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# When Was Christ *Really* Crucified?

*There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.*  
CW 35

When was Christ crucified?

Your answer is probably: “Friday!”

O.K. But give some specifics. Say more.

“Well, Jesus ate the last supper with His disciples Thursday night. He was crucified at 9 a.m. Friday morning, and died at 3 p.m. Friday afternoon – right at the time of the evening sacrifice.”

Good answer. It is the most commonly held view of the Passion week.

It is possible you may have answered: “He was crucified on Wednesday!”

The belief that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday is based on one of two premises:

1. That three 24-hour time periods were required to fulfill the prophecy of Matthew 12:40: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”
2. That Passover, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, as calculated by the luni-solar calendar fell on a Julian Wednesday in A.D. 31.

Christ *was* crucified on the sixth day of the week, on the Passover. This is clearly spelled out in John 19:31: “The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was a high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”

This text is highly significant. It establishes that the crucifixion occurred on the sixth day of the week. The Jews did not *name* their week days - they numbered them. The only two days of the week that were named were the sixth day (“the preparation”) and the seventh day (the Sabbath.)

It is a fact that Christ was crucified on the Passover. But what does it mean “that sabbath day was a high day”?

The answer is found in Leviticus 23:4-7:

These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD’s Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

Remember, when the months started with the first appearance of the new moon, and then they counted the six work days until the next Sabbath on the eighth of the month, the fifteenth was also a seventh-day Sabbath. (8 + 7 = 15). Of the seven additional “Sabbaths” listed in Leviticus 23, three of them *always* fell on the seventh day Sabbath and those Sabbaths were referred to as High Sabbaths.

John 19:31 is important for another reason as well - it shows that Christ, as the great anti-typical Lamb, fulfilled all of the *types* brought forth in the sanctuary service. He was crucified at the time of the morning sacrifice on the day of the Passover (9 a.m.) and died right at the time of the evening sacrifice (3 p.m.) He rested in the tomb over the Sabbath (which was also a High Sabbath, because it was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) and was raised back to life at dawn on the first day of the week which fulfilled Leviticus 23:9-11:

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

The Passover, as spelled out in Lev. 23:5, always fell on the 14th of the month, the sixth day of the week and the preparation day. The first day of unleavened bread was always on the seventh-day Sabbath, and the wave sheaf of first fruits, typified by Christ’s resurrection, was always offered to the Lord on the second day of Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was always the first day of the week.

In Desire of Ages is this confirming quote: “Trouble seemed crowding upon trouble. On the sixth day of the week they had seen their Master die; on the first day of the next week they found themselves deprived of His body, and they were accused of having stolen it away for the sake of deceiving the people.”<sup>1</sup>

Christ, as the great antitypical Lamb, fulfilled all of the types of the sanctuary service as spelled out in Leviticus 23: on the 14th of the month (the sixth day of the week) He was crucified; He

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<sup>1</sup> DA 794

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rested in the tomb over the seventh-day Sabbath (which always fell on the 15th) and He was resurrected on the 16th – the first day of the week when first fruits were waved before the Lord. The reason that this is so important to understand is because it is here, more than any other place, there is proof that the cycle of Biblical, luni-solar calendar weeks do not coincide with the continuous successive cycle of Julian/Gregorian calendar weeks.

The first installment of papers from the Grace Amadon Collection, was confusing because of how much focus was spent on the date of the crucifixion. We had thought more attention would be given to Day of Atonement in 1844. In roughly 3,000 pages, the bulk of the collection, a significantly large portion of it is concerned with the date of the crucifixion.

Why? *Because it is the date of the crucifixion that is the linchpin on which hang all other dates of the 2300 day prophecy.* There were three decrees to restore and build Jerusalem. Only one of them, the third in 457 B.C., reached to the life of Christ. The 2300 day prophecy is really just a math equation. From 2300, subtract 457 B.C. (subtract because it is B.C.) and the answer is A.D. 1843, the original date William Miller believed Christ would return. Next, one year must be added because there is no 0 year - something the Millerites did not initially take into account. The prophecy equation looks like this:  $(2300 - 457) + 1 = 1844$ . The 70 weeks (490 years) precisely pinpoint A.D. 31 as the year of Christ's crucifixion.

William Miller was one of the first to understand that the “70 week prophecy” of Daniel 9 was a continuation of the prophecy of Daniel 8.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people . . . Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and three score and two weeks: . . . And after three score and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off . . . And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease . . .” (Daniel 9:24-27).

