

# “Three Days and Three Nights”

Or

## Jesus In The Grave Seventy-Two Hours

By L. F. Gill

In the preface to this article Bro. Gill states: “These pages were written without any notes or corrections — written in haste. There are many repetitions for which I make no apology. My one aim was to make the subject clear. If you seek the truth concerning Him of whom I write it will be a blessing to you. I urge your careful, prayerful study.”.

### INTRODUCTION

Many people believe our Lord was crucified on Friday and rose from the grave on Sunday morning — that He was in the grave two nights and one day, or about thirty six hours. This is the teaching of the Catholic Church and is accepted by many others without any attempt to know the truth of God’s Word.

Jesus said, “For as Jonas 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” (Mt. 12:40; Jonah 1:17) Very clearly we see the “Friday to Sunday” theory does not fulfill the words of our Lord — one is 36 hours — the other is 72 hours.

Several years ago I decided to find the *truth* of God’s Word on this important subject regardless of the study required — to find “what saith the scriptures?” In the following pages I give you the result of a long, careful, open study of God’s Word. I challenge you to study it with an open mind — to check me with the Word of God.

I will show you that Jesus did not enter Jerusalem on Sunday — so there is no “Palm Sunday.” He was crucified on Wednesday instead of Friday — so there is no “Good Friday.” He rose Saturday evening instead of Sunday morning — so there is no “Easter Sunday.”

### A STUDY OF THE REGULAR SABBATHS

1. Exodus 16:23-30. The Sabbath first commanded to Israel.
2. Exodus 20:8-11. The fourth commandment —

“Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.” The *seventh* day of the week was always a *sabbath*. Nothing ever altered this. There were a number of *special* sabbaths in connection with the Feasts but these were in addition to the regular Sabbaths. It was possible for Israel to have three Sabbaths in a week — one regular Seventh-Day Sabbath, and two *special* Sabbaths in connection with the Feasts. The Seventh day was *always* a Sabbath. Every Sabbath day — whether the regular seventh day or the *special* feast day or the special feast day Sabbath — was a *holy day*. No labor could be performed.

3. Exodus 31:12-17. The Sabbath is a *sign* between the Lord and Israel. It is a type of the Israelite Kingdom (See Heb. 4).

“Six days shall work be done: but the *seventh* is the Sabbath of rest, an *holy convocation*.” Remember this — you will need it. Just fix in your mind that each seventh day was a *sabbath* — a holy day — an holy convocation — a day in which there was no labor.

### A STUDY OF THE SPECIAL SABBATHS OBSERVED BY ISRAEL

God not only commanded Israel to observe the regular “seventh day” Sabbath but He also commanded a number of *special* Sabbaths in connection with the great feasts. Study Leviticus 23. In verses 5-8 we find that in the first month the 15th and 21st were Sabbath days. Verses 23-32 tells us the 1st and 10th days of the seventh month were Sabbaths or holy convocations. You readily see these two Sabbaths were not seven days apart. Then in verses 33-39 we find that the 15th and 22nd of this seventh month were also Sabbaths. So, in the seventh month in addition to the regular seventh-day Sabbaths there were *four* special Sabbaths — the 1st, 10th, 15th, and 22nd. *Remember* — all these special Sabbaths in Lev. 23 were on *fixed* days of the month. Always they came on a certain day of the month regardless of the day of the week. This is very important. Study it until it is clear to you.

## A SPECIAL SABBATH ALWAYS FOLLOWED THE PASSOVER

1. Exodus 12:3-6, 18. The Passover lamb was selected on the 10th day of the first month (Nisan — our April). The lamb was kept until the 14th. It was killed and eaten on the *night* of the 14th of the same month. “In the fourteenth day of the first month at *even* is the Lord’s Passover” (Lev. 23:5). The Passover was always eaten on the *night* of the 14th of the first month.

In reckoning the time *remember* — while our day begins at *midnight*, their day began at sunset. To put it in our terms let us say, their day began at 6:00 P.M. — that is our 6:00 P.M. So they ate the Passover in the early or first hours of the 14th — just after it began at 6:00 P.M. Jewish historians tells us they always killed the lambs in the late evening or last hours of the 13th — just before the 14th began at 6:00 P.M.

2. The 15th or day following the eating of the lamb, was always a Sabbath or holy convocation. It is important to see that this 15th day of the month was *always* a Sabbath regardless of the day of the week. Leviticus 23:5-7 reads, “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* (15th) ye shall have an holy convocation: *ye shall do no servile work* therein.” This plain passage fixes — once and forever — the fact that the 15th or day following the eating of the Passover was *always* a Sabbath or holy convocation.

This is important to see for here many have been confused. The Gospels make it clear that our Lord was crucified on a day before a Sabbath. Without any study

of the Scriptures many have taken it for granted this was a regular Saturday-Sabbath and therefore He had to be crucified on Friday. This is the result of failure to *study*.

