

## The Christian Passover

By Eugene Story<sup>1</sup>

We as Christians have learned to accept those truths of the scriptures through faith, accepting on faith those things that we are unable to comprehend with the carnal mind. Such has it been with the Easter story. I have always accepted through faith the commonly taught concept of the Crucifixion of Christ on a Friday afternoon and the Resurrection on Sunday morning. But in my mind I have always wondered about the apparent time discrepancy that existed. For no matter how I looked at it there were roughly 40 hours between the death and resurrection of Christ (less than 2 full days) and I could not come up with 3 days without an exaggerated use of the term 'day'. There also was a discrepancy with the words of Christ when he said "three days and three nights shall the son of man be in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:40 KJV, 12:34 IV) Now I would not seek to dampen the faith of those who have always accepted this without question, but for those with insufficient faith and for purposes of converting nonbelievers I would like to present the information that has come to my attention.

I would not take any credit for the following treatise, only to say that I have attempted to relate in simple terms those things that have been brought to my attention by those who have related them to me. I would give all glory to God who is the author of all things and arranged these things for us from the foundation of the world.

Before we begin it should be noted that these events will not concur with the Rabbinic Jewish traditions. These traditions are based upon the "oral torah" which was handed down generation to generation orally and it was forbidden to write them for many centuries. After the destruction of the second temple and the persecution of the Jews, the Sanhedrin decided they should be written down or they would most probably be lost. This oral torah became the Talmud put into writing after 70 AD and perhaps as late as 200 AD (or CE depending on your preference). It was probably not the law that was being followed at the crucifixion of Christ because portions of it are in contradiction with the Holy Scriptures. For instance the Jews added a rule that the new year could not start on certain days of the week because that would place Sabbaths on consecutive days. There is no such requirement in the written word. We see in John 7:24 and Mark 7:6 that the Lord condemned the Jews and their traditions. It may be that the Jews intentionally altered their traditions to conceal the truth of the divinity of Christ, this has been suggested as a reason for a disparity of 165 years between the Hebrew and secular calendars from the time of the destruction of the first temple to the building of the second temple. A disparity in which

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the Book of Mormon would side with the secular calendar. Remember the oral traditions were kept and enforced by the Sanhedrin, the very group that was responsible for the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior. It is no more likely that the Rabbinic Jews have kept a better record and done a better job of keeping the commandments of the Lord over the last two millennia than any of the groups that accepted Christ as their Savior have done.

It is perhaps best to start by quoting Paul who said, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." (Colossians 2:16-17) We see by Paul's statement here and repeated in a slightly different manner in Hebrews 8:5 & 10:1 that the law given to Moses was a type or shadow of things to come. See also Alma 14:75, 2 Nephi 11:45 RLDS. With this in mind, we should begin by studying the law to see if we can glean from it those things that point to the body of Christ. Let's examine the feast of the Passover that was taking place during the week of the crucifixion.

Exodus 12 is the institution of the Passover, it appears that the children of Israel selected a lamb and slaughtered it on the same day (Ex. 12:21&22), but in the commandment for the institution of the Passover the Lord commanded that the lamb be selected on the 10th day of the month Abib (Nissan on Hebrew Calendars) (Ex. 12:3) which was to be made the 1st month of the year. (Ex. 12:1&2) (The Jews still celebrate Rosh Hashanah, which means beginning of the year, in the fall in the original first month.) This lamb was to be of the first year (a virgin), taken from the males, and was to have no blemishes. (Ex. 12:5) It was to be kept up from the tenth day to the 14th day of the month when it was to be killed in the evening (Ex. 12:6). During these intervening days it was the custom of the Jews to display this lamb where all could examine it and see there was no blemish in it. It was to be roast with fire and no water was to be used on it (Ex. 12:8-9). At this same time the feast of unleavened bread was begun, the bread to be eaten could have no leaven in it at the Passover meal or for 7 days afterward (Ex. 12:8 & 15).

