

The Two Sabbaths of Passover

Most people believe that Y'shua (Jesus) died on Passover and arose on Sunday. However, is this what the Scriptures prove? In order to get the whole picture one must piece together the information given in the gospels, co-ordinating this picture with the information in the Old Testament describing what was going on during the Passover season.

We know that Y'shua celebrated the Passover in obedience to the commandments to do so given in Leviticus 23, Exodus 12 and Numbers 28:16-25. He began the events leading to His death by celebrating this event for which He instructed His disciples to prepare:

And the disciples went out, and came to the city, and found *it* just as He (Y'shua) had told them; and they prepared the Passover. Mark 14:16

After eating the Passover meal (seder), Y'shua went to the Garden of Gethsemane with the disciples to pray. (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46)

And they came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." Mark 14:32

After praying, Y'shua was arrested, tried and on the cross by 9 a.m. the next day.

And having arrested Him, they led Him *away*, and brought Him to the house of the high priest... Luke 22:54

Now when morning had come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Y'shua to put Him to death;
² and they bound Him, and led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate. Matthew 27:1-2

And it was the third hour when they crucified Him. Mark 15:25

As most everyone knows, Messiah died, was buried and resurrected. The traditional teaching says that Y'shua died on Friday, the weekly Sabbath, (good Friday) and arose on the following Sunday. However, Y'shua, HIMSELF, said,

for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of Man be **three days and three nights** in the heart of the earth. Matthew 12:40

Is it possible to get three days AND three nights from Friday to Sunday? No, it is not. Therefore, from Messiah's own words we can see that this teaching cannot be correct. Therefore, exactly what did happen?

Leviticus 23 gives us the important and "missing" information in the traditional teaching. Because we have not bothered to put the New Testament account into its Old Testament framework, we have misunderstood and misconstrued the events of the Passover season in which Y'shua died and was resurrected. Therefore, to understand what happened, let's look at this missing info.

⁵In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight (*when God says a new day begins) is Yahweh's Passover.

⁶ 'Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to Yahweh; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.

⁷ 'On the first day you shall have **a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.**

⁸ 'But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to Yahweh. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.'" Leviticus 23:5-8 (*my commentary)

This passage tells us that the Passover is on the 14th and the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins the 15th; they are back-to-back. The first day (and the last day) of the Feast of Unleavened Bread **is a Sabbath**. This is a “special” Sabbath, also called a “high Sabbath”. Therefore, the Sabbath for which Y’shua had to be removed from the cross was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, not the weekly Sabbath. (The weekly Sabbath does play a part in Y’shua’s timeline, which we will shortly see.) Unlike the weekly Sabbath that is every Friday night to Saturday night, this special Sabbath can fall on any day of the week.

Are there New Testament Scriptures that give us this information about this special Sabbath? Yes, there are:

⁵²...this man (Joseph of Arimathea) went to Pilate and asked for the body of Y’shua.

⁵³ And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.

⁵⁴ And **it was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin**. Luke 23:52-54

³¹ The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (**for that Sabbath was a high day**) John 19:31

⁴² Therefore on account of **the Jewish day of preparation**, because the tomb was nearby, they laid Y’shua there. John 19:42

Passover is not a Sabbath. It is the day of preparation for the High Sabbath that is the first day of the (seven day) Feast of Unleavened Bread.¹ Y’shua died on Passover, but was removed from the cross before sunset, which began the High Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

⁷ 'On the first day you shall have a **holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.**

On a Sabbath no work is done, therefore, the women could not prepare Y'shua's body for burial. Y'shua was removed from the cross, wrapped in linen and placed in a tomb.

⁴⁶ And *Joseph* bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mark 15:46

Because of the encroaching High Sabbath, the linen wrapping was all that time allowed to be done for Y'shua. Under the torah (law) one could not buy or sell on a Sabbath.

As for the peoples of the land who bring wares or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or a holy day; Nehemiah 10:31

Therefore, the women could not obtain the necessary items to properly anoint His body and bury Y'shua. However, once the High Sabbath was over, the women could buy what they needed for this task.

