

Thank you

John 11:25 I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies

This our blessed hope

Romans 6:5-7 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Today is what we here at the Greenwood Christian Church call resurrection Sunday. Today, I want to point out some interesting things regarding the Appointed Times of God that I have seen in the resurrection story.

As evening approached, the Sabbath was near, and burial customs required swift action. Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy follower of Jesus, requested Jesus' body from Pontius Pilate. With Nicodemus, he wrapped Jesus' body in linen cloths, anointed it with myrrh and aloes, and laid it in a new tomb carved from rock (John 19:38-42; Matthew 27:57-60). A large stone was rolled across the entrance, sealing the tomb. Roman guards were stationed, and a seal was placed on the stone to prevent tampering (Matthew 27:62-66).

The Passover started. They were there in Jerusalem for the festival, so they would have selected a lamb a few days prior on the tenth of Nisan. They would have been keeping watch over the lamb. But this whole joyful pilgrimage feast was turned upside down for the family and followers of Jesus. Celebration was turned into mourning. Jesus the Messiah hung on a cross. He was innocent, yet he was tried, convicted, and put to death as a criminal.

One question that I have is...

Who would have gone to sacrifice the lamb for the Passover celebration that evening? Did they forego it entirely? Doubtful.

The Passover time of sacrificing in the Temple would have been chaotic, because this was one of the three pilgrimage festivals. The other two are Shavuot and Sukkot, or if you prefer Pentecost and Booths. There would have been tons of people there from all over. It appears that they had the whole Passover sacrifice down to a science.

Mishnah Pesachim 5:5-10

Tractate Pesachim in the Mishnah (Order Moed) describes the procedure for offering the Passover sacrifice in the Temple.

The people were divided into three groups (called kahal, kahal, kahal) to manage the large crowds efficiently. Each group took turns entering the Temple courtyard (Azarah) to slaughter their lambs.

- The priests stood in rows with basins to catch the blood, which was then dashed against the altar. The Levites sang the Hallel (Psalms 113–118) as the sacrifices were performed.

- The Mishnah notes that the slaughter could be done by any Israelite (not just priests), but the priests handled the blood service.

- Timing was critical: the sacrifice occurred on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, "between the two evenings" (bein ha'arbayim), typically understood as the late afternoon before sunset.

Mishnah Pesachim 5:5

"The Passover offering was slaughtered in three groups... When the first group entered and the courtyard was filled, the gates of the courtyard were locked."

Mishnah Pesachim 7:1-4

After the slaughter, the people took the lambs home (or to designated locations in Jerusalem) to roast them whole, as commanded in Exodus 12:9. The Mishnah specifies that the lambs were roasted on spits made of pomegranate wood, avoiding metal that might conduct heat unevenly. It was also to ensure that it was roasted and not cooked by any other means, since that was the commandment.

- Groups (called chavurot) were formed—typically family units or small gatherings—to eat the sacrifice together, ensuring that each participant had at least an olive-sized portion.

The lamb would have been sacrificed and they would have joined together that night and had roasted lamb for dinner. Even if Jesus' family did not have much of an appetite to eat, they could have still fulfilled the commandment regarding the Passover lamb, because all that needed to be consumed is an olive sized amount of meat along with the bitter herbs (maror) and matzah.

There is a commandment derived from Deuteronomy 16:14 to rejoice in the festivals (Mitzvah 488 Sefer HaChinuch). Not only that, it was Shabbat and Shabbat is supposed to be joyful. Shabbat is always seen as a taste of the world to come! How could you rejoice at this point???

Can you imagine the conversations they had that night?

Matthew 27:57-61

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

Luke 23:55-56

Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Here, I think it would be important to talk about what is often referred to as the "Jewish reckoning of time."

Is it really the Jewish reckoning of time though? Or is it the Biblical reckoning of time?

I think that the terms are synonymous, however since we like to distance ourselves from the Jewish people, it is often referred to as the Jewish reckoning of time. Even though the Bible spells it out for us.