The first day of this feast of unleavened bread was to be a holy convocation. That is there was to be no work done in it. It was the same as a Sabbath day. Leviticus 23 names all the Sabbaths of the Lord declaring them Sabbaths and forbidding work during any of them. It did not matter what day of the week it fell on, the 15th day of the month Abib was a Sabbath, be it on Monday or Wednesday or any other day of the week. It is also important to note that the Jews celebrated their Sabbaths from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). This is consistent also with the account of creation, where the Lord says "the evening and the morning" (Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31 KJV; 1:8,11,17,21,24,33 IV). So in numbering days we must remember the day starts the evening before in the Jewish law about 30 minutes after sunset when it begins to be dark.

This feast was to be held in "the place which the Lord shall choose to place his name"(Deut. 16:2). We all recognize Jerusalem as the place that the Lord would put his name, and at least 4 separate accounts of Jesus going to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover are given in the New Testament (Luke 2:41, John 2:13, 6:4, & 11:55). The lamb was to be slaughtered in the evening (Deut. 16:6, Ex.12:6) and none of the bones of the lamb was to be broken (Exodus 12:46). The terminology here has been understood to mean that the lamb was to be killed on the 14th day of the month as the evening approached. This would allow the slaughter and preparation of the lamb to happen on the 14th before the start of the Sabbath (15th) at dark.

With this knowledge of the Passover at hand let us now look at the events of the last week of Jesus life before his crucifixion.

"Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany" (John 12:1). We recognize that this was on Saturday a week before the resurrection, because the next day was Palm Sunday (John 12:12 & 13). From this information we can calculate the day of the Passover which we can see from Mark 14:10 IV that it usually indicates the day the Passover was to be killed. We as Christians have counted 6 days from Saturday and come to Friday. But we must not count by our counting but by the counting of the Jews at the time of the crucifixion.

We have a zero concept in our numbering system that was not present in the numbering systems of the Middle East in the first century AD. A brief examination of the counting of the Scriptures will reveal this difference. It is all based on the creation story in which the evening and the morning were the first day so that the beginning day, year, or item/person is used in the count. Examples of this are Jude 14 IV "Enoch the seventh from Adam" (Adam Seth Enos Cainan Mahalaleel Jared Enoch) Leviticus 23:15 "Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days". Seven weeks from one day after the Sabbath back to one day after the Sabbath was 50 days not 49 as we would count. We also see this in the commandment for circumcision it was to be done on the eighth day. Many may not be aware that our modern calendar starts the year on the beginning of a month by accident. Before the Gregorian calendar was implemented the Julian calendar in England started the New Year on March 25th. The reason for using January 1st as the day for the New Year was that it was being used by the Eastern Orthodox Church on the basis of it being the 8th day from the birth of Christ therefore the day of his circumcision beginning his keeping of the covenants. To most of us Dec. 25th to Jan. 1st is 7 days, but not in the traditional Hebrew method of counting days.

This would all come together to indicate that if Saturday were six days before the Passover was to be killed then the 14th day of Abib would have been on Thursday. Using

this as our reference we come up with the following. Sunday 10th, Monday 11th, Tuesday 12th, Wednesday 13th, Thursday 14th, Friday 15th, Saturday 16th, Sunday 17th.

Sunday the 10th day of Abib is the first day of the Passover season. (Remembering that the Passover was not one day but composed the time from the selection of the lamb and continuing through the week of unleavened bread). On this day the 10th of Abib, the Passover lamb is selected. (Ex.12:3) It is on this day when the lamb was selected that Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was proclaimed (selected) as King of Israel by the people, Christ himself declaring that if the people were silenced the very stones would cry out (Luke 19:36-39 IV, 37-40 KJV). (Indicating that God himself would declare the selection of the lamb if the people did not.)

According to the requirements of the law this lamb that was selected was now prominently displayed. Jesus was very active in the next few days, and much of the ministry that we have recorded of him took place during this time. Mark gives us a day by day account.