And **when the Sabbath was over**, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, **bought spices**, that they might come and anoint Him. Mark 16:1

Since there were no food processors or machinery during the first century, this was a time consuming, laborious task. On the day after the High Sabbath, the women purchased the spices and spent the day preparing them to anoint Y'shua's body. However, they were once again delayed, this time by the weekly Sabbath.

⁵⁵ Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed after, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.

⁵⁶ And they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And **on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.**

¹ But **on the first day of the week**, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. Luke 23:55 - 24:1

Thus far, Y'shua has died, been placed in a tomb as the High Sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. The women were forced to wait for that evening and day to pass. The next morning after the Sabbath when the shops were open, they purchased the spices and prepared them to anoint Y'shua's body. They then had to rest for the weekly Sabbath to pass. Since there were no electric lights to enable them to work at night, they waited until morning on the first day of the week, Sunday, to go to the tomb to prepare His body. When they arrived, the tomb was empty. Does this mean that Y'shua arose on that day, or was tomb empty because He had already arisen?

To make all of these events fit, we can count backwards from the weekly Sabbath and figure out what evening Y'shua and the disciples had the Passover meal and what day He was crucified. The timeline of events would look like this:

Tuesday night – Passover Seder (meal), prayer in Gethsemane, arrested,

brought before the Jews

Wednesday morning – before Pilate, on the cross by 9 a.m., dead by 3 p.m.²

Wednesday night – Y'shua in the tomb – **first night**, High Sabbath begins

Thursday – Y'shua in the tomb – **first day**, High Sabbath,

Thursday night – Y'shua in the tomb, **second night**, end of High Sabbath

Friday – Y'shua in the tomb, **second day**, spices bought & prepared

Friday night – Y'shua in the tomb, **third night**, weekly Sabbath begins

Saturday – Y'shua in the tomb **third day**, weekly Sabbath

Saturday Night – Y'shua **NOT IN THE TOMB**, End of weekly Sabbath

In order for Y'shua's words to be fulfilled of three days AND three nights in the earth, ***He could not have spent a fourth night in the tomb!*** Therefore, sometime before sunset and the end of Saturday, Y'shua arose.

Would Y'shua's resurrection on Sabbath violate torah (the "law")? The torah instructs us to do no work on the Sabbath; could Y'shua rising from the dead be considered work? What did Y'shua say about this?

If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Matthew 12:11-12

This passage refers to healing on the Sabbath. Rising from the dead to bring eternal life to the world would certainly be a bigger "good" to do on the Sabbath!

Y'shua also told us:

For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Matthew 12:8

(also Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5)

HE is Lord over the Sabbath, not the Sabbath lord over Him! As the Word of God (John 1:1-5), He was the author of the Sabbath commandments. Would the author's writing have more authority than the author, Himself?

When the women arrived at the first opportunity to see what they had come to do, Y'shua had already arisen! He was gone. He did NOT rise on Sunday. He arose on Saturday, as the Lord of the Sabbath.

⁵ And the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I

know that you are looking for Y'shua who has been crucified.

⁶ "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Matthew 28:5-6

(Also Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:2-7; Luke 24:1-3)

The tradition of Y'shua dying on "good Friday" and rising from the dead on Sunday has long been the justification of believers changing the seventh day Sabbath God instructed His people to keep, to Sunday, as the supposed "day He arose." The question begs to be asked: where in Scripture does GOD give us permission to change His Sabbath to ANY day other than the day He ordained: the seventh day of the week?

Each reader will have to decide whether they will hold to the traditions they have been taught, or whether the Word of God will be their "bottom line" and ultimate guide. If the later is chosen, then that reader will have a choice to make: will they keep the Sabbath God ordained and has never changed³, or will they keep the Sabbath that men created?

The choice is yours: obey God or men.

FOOTNOTES:

¹Scripture can be confusing at times because it calls this season either the Passover Season and because unleavened bread is eaten from Passover throughout the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread, sometimes Scripture includes Passover into the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching. Luke 22:1

³ Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

⁴ And when he had seized him (Stephen), he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. Acts 12:3-4

²(Matthew 27:45-46; Mark 15:33-34; Luke 23:44-49)

³(If you think it has, find just ONE Scripture to prove it)