Seventy weeks in prophetic time (1 day = 1 year) is 490 years. Christ was “cut off” in “the midst of the week” – in the middle of that last seven year time period, He was crucified. By knowing the date of the crucifixion, the student of prophecy can count ahead 3 1/2 years to the end of that “week”, then count *back* 490 years (490 years = 490 days prophetic time = 70 weeks) to when the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem went forth. From the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem, 2300 years is counted ahead to find the ending of the 2300 day time prophecy.

The seventieth week of Daniel 9 embraces the years A.D. 27–34. It is in the “midst” of these years that Christ was crucified. Miller initially believed that Christ was crucified in A.D. 33.<sup>2</sup> He was in good company. The Roman Catholic Church, as well as most Protestants, teach that Christ was crucified in A.D. 33. Sir Isaac Newton (who was also a theologian and wrote more on theology than on science) believed that Christ was crucified in A.D. 34. To the authors’

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<sup>2</sup> L. E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Review & Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1982, Vol. 4, 478.

knowledge, Seventh-day Adventists are the only ones who believe and teach that Jesus Christ was crucified in A.D. 31. The reason for this is as simple as it is stunning: *it is impossible to have a Friday crucifixion in A.D. 31*. Remember, Jesus *was* crucified on the sixth day of the week, but what this fact reveals is that the sixth day of the Biblical luni-solar week in A.D. 31 did not coincide with a Julian Friday.

The Biblical way of reckoning time is very simple and very consistent. Once the new moon is found for Nisan, all that is necessary is to count up 14 days to arrive at Passover - the day on which Christ was crucified. The first month of the year, because it was tied to the barley harvest, provided that the paschal full moon occurred between Julian/Gregorian April 8 and May 6.

Sir Isaac Newton, however, because he lacked knowledge of certain chronologies, did not consider any year before A.D. 31. He considered the years A.D. 31–36 and made a compelling case for why he believed that Christ was crucified in A.D. 34:

I take it for granted that the passion was on Friday the 14th day of the month Nisan, the great feast of the Passover on Saturday the 15th of Nisan,<sup>3</sup> and the resurrection on the day following. Now the 14th day of Nisan always fell on the full moon next after the vernal equinox; and the month began on the new moon before, not at the true conjunction, but at the first appearance of the new moon: . . . Computing, therefore, the new moons of the first month according to the course of the moon . . . and thence counting 14 days, I find that the fourteenth day of this month in the year of Christ 31 fell on Tuesday March 27; in the year 32, on Sunday, April 13; in the year 33, on Friday April 3 . . . .

The 14th day of Nisan will fall in the year of Christ 31, on Wednesday, March 28; in the year 32, on Monday, April 14; in the year 33, on Friday, April 3; in the year 34, on Friday, April 23; in the year 35, on Wednesday, April 13 . . . By this comparison therefore the year 32 is absolutely excluded, because the Passion cannot fall on Friday without making it five days after the full moon, or the next day. For the same reason the years 31 and 35 are excluded, because in them the Passion cannot fall on Friday, without making it three days after the full moon, or four days before it: errors so enormous, that they would be very conspicuous in the heavens to every vulgar eye. . . . Thus, all the characters of the Passion agree to the year 34; and that is the only year to which they all agree.<sup>4</sup>

Newton was a prisoner of his own time. He knew the basics of how the Jewish calendar worked, and yet he was trying to find a Friday crucifixion. It does not work. Seventh-day Adventists have the light of the 2300 day prophecy. October 22, 1844, the ending date of that prophecy, is a nail in a sure place. The only way for the 2300 day prophecy to end in 1844 is if Jesus was crucified in A.D. 31. Because Newton reckoned that the Passover fell on Wednesday, March 28

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<sup>3</sup> Here Newton makes a mistake. He places the Passover on the 15th of Nisan in clear contradiction to the date given it in Lev. 23 - Passover on Nisan 14; first day of Feast of Unleavened Bread on Nisan 15.

<sup>4</sup> I. Newton, *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse*, 1733, pp. 160-168; quoted in "Quotations, Translation and Miscellaneous Materials Related to Karaite Calendar", Box 6, Folder 3, Grace Amadon Collection.

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in A.D. 31, he discounted it as the year in which Christ was crucified. Notice that Newton actually gave two dates for Nisan 14 in A.D. 31: Tuesday, March 27, and Wednesday, March 28. This is because he believed that the Jews counted their days from sunset to sunset.