- Mark 11:1-11 KJV; 11:1-13 IV Sunday Abib 10.
- Mark 11:12-19 KJV; 11:14-21 IV Monday Abib 11.
- Mark 11:20 to 14:10 KJV; 11:22 to 14:10 IV Tuesday Abib 12.
- Mark 14:12-71 KJV; 14:11-82 IV Wednesday Abib 13 to Thursday morning Abib 14.

Most interpretations of the account of this week create a missing day to move the crucifixion to Friday, but the evidence is that Mark intended to give a day by day account of the week. Also read Luke 19:46 IV, 47 KJV. Mark 14:10 IV 14:12 KJV appears to disagree with John 13:1-2. However the word used in Mark is protos (G4413 in Strongs) and the word used in John is pro (G4253 in Strongs). Protos is derived from pro which means before or in front of. Protos can also mean before thus making them equal in meaning. Some of the other translations could be also taken to mean the day was approaching rather than that it had already arrived Luke 22:7 Matthew 26:13 IV, 17 KJV. Some would argue that the Inspired Version does not correct these however the Lord did not say that he would correct every error. He has left some things for us to study out with prayer and fasting to test and strengthen our faith. Christ says prepare to eat the Passover again remembering that the days leading up to the feast day are all a part of the preparation for the feast. Therefore the last supper was the meal they ate in preparation for the coming feast that would take place the next evening.

This would put the Crucifixion on Thursday the 14th day of Abib. We see this supported in John 13:1 and John 18:28, both of which indicate the Passover had not yet been eaten. It is also supported by the last supper meal itself. Judas received a sop from Jesus after which Satan entered into him. (John 13:26-27) If this were the actual Passover

meal he could not have had a sop, which is a piece of typically leaven bread used to soak up a broth, (Unleavened bread makes a very poor sop unless it is soaked for a long time not dipped) there is to be no leavened bread eaten with the Passover. Furthermore it is not to be sodden at all with water so there could be no broth (Exodus 12:8&9). Therefore the meal was eaten on Wednesday evening (actually after sunset would have made it Thursday evening according to the proper keeping of dates). Thus we see that our Lord would have instituted a prayer service on Wednesday night while in the garden, an event we have the privileged of revisiting every Wednesday evening.

The armed men would have taken Jesus during this Wednesday/Thursday evening and brought him before the Sanhedrin where he was questioned all night. In the morning he was taken before Pilate and then Herod but the Jews would not go in so that they were not defiled by the Gentiles and could still eat the feast which was that evening (John 18:28). This is confirmed by Mark 15:8 IV, 6 KJV in which Pilot would release a prisoner at the feast and the Chief Priest encourage the release of Barabbas. It then would have been Thursday afternoon (which can also be referred to as evening) the 14th day of Abib that Jesus died on the cross. (Matthew 27:45-46) The ninth hour would probably be about 3 o'clock in the afternoon (Remembering that the days were divided into 12 equal segments called hours and being near the spring equinox they would have been very close to 60 minutes each). This was the same time the Passover lamb was to be killed, and outside the city where the Lord had placed his name (Jerusalem). (Deuteronomy 16:2)

On the day Jesus died the bodies could not be left on the cross because the next day was a Sabbath (John 19:31), not the Saturday Sabbath that we are all familiar with, seeing it would be Friday, but the 15th day of Abib or the 1st day of unleavened bread which was also a Sabbath. (Leviticus 23:6-7) Therefore the bodies could not be left upon the cross, but when the soldiers came to Jesus and found he was already dead they did not break his bones, fulfilling the commandment that not a bone shall be broken. (Ex. 12:46, John 19:36) Therefore we have two Sabbath days in a row, the Sabbath of the first day of unleavened bread on Friday the 15th of Abib and the normal weekly Sabbath on Saturday. We see by this that the women could not come to the sepulcher on Friday or Saturday because they were both days of rest.