Here it is in a “nut shell.” Jesus ate the Passover in the first hours of Wednesday the 14th — just after 6:00 P.M. (We would call this Tuesday night). Then He went to the Garden — was arrested — tried — and the next day crucified — still Wednesday the 14th. He was crucified on the same day in which He ate the Passover. Then at 6:00 P.M. Wednesday evening the 15th began — this *special* Passover Sabbath. Now study John 19:31 which reads, “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 an high day*,) besought Pilate that their legs be broken, and that they might be taken away.” It is all so clear. This *high* Passover Sabbath — the *Highest* of all the year — would begin at 6:00 P.M. and they must hasten the removal of the bodies. Work could be done on the 14th but no work on the 15th. Note this also, the 14th (day He was crucified) was called the *preparation* or preparation day. It was the *preparation* for this highest of all Sabbaths. The 15th — this *high* day — was the day that was called the “Passover.” Study this until it is clear to your mind.

## HOW LONG WAS THE BODY OF JESUS IN THE GRAVE?

Those who accept the “Friday to Sunday” theory of His burial say He was in the grave part of Friday, all of Saturday and part of Sunday and this accounts for the three days. This is a weak effort to “explain away” the plain words of God. When a “theory” is at variance with the plain Word — change the theory — not the Word.

In Matthew 12:40 Jesus said, “For as Jonas 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.”

If we had no evidence of when He was crucified or when He rose I would still say He stayed in the grave three full days and three full nights — a full seventy two hours — for *His* Word never fails (Mt. 24:35). Any theory that does not account for the *three days* and *three nights* of His word is false. If He was in the grave only from Friday evening till Sunday morning His Word failed. In these words Jesus makes Jonah’s stay in the whale a type of His burial. In Jonah 1:17 we read, “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish *three days* and *three nights*.” Words cannot be plainer than these.

### READ THE BAPTIST CHALLENGE

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Any school boy can read these words and tell you how long Jonah was in the fish — *three days and three nights* — 72 hours. Who will dare make these plain words of God mean less than that? Then Jesus had to be in the grave 72 hours to fulfill the type of Jonah.

In several places Jesus said He would rise the third day or that on the third day He would rise (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; Mk. 8:31; 10:34). Those who hold the “Friday to Sunday” theory make much of this — that He would rise the *third day* — which they say was Sunday. But a little study of Matthew 27:62-64 will reveal very clearly that the “third day” meant the same as “after three days” — the *third day* was “*after three days*” had expired — at the *end* of 72 hours. Now let this be a *fixed point* — Jesus was in the grave 72 hours. He had to be — for He said He would be — His Word cannot fail.

*When did our Lord rise from the dead?* This point is very clearly fixed by the Word of God — to open minds. Matthew 28:1 (King James Version) reads, “In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary *to see the sepulchre.*”

Matthew 28:1 (American Standard Version) reads, “Now *late* on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary *to see the sepulchre.*”

Matthew 28:1 (Moffatt’s Translation) reads, “*At the close* of the sabbath, as the first day of the week was *dawning*, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary *went to look at the tomb.*”

Forget the “theory” — let God speak. At the *end* of the Sabbath — Late on the Sabbath — at the close of the Sabbath — just at 6:00 P.M. when the first day of the week began — these two women came to look at the tomb. *God* fixes the time of this visit definitely. It was just at the time when the regular Sabbath closed and the first day of the week began — definitely at 6:00 P.M. Saturday. Note that this was a *regular* Saturday-Sabbath for it was followed by the first day of the week — this was not a *high* Sabbath.

As you continue reading Matthew 28:1-8 you find what these women *saw* at 6:00 P.M. Saturday evening. They saw the earthquake and the angel roll back the stone, etc. They heard this angel announce that Jesus was risen from the dead. They were invited to *see* the place where the Lord lay, etc. You cannot read this passage with an *open mind* and not be convinced that Jesus rose from the dead at the *close* of the Sabbath as the first day of the week dawned or began. God very definitely fixes the *very minute* of His resurrection.

Now bear this in mind — Matthew records the visit

of the women on Saturday evening — at the close of the Sabbath — at 6:00 P.M. Mark, Luke and John all record the visit of the women the next morning — early Sunday morning — about daylight. The two visits are not the same. Saturday evening the two women came to *see the tomb*. Sunday morning they came with spices to anoint His body. It is all so clear when you let the Word mean what it says instead of trying to make it “fit a theory.” Just read it and *believe* it as God wrote it.

### WHEN WAS JESUS BURIED?

Now remember we have *two fixed points* — fixed by the Word of God. First, He was in the grave 72 hours. Second, He rose Saturday evening at 6:00 P.M. These are definite — no argument on them. Counting back 72 hours from 6:00 P.M. Saturday places us at 6:00 P.M. Wednesday. If there was no other evidence other than the above fixed points I would be forced to say He was buried at exactly 6:00 P.M. Wednesday evening. In our terms He was in the grave *three nights* — Wednesday night — Thursday night — Friday night. And also *three days* — Thursday — Friday — Saturday — the full 72 hours.

