him, might be excused because he most commendably wishes to reconcile the apparent contradiction between John and the synoptic gospels, and can find no other way to do it.
- §244 However, the discovery of another calendar at Qumran has shown the existence of two calendars within Judaism in the first century. The Qumran calendar places the Passover on Tuesday evening, and it is quite possible that Yeshua used it to gain entry to the city before the Biblical Passover. No one would suspect Him to be in the guise of an Essene. It was the only way He could be alone with His disciples without being arrested before the right time. The Essene calendar, thus, provided Him with the needed cover to carry out the double seder tradition in Jerusalem where it was not

normally used.

§245 But this is hypocritical. For "preparation" is not clearly used to mean "Friday" in the first century either.

§245.1 "Dalman has, we believe correctly, pointed out: Neither could the author (of Jn. 19:14) have meant ... by the expression the, 'Eve of the Passover' anything other than the day which the Jews call in Hebrew, '*ereb pesah*', and in Aramaic '*arubat pisha*', i.e. the day which preceded the Festival; never the Friday in the festive week, as Zahn suggests." (*Jesus-Jeshua*, pg. 88.) (*Journal of Biblical Literature*, pg. 270, Zeitlin, "The Date of the Crucifixion", 1932-33).