

The Crucifixion

(Why Jesus Died on a Wednesday)

Matthew 12:40; John 19:31
~A.L. Moss, Sr., MTh.

The question of whether Jesus was crucified on Wednesday or Friday is not about choosing between tradition and speculation, but allowing scripture to interpret scripture, while maintaining theological integrity, **Matthew 12:40**.

If this statement is taken at face value, it immediately creates tension with the traditional Friday Crucifixion model because a Friday burial before sunset and a Sunday morning resurrection cannot naturally produce three nights.

A closer reading of the Gospel accounts shows that Jesus was crucified on the Day of Preparation before a Sabbath, **Mark 15:42**, but John adds an important clarification this Sabbath was a High Day, Special Day, **John 19:31**. This detail is often overlooked, yet it was critical because of the Law of Moses establishes that certain feast Days functioned as Sabbaths regardless of the day of the week, **Leviticus 23:6-7**.

This means the Sabbath following the crucifixion was not a regular Saturday Sabbath, but a Passover Sabbath. It suggests that Passion Week contained two Sabbaths: The Passover, High Sabbath in **John 19:31** and the weekend Sabbath.

This framework resolves another apparent tension in the resurrection narrative, **Mark 16:1** says the women brought spices after the Sabbath; while **Luke 23:56** says they prepared the spices and then rested on the Sabbath. This only makes coherent chronological sense, if there were two Sabbaths with a normal working day between them. In such a sequence, the women could rest on the Passover Sabbath, purchase and prepare spices on the following day, and rest again on the weekly Sabbath before visiting the tomb early on the first day of the week!

When this timeline is followed through carefully, a Wednesday crucifixion emerges as the most textually consistent model. Jesus would have been buried before sunset on Wednesday, the Passover Sabbath would occur on Thursday, the women would buy and prepare spices on Friday, the weekly Sabbath would occur Saturday and the resurrection would occur sometime before Sunday morning. Which explains why the tomb was already empty when discovered. This also satisfies the three days and three nights. Wednesday night to Thursday day forms the first cycle. Thursday night to Friday day is the second cycle and Friday night to Saturday day the third cycle. The Friday view has historically been maintained largely through ecclesiastical traditions where a portion of a day could be counted as a full day.

Theologically, the most important issue is not the preservation of tradition but the integrity of scripture and biblical writings. It's also prophetic timing, particularly in

relation to the feast of Israel. Jesus dies as the Passover Lamb, **1 Corinthians 5:7**. Is buried during the feast period. And rises in connection with the First Fruits pattern, **1 Corinthians 15:20**. The crucifixion is not just an event in history, but a fulfillment of sacred time: demonstrating that redemption unfolds according to God's calendar rather than human assumption. This also protects the deeper theological point Jesus was making. His reference to Jonah was not casual language, but prophetic precision. Just as Jonah entered what appeared to be certain death and emerged as the Victorious Son. The three days and three nights therefore, function as a declaration that His death was real. His burial was complete and His resurrection was decisive.

What remains beyond dispute is that Jesus really died, Jesus entered death's realm and truly rose in victory! He fulfilled the redemptive pattern embedded in Israel's sacred calendar.

The Scapegoat Meaning

It's a goat selected during Yom Kippur, (The Day of Atonement), ritual to symbolically carry the sins of the Israelites into the wilderness. In **Leviticus 16** the High Priest laid hands on the goat, transferring the nations iniquities before sending it away to remove the sins. The symbolism of the Scapegoat served as a visible, physical representation of sin being removed and carried away, demonstrating purification and reconciliation with God.

So, on the cross you had a rebel and a murderer named Jesus Barabass, **Matthew 27:16-18 (NIV)** and you had in the middle Jesus of Nazareth, Blameless and Holy. The crowd chose the guilty one, Barabass, to go free and Jesus the innocent one became the scapegoat, the substitute to die for all humanity. That's not a mistake. That's the Gospel!