One calendation principle of which Newton was apparently unaware was that the Jewish New Year was tied to the barley harvest and not the vernal equinox. Consequently, no Passover ever fell in March. The first visible new moon *after* the harvest was ready in A.D. 31 appeared the evening of Wednesday, April 11, making Nisan 1 fall on Thursday, April 12. Thirteen days later, Nisan 14 fell on the full moon of *Wednesday*, April 25. The Passover always fell on the full moon and Ellen White confirms that the moon was full the night of Christ's betrayal: "In company with His disciples, the Saviour slowly made His way to the Garden of Gethsemane. The Passover moon, broad and full, shone from a cloudless sky."<sup>5 6</sup>

Astronomers confirm that the full moon for that month was Wednesday, April 25.<sup>7</sup> In considering the different possible dates for the crucifixion, Astronomer Karl Schoch wrote:

I now come to the year 31 A.D. when the new moon for the Nisan new light came on April 10, 2:10 in the afternoon, Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup> After 28 hours, on the eve of April 11, at this time of the year, every new light is quite easily seen in Jerusalem . . . 1 Nisan = April 12; 14 Nisan = April 25, Wednesday; 15 Nisan = April 26, Thursday.<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly enough, Schoch's very accurate calculations of the visible new moon A.D. 31 led him to reject that year as the year of Christ's crucifixion. He, like Newton, was a prisoner of his own time in trying to force a Julian Friday crucifixion.

God's people today can be more accurate. Unlike these noted astronomers, Seventh-day Adventists have the truth of the 2300 day prophecy. They *know* that Christ was crucified in A.D. 31 because the 70th week of Daniel 9 ended in the fall of A.D. 34 and the full 2300 days ended on Oct. 22, 1844. These dates for A.D. 31 are proven by the Astronomical Applications Department of the United States Naval Observatory.

Because most people are not astronomers, the cycles of the moon are not understood. They can appear confusing and arbitrary. Nothing could be further from the truth. The motion of the moon is very predictable. If the correct mathematical formula is known, anyone can calculate it on a piece of paper just like Karl Schoch and Sir Isaac Newton did.

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<sup>5</sup> DA 685

<sup>6</sup> Some, in light of USNO calculations, interpret this to mean that Passover and Christ's crucifixion fell on Thursday, April 26. Either way, a Friday crucifixion is impossible as proven by accurate lunar calculations.

<sup>7</sup> See astronomical tables at the end of this chapter.

<sup>8</sup> Remember, the astronomical "new moon" is when the sun, moon and earth are in conjunction and no new moon can be seen. The Jews started their months at the first *visible* new moon.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Schoch, "The Crucifixion of Christ on 14 of Nisan", Berlin-Steglitz, August 20, 1927 as quoted in "Translations of Various Scientific Documents: On Lunar Calendar and the Crucifixion Date", Box 2, Folder 5, Grace Amadon Collection.

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For those who do not have quite that level of mathematical ability, those calculations are done by computer at the U. S. Naval Observatory (USNO). The USNO calculations list *Wednesday*, April 25, as the full moon. One cannot argue with these figures. They are accurate. The idea that there has been a continuous cycle of uninterrupted weeks ever since Creation is wrong. It is true that the *week* as a measurement of time is still the original length – seven days. But clearly, the *cycle* of weeks never was intended to be continuous as the lunar months interrupted it.

The church has to deal with this truth. It cannot be shrugged off with, “Well, if the Bible and Ellen White don’t agree with the U. S. Naval Observatory, you know which one is wrong – it’s the U. S. Naval Observatory!” It is not wrong. Ellen White confirmed that Jesus was crucified on the sixth (not fourth) day of the week. In A.D. 31, the sixth day of the luni-solar week, fell on a Julian *Wednesday*; the seventh-day Sabbath (and first day of Feast of Unleavened Bread) fell on a Julian *Thursday*; and First Fruits, the resurrection on the first day of the week, fell on a Julian *Friday*.

To insist that the USNO must be wrong because this does not fit preconceived opinions shows not only ignorance of the accuracy and precision of their calculations, but it is also skating onto thin ice. The very same lunar calculations used by the USNO that reveal Christ was crucified on a Julian *Wednesday* also prove that the tenth day of the seventh month in 1844 was indeed October 22.<sup>10</sup> It cannot be both ways. Either they are both correct, or they are both wrong. These precise calculations are also demonstrable on perpetual lunawheels which show lunations for specific dates for thousands of years.<sup>11</sup>

This inspired council should be heeded by the people of God:

Lay at the door of investigation your preconceived opinions and your hereditary and cultivated ideas. You will never reach the truth if you search the Scriptures to vindicate your own ideas. Leave these at the door, and with a contrite heart go in to hear what God has to say . . .

Do not carry your creed to the Bible and read the Word in the light of your former opinions. Do not try to make everything agree with your creed. Search the Word carefully and prayerfully with a mind free from prejudice. If as you read conviction comes, and you see that your most cherished opinions are not in harmony with the Word, do not try to make the Word fit these opinions. Make your opinions fit the Word. Do not allow what you have believed or practiced in the past to control your understanding. Open the eyes of your mind to behold wondrous things out of the law. Find out what is written, and then plant your feet on the eternal Rock.<sup>12</sup>

God is restoring to His people the knowledge of His original clock/calendar. The remnant are those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; “they are called virgins, because they profess

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<sup>10</sup> Refer to chart at end of previous chapter.