We use the Gregorian calendar, which evolved from the Roman Julian calendar. The Gregorian calendar really throws a wrench in our understanding of the Bible, which is unfortunate.

It's also noteworthy to point out that our entire system of time is pagan as well. Look at the days of the week even:

Moon's Day

Tiw's Day

Woden's Day

Thor's Day

Frigg's Day

Saturn's Day

Sun's Day

Does that bother any of you?

I hate it.

In the Creation Story there is a repeated pattern. There was evening and there was morning...

From that we learn that evening is the first part of the day, but in our culture we view the day starting technically after midnight, but mostly at dawn.

There is a neat picture of hope there in the Creation Story. The day starts in the evening, which shows how humanity very quickly devolved into sin and darkness, but there is hope as the day brightens. We look forward to the day when there is no darkness.

The Bible is constant throughout. Evening and then morning.

There are no names for the days of the week in the Bible, except for the Sabbath. The other days are associated to the Sabbath though.

So the way they would say it would be the first of the Sabbath, the second of the Sabbath, the third of the Sabbath, and so on, except for the sixth day. That day was referred to as the Preparation Day, because it was a day spent making the final preparations for the Sabbath. Then there was the seventh day, which was called the Sabbath.

So, in your Bibles, when it reads, "the first day of the week" what it is really saying is the first of the Sabbath. Sabbath in that context means week. The Greek is Sabbaton, which is Sabbath.

Let's briefly look at Acts 20:7.

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

In the Gregorian way of reckoning the day we would tend to think that this is talking about Sunday. That mistake persists to this day.

The context here is night time. We also know that Paul mostly spoke on Shabbat to people. Sabbath is from Friday night at sundown to Saturday night at sundown. So here he prolonged his stay to Saturday night and he left on Sunday.

Bible commentators really struggle with this because they want to use this passage to point to a Sunday gathering with the Lord's Supper.

The New Testament nowhere points to any kind of Sunday gathering. This is also not the Lord's Supper. That may be a little jarring. But hear me out.

Bread was a staple to really anyone's meal back then and it is still a staple today. But something that we are not used to in our western culture is that we usually do not physically break bread at our meals. In Judaism, they very much do physically break bread. There is a blessing and the bread is physically broken and passed around.

Jesus even did this when he fed the 4000 and the 5000.

Breaking bread is also a common expression that means to share a meal. There is nothing further to indicate that this anything outside of a normal gathering with a meal.

The Tyndale New Testament Commentary, which is a major Christian Commentary has to attempt some cartwheels to make Sunday fit by saying that Luke is using the Roman reckoning of time. Even though all throughout scripture elsewhere the Bible is consistent in how it reckons the day. This commentary reads:

Acts 20:7

It is not altogether clear what method of time-reckoning Luke is employing. According to the Jewish method of calculating the new day from sunset, Paul would have met with the Christians on what was Saturday evening by our reckoning, and would thus have resumed his journey on Sunday morning. According to the Roman method of reckoning the new day as beginning at dawn, the Christians would have met in the evening of either Sunday (the first day of the Jewish week) or Saturday (the first day of the Roman week).

There are other commentaries that say something similar. Some, like the Holman New Testament Commentary state:

Acts 20:7 Here we find one of many New Testament references for Sunday worship.

This is just not true. I have other commentaries that do something similar. They completely reject the Biblical reckoning of the day to fit Sunday in there.

However, I do have a commentary called the United Bible Societies (UBS) Handbooks for both the Old and New Testament. These were written specifically for Bible translators.

Acts 20:7

On Saturday evening is literally "on the first day of the week." This meeting would have taken place in the evening; and according to the Jewish calculation the first day of the week would have begun on Saturday evening and continued until Sunday at sunset. Some infer, on the basis of the phrase until sunrise (v. 11), that Luke was not counting the day in the Jewish fashion but in the Greek way, by which the day began at sunrise. If this is the case, then the translation

should be "Sunday evening" rather than "Saturday evening"; however, the weight of evidence is in favor of "Saturday evening."