It is of interest to note that the disciples that removed Jesus from the cross and wrapped him in the linen and spices could not partake of the Passover (Numbers 9:6). (In effect Christ effectively fulfilling the Law of Moses and applying this fulfillment on his followers.)

When the women came to the tomb early on the 1st day of the week (John 20:1) it was by definition Sunday morning. (In this case the 17th day of Abib.) This would make from Thursday afternoon/evening to Sunday morning that Christ would have been in the

"heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). This fulfills Christ's own claim of three days and three nights being Thursday, Friday, and Saturday days and according to Hebrew chronology Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights/evenings

For those who accept the Book of Mormon as a second witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ we have additional evidence to support these claims. In Helaman 5:76 (RLDS) Samuel prophesies of three days of darkness to last from the time of his death until the time of his resurrection. We see that the prophesies of Samuel came to pass in the Third Book of Nephi Chapter 4. (In this account in the first month on the 4th day of the month that the storm arose.) (Do not confuse these months with our months in the modern calendar or with the Jewish months because we see in III Nephi 1:45 that the Nephites began to reckon their time from the time of the birth of Christ.)

To correlate the time of day when these events must have come to pass we must remember that there are approximately 8 hours difference in the time between Jerusalem and Central America where these events took place. Thus if the storm arose when Christ was hung on the cross and lasted for the three hours of the Crucifixion, it would have been very early in the morning on Thursday, probably even before the sun rose. Then is when the three days of darkness would have begun. III Nephi 4:12. It is also interesting to note that a storm and earthquake at this time of day would have had the most devastating impact since the people would not have left their homes to go to the fields or their places of work.

According to the account the darkness lasted three days (III Nephi 4:21 & 61) and in the morning the darkness dispersed. If we use the traditional account of Christ being crucified on Friday and Resurrected on Sunday lets see what it does to the Book of Mormon account that Samuel said would last from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection. (Helaman 5:75&76) The darkness would have begun early on Friday (the 1st hour) and would have lasted until Sunday morning when the darkness dispersed. This gives only 2 days and 2 nights of darkness, Friday and Friday night and Saturday and Saturday night, refuting the testimony of the Book of Mormon. If however we accept the modified account which includes the Sabbath of Unleavened bread we have the darkness beginning on Thursday morning and dispersing on Sunday morning, giving three days and three nights of darkness (Thursday and Thursday night Friday and Friday night and Saturday and Saturday night) with the darkness dispersing after the resurrection which would have occurred during the night and waking to find the sun once again shining brightly, just as we always envision Resurrection Morning.

We can also glean some additional information from the dates given in the Book of Mormon. Scholars have proven that the Mayans were one of the earliest civilizations to use the zero concept. With this in mind and taking into account that they numbered their days

from the birth of Christ his birthday would have been day 0, not yet a day since his birth. The next day would be day one and the 365th day would be his first birthday. The next day would be the start of the second year and the first day. If we take this out to its fullest extent we find that Christ had finished his 33rd year and that 4 days had passed in the 34th year making him 33 years and 4 days old at the time of his death. This would mean that his birthday would have been celebrated on Sunday Abib 10th the day the lamb was selected!

I would like to stress again that this is not written to destroy the faith of those who believe in Christ, but rather to prove to those who are weak in the faith that not only did Christ do all that he promised, but that he was the Passover lamb selected on the 10th day of Abib, a virgin male without blemish, he was prominently displayed until the 14th day at evening when he was killed in the place the Lord chose and not a bone was broken. Christ was the true Passover if we eat his flesh and drink his blood the destroying angel will pass us by on the Day of Judgment and we shall escape that eternal punishment that shall come upon all who will not accept his Passover sacrifice (John 6:53). And that all this was known and planned from the beginning and given to Moses as a shadow of things to come more than 1000 years before it came to pass. And most importantly that he did rise again the 3rd day and sits on the right hand of God to make intercession for all those who will repent and be baptized in his name.