<sup>11</sup> The lunawheel is a circular slide-rule moon-phase calendar. It can be used to determine the moon phase for any date between January 1, A.D. 1 and December 31, A.D. 4000. It is available from [www.lunawheel.com](http://www.lunawheel.com).

<sup>12</sup> MR No. 209, 431 & 432.

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a pure faith.”<sup>13</sup>

A common response is, “Would God really allow the knowledge of His true Sabbath to be so lost? Wouldn’t He at least preserve a knowledge of the proper *day*?”

The answer to that is found in Lamentations 2:6: “The LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths<sup>14</sup> to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.”

Since He (Christ) made all things, He made the Sabbath. By Him it was set apart as a memorial of the work of creation. It points to Him as both the Creator and the Sanctifier . . . Speaking of Israel, He said, “I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them,” – make them holy. Ezekiel 20:12. Then the Sabbath is a sign of Christ’s power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God.<sup>15</sup>

The Sabbath is a holy thing and to those who do not properly value it and treat it with the reverence it deserves, they will lose the privilege of knowing about the true Sabbath. That text in Lamentations was written as an explanation for the last generation. “Each of the ancient prophets spoke less for their own time than for ours, so that their prophesying is in force for us.”<sup>16</sup> In times of apostasy, when the people did not follow the Lord, they went into captivity and their privilege to keep the Sabbath at all was taken from them. The next chapter will cover just what led to a loss of the knowledge of the true Sabbath; the disregard for it that led the Lord to cause “the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion.”<sup>17</sup>

In speaking of the joy in Heaven over Christ’s triumph at His death, Ellen White states:

Now Jesus rested from the work of redemption; and though there was grief among those who loved Him on earth, yet there was joy in heaven. Glorious to the eyes of heavenly beings was the promise of the future. A restored creation, a redeemed race, that having conquered sin could never fall, – this, the result to flow from Christ’s complete work, God and angels saw. With this scene the day upon which Jesus rested is forever linked . . . *When there shall be a “restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21), the creation Sabbath, the day on which Jesus lay at rest in Joseph’s tomb, will still be a day of rest and rejoicing.* Heaven and earth will

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<sup>13</sup> COL 406

<sup>14</sup> To argue that this cannot apply to the seventh-day Sabbath, but rather to the feasts, is inconsistent with the well-known texts: “Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them” (Ez. 20:12) and “Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you” (Ex. 31:13). The word translated “sabbaths” in all three texts, Ez. 20:12, Ex. 31:13 and Lam. 2:6 is the same: #7676 – “intermission, i.e. (spec.) the Sabbath” (James Strong, *Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990, 112.)

<sup>15</sup> DA 288

<sup>16</sup> 3SM 338

<sup>17</sup> Lam. 2:6

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unite in praise, as “from one Sabbath to another” (Isaiah 66:23) the nations of the saved shall bow in joyful worship to God and the Lamb.<sup>18</sup>

In the time of Christ, there were only two calendars in use: the pagan solar calendar established by a Roman emperor in 46 B.C., and the Jewish luni-solar calendar established by God at Creation. Which calendar do you think the Jews (and Jesus) used for calculating their days of worship?

Let God’s people honor Him by worshiping Him on the “creation Sabbath, the day on which Jesus lay at rest in Joseph’s tomb.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> DA 769-770, emphasis supplied.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

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This calendar shows the phases of the moon, as per United States Naval Observatory calculations, for March A.D. 31. The conjunction (or black moon) appeared on March 12, with the first visible crescent on March 14. This made Passover too early for the barley harvest to be ready for the wave sheaf offering on the second day of Feast of Unleavened Bread. Consequently, it was declared an embolismic year and the 13<sup>th</sup> month, Veadar, was intercalated to bring the lunar year back into alignment with the solar year.

<b>March, A.D. 31</b>						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 ●	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27 ○	28	29	30	31
Phases of the Moon: 5:☾ 12:● 20:☾ 27:○						

Nisan 1 in A.D. 31 corresponded to the Julian date of April 12, the conjunction being on April 10. The 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan thus fell on April 25, a Julian Wednesday. In the key at the bottom of the chart, the USNO confirms that the full moon appeared on April 25.

<b>April, A.D. 31</b>						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 ●	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 ○	26	27	28
29	30	Phases of the Moon: 3:☾ 10:● 18:☾ 25:○				