So, they met Saturday night after Havdalah, which means separation. Havdalah is a time of de-sanctifying the day; leaving holy time and entering common time. A candle is lit, which is otherwise forbidden on Sabbath.

Spices are passed around to be smelled. The spices are meant to uplift the soul, which is believed to be saddened by the departure of the Shabbat's extra spiritual presence. The fragrance represents a lingering sweetness from Shabbat to carry into the week.

A special braided candle with multiple wicks is lit, and a blessing is recited over its light. The multi-wick flame (at least two wicks) represents the unity of Shabbat and the weekday, as well as the power of light to dispel darkness. The blessing ("Borei Me'orei Ha'esh" - Who creates the firelight) praises God as the creator of the lights of fire.

You might say, well Havdalah is not in the Bible. Maybe, but the Jewish practice of Havdalah goes back to at least the 5th century B.C.

The disciples would have been gathered together already and now that you can cook, because cooking is forbidden on Shabbat, sharing a meal is appropriate.

Why do I bring all that up when this is resurrection day? Good question. Turn to Matthew 28:1

Matthew 28:1

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.

Because of what I was just talking about regarding our Gregorian way of thinking about time and the Biblical reckoning of time this passage can be confusing.

The word that the NASB translated as "after" - Now after the Sabbath...

It is a Greek word that means late, late in the day, or at a late hour.

A good rendering would be "Late in the Sabbath" or as Young's Literal Translation reads, "And on the eve of the sabbaths"

So right away without having moved forward in this verse all the way, the time is Saturday night as Sabbath was ending.

But then there is the next part of the verse, "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week..."

Did Matthew just skip the whole night? Or is there something else going on here? This is why I brought up the reckoning of the day. It's important in this context.

Literally the verse reads pretty much as the NASB rendered it; "As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week..."

What's going on here?

One thing that we can do is look at how this word for dawn is used elsewhere in scripture. That's a great way to gather some context to a verse if there is confusion.

Is this word used elsewhere?

As a matter of fact it is. It is used only one other time in a different gospel. It was used in Luke, who also wrote Acts.

Luke 23:54

It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

That same exact word is translated here as, "about to begin." In other words, the Sabbath, which is Friday night to Saturday night, is dawning.

How can we reconcile this?

A.T. Robertson says in his book, "A Harmony of the Gospels For Students of the Life of Christ" (page 239)

This phrase once gave much trouble, but the usage of the vernacular Koine Greek amply justifies the translation. The visit of the women to inspect the tomb was thus made before the sabbath was over (before 6 p.m. on Saturday).

Dr. Fruchtenbaum agrees and states:

It is possible - even probable - that Matthew 28:1 and Mark 16:1 should not be viewed as parallel passages. Matthew mentioned only two women, while Mark mentioned three. The timing in Matthew was late afternoon or early evening Saturday, while the timing in Mark was the early hours of Sunday morning. In the Matthew passage, the women were coming to see (or visit) the sepulchre, while in Mark, they were coming to finish the burial procedure. This would not have been practical on Saturday evening, but very probable in the light of Sunday morning.

So, it's very possible that the resurrection occurred Saturday night, just after Sabbath. The tomb, however, was found early Sunday morning albeit while it was still dark.

John 20:1

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene *came early to the tomb, while it *was still dark, and *saw the stone already taken away from the tomb.

Regardless though, from Saturday night to Sunday night it's all the first day of the week. The problem is that Matthew is specific with his time, indicating night, whereas Mark specifically says that it was at sunrise.

There is another thought to add to that. While this thought does not prove definitively that the resurrection happened Saturday night, it does however support it.

Paul associates Jesus' resurrection with first fruits, which begins immediately after Passover.

1 Corinthians 15:20

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

So, during the time of Jesus, it would have started Saturday night. First Fruits is always on the 16th of Nisan.

Why is that important to know?

Leviticus 23:15

You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths.

The same day that our Master was crucified, representatives of the Sanhedrin went out to the barley field to bind up the standing barley into bundles while it was still attached to the ground, so that it would be easier to harvest.

Then the next day a whole entourage would go out to the barley field the evening of the 15th of Nisan, right before nightfall. Once the sun set, so on the 16th of Nisan; the very beginning part of the day they would begin.

For our context here, Jesus was crucified on a Friday afternoon. At the same time representatives of the Sanhedrin bound up the barley. Then Saturday evening the first fruits festivities began.

There was great fanfare when the barley was harvested. If the date was on a regular day, three people, each with their own sickle, went out to the barley field with the crowd. If it occurred on the weekly Sabbath, only one person cut the barley, but there was still the big crowd of people. The reason for less people harvesting on the Sabbath was because it was forbidden to reap on the Sabbath, so in order to minimize the amount of work down on the Sabbath they only used one person to cut the barley.

Exodus 34:21

"You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest.

The night Jesus was in the Tomb would have been a regular day and so three people with sickles would have been harvesting the barley.

Once it became dark at least one with a sickle would ask, "Has the sun set and night begun so that I may cut the barley?" The crowd would respond, "Yes." The question would be asked three times total and the crowd would respond accordingly each time.

Then at least one with a sickle would ask, "Should I cut the barley with this sickle?" and the crowd would respond, "Yes!" The question would be asked three times total and the crowd would respond accordingly each time.

Then at least one with a sickle would ask, "Should I place the cut barley in this basket?" and the crowd would respond, "Yes!" The question would be asked three times total and the crowd would respond accordingly each time.

Leviticus 23:10-11 "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

Once the barley was harvested it was processed into flour that same night.

Then, the morning of the 16th of Nisan, in our context Sunday morning, the women discovered the empty tomb, all the while the High Priest was mixing the barley flour with oil and frankincense to prepare as a bread offering to be waved before the Lord. Part of the barley dough was offered on the altar and the rest was then baked into unleavened loaves to be shared by the priests.

If Jesus was resurrected at night and then revealed Himself that morning, that would fit exactly with the first fruits ceremony consisting of both a night event and a day event.

Wouldn't it be something if the earthquake happened during the harvesting ceremony?

This next thing I want to discuss, to me, is a beautiful picture of redemption. It really shows God's love and compassion in a very simple way.

John 20:1-2 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene *came early to the tomb, while it *was still dark, and *saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. So she *ran and *came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and *said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Notice that in John's account there is no angel telling the women to go and inform the disciples that He has risen.

Mary goes and tells Peter and John and everyone comes running to the tomb. John and Peter see the empty tomb and then leave and go to their homes, because they still do not understand the scriptures that say that He must rise again from the dead. Mary, however, stays at the tomb and this is where I want to pick up.

John 20:11-18 But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she *saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. And they *said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She *said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." When she had said this, she turned around and *saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus *said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she *said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." Jesus *said to her, "Mary!" She turned and *said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher). Jesus *said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene *came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.

Who did she think that she was talking to?

The gardener...

If she thought that she was talking to the gardener, where must they be?

In a garden...

What is significant about being in a garden?

The first sin occurred in the garden.

Who sinned first?

Eve.

How appropriate then, if a woman brought sin into the world, would it not be appropriate for a woman to deliver the good news of redemption?

There's often a focus of women not being able to testify in court. A lot of commentators bring that out. I do not think that this has anything to do with what is happening here.

A woman is bringing the message of the resurrection, the FIRST FRUITS, to Adam... MAN

How'd we get here?

Passover was calculated very specifically and God gave the Jewish people His calendar. This is how you calculate my Appointed Times; My Moedim.

Exodus 12:2

This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.

This is commandment number 4 of 613 if you are counting in order in which they occur. The specific commandment is to sanctify the New Moon. Rosh Chodesh.

Wait a minute... That is not what it said???

The Bible promotes a lunar calendar. That is how the whole Torah operates. Figuring out when the New Moon was took some effort.

There are other verses that expound the New Moon sanctification.

Numbers 10:10

Also in the day of your gladness and in your appointed feasts, and on the first days of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a reminder of you before your God. I am the Lord your God.”

Numbers 28:11

‘Then at the beginning of each of your months you shall present a burnt offering to the Lord...

We currently use a solar calendar, but not for long. God is going to bring back His calendar.

Isaiah 66:22-23 “For just as the new heavens and the new earth

Which I make will endure before Me,” declares the Lord,

“So your offspring and your name will endure.

“And it shall be from new moon to new moon

And from sabbath to sabbath,

All mankind will come to bow down before Me,” says the Lord.

The Torah is not specific on how the New Moon is to be determined and this demonstrates the power of the oral traditions. Once two reliable witnesses observed the first visible silver waxing of the new moon they would go to the Sanhedrin, which is the ruling court in Israel. Think of it like the Supreme Court. The two witnesses would appear before them and the Sanhedrin would interrogate them before making a ruling. Bad weather could potentially delay the declaration of the new moon. Once the new moon was sanctified signal fires were used to inform distant communities. Later they used messengers.

In the 4th century Hillel 2 created a fixed calendar. This was due to persecution from the Romans. This fixed calendar is still used today to calculate the Rosh Chodesh. Also, since the Torah uses a lunar calendar there is another important aspect to this and that is the addition of one month (Adar 2) to offset the discrepancy that results from lunar months, which are shorter than solar months.

This is very much an important commandment. Because without it the entire Torah cycle of festivals would be off.

The first commandment given at this point, right before the specifics of Passover, is to have a fixed time so that everything else that is given has a point of reference, which is actually brilliant.

This is the start of your calendar. Everything else is dependent upon this calendar.

Today is resurrection day. Do you ever wonder?

How did we get to this day? Resurrection day? Is it a Biblical holiday? Is it a tradition? Is it a Christian invention? When was it established? What is going on with this day? Is it a commandment?

First and foremost, there is no specific commandment of God to celebrate resurrection day. This is strictly a tradition that evolved from the commandments of God.

Why do I say that this is a tradition that evolved from a God's commandments?

Originally, this was not called Resurrection Day, or Easter, or anything like that. It was called Pascha in the Greek. Pascha means Passover. The first Christians celebrated Passover. But then as more Gentiles became believers there grew a disdain for the Jewish people. In fact, this divide in how to celebrate Passover was one of the reasons for the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. There were those who were in the minority that believed that it should be celebrated alongside the Jewish people on the 14th/15th of Nisan. But the majority preferred a Sunday near Passover. So, the decision came down. It reads as follows:

When the question relative to the sacred festival of Pascha (Passover) arose, it was universally thought that it would be convenient that all should keep the feast on one day; for what could be more beautiful and more desirable, than to see this festival, through which we receive the hope of immortality, celebrated by all with one accord, and in the same manner? It was declared to be particularly unworthy for this, the holiest of all festivals, to follow the custom of the Jews, who had soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes, and whose minds were blinded. In rejecting their custom, we may transmit to our descendants the legitimate mode of celebrating Passover, which we have observed from the time of the Saviour's Passion to the present day [according to the day of the week]. We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, for the Saviour has shown us another way; our worship follows a more legitimate and more convenient course (the order of the days of the week); and consequently, in unanimously adopting this mode, we desire, dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews, for it is truly shameful for us to hear them boast that without their direction we could not keep this feast. How can they be in the right, they who, after the death of the Saviour, have no longer been led by reason but by wild violence, as their delusion may urge them? They do not possess the truth in this Passover question; for, in their blindness and repugnance to all improvements, they frequently celebrate two Passovers in the same year. We could not imitate those who are openly in error. How, then, could we follow these Jews, who are most certainly blinded by error? for to celebrate the Passover twice in one year is totally inadmissible. But even if this were not so, it would still be your duty not to tarnish your soul by communications with such wicked people [the Jews].

This sounds like they chose to make alterations in times and in the Law of God.

Have we nullified the commandments of God to keep our traditions?

May grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people. May He establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.