Later on in the “Ten Eventful Days” — I will give more proof concerning the day on which He was crucified but just now let us look at the Word concerning His death and burial.

Mark 15:25 tells us He was crucified at the *third hour*. This was 9:00 A.M. when they put Him on the cross. Matthew 27:45-50, Luke 23:44-46 make it clear that He died about the *ninth hour* which was 3:00 P.M. This left only three hours until the *High* Passover Sabbath began at 6:00 P.M.

Let us note the events of these three hours. Some of this three hours was consumed in the Jews request and Pilate’s order to break the legs of those crucified (Jn. 19:30-37). Then Joseph came and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate had to make sure of the centurion that Jesus was dead. Then Joseph had to buy the linen, take Jesus down and prepare Him for burial (Mk. 15:42-46). All of this consumed time — and there were only three hours to begin with. Read carefully John 19:41-42 and you readily see Joseph had to *rush*. The Jews “preparation day” — the 14th — was coming to a close. The 15th — the *High* Passover Sabbath — was about to begin — at 6:00 P.M. He had to be buried and buried quickly. His body was placed in the tomb in the garden because it “*was nigh at hand.*” There was no time to bury Him anywhere else. The open mind can readily see that He was buried in the last minutes of the day — even at 6:00

P.M. on Wednesday. From 6:00 P.M. Wednesday to 6:00 P.M. Saturday — 72 hours.

Read carefully Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56. If you read these with an *open mind* you will be fully convinced that only *Joseph* claimed the body — took it down — wrapped it in *linen cloth* — and buried it. Nicodemus was not present that evening. The time was so short Joseph did not have time to prepare the body according to Jewish custom. Joseph did not use any *spices* in the burial. Note carefully Luke 23:50-56. The women observed this and that is the reason they prepared the spices and brought them to the tomb Sunday morning. Note Luke 23:56. The women returned and prepared the spices. These women could not prepare these spices that night or the next day for it was the High Sabbath. Then they must have prepared them Friday. Saturday was a regular Sabbath and they could not anoint His body that day. So Sunday was the time they came. The Greek word rendered linen or linen cloth in these passages means a “sleeping garment.” The same word is used in Mark 14:51-52 and rendered linen cloth. In haste Joseph simply wrapped the body in the new linen cloth — which was not the Jewish custom in burial. Matthew Mark and Luke record the *temporary* burial of Jesus by Joseph alone. Now study carefully John 19:38-42. Sometime after Wednesday evening — and it surely must have been Friday — Nicodemus joined Joseph and “They” (You do not find the plural word in other gospels — there it is “He” not “They.”) prepared the body of our Lord for final burial. Nicodemus furnished a hundred pounds of spices for this. The Greek word for linen clothes in verse 40 is different from that in the other gospels. It means “burial bandages.”

Note verse 40 which reads, “Then took *they* the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, *as the manner of the Jews is to bury.*” But what was the Jew’s manner of burial? They used narrow strips of linen cloth and wrapped or wound the body with the spices which was a gummy substance. When they finished it was much as if the body has been wound in “adhesive tape.” Such preparation of a body required time — *time*, which Joseph did not have Wednesday evening. After Christ rose it was seeing these undisturbed “burial bandages” that made John the *first* believer in His resurrection (See John 20:1-10).

I am confident this final preparation was made Friday — the day between the two Sabbaths. If someone objects because the tomb was then under guard by the soldiers, then just remember both Joseph and Nicodemus were very prominent Jews. Both men were members of the Jewish Counsel. Besides the tomb belonged to Joseph.

These men could have enjoyed any favor from Pilate of the soldiers. The Roman guard was only to make sure His body was not taken away from the tomb (Mt. 27:62-66). The women knew the way He was buried Wednesday evening (Luke 23:50-56) but I am sure they did not know of this final preparation by Joseph and Nicodemus. Had they known it they would not have brought their spices to the grave Sunday morning.

May I answer one more question. It was lawful for the two women to go to the tomb Saturday evening — on the *Sabbath* — but they could not anoint His body on the Sabbath. After the Sabbath ended at 6:00 P.M. it was too late to do this. So, they came only to *see* — and the next morning they brought the spices — spices they never used — for He was already risen from the dead.

## THE TENEVENTFUL DAYS

I plead for a careful study of the order of events in these days.

### I. *Friday, Nisan the 9th.*

John 12:1. Jesus came to Bethany “*six days before the passover.*” He came from Jericho (Mk. 10:46-11:1). This Scripture definitely *fixes* the date when He came to Jerusalem for the last week. “Six days before the passover.” The lamb was eaten on the 14th but the 15th — the *High Sabbath* — was the day called the “Passover.” He was crucified Wednesday — but Thursday the 15th was the “Passover.” Counting back *six* days from the 15th and you have the 9th. So He came to Bethany — near Jerusalem — on Friday, Nisan 9th.

### II. *Saturday, Nisan 10th — a regular Sabbath.*

John 12:12-19 “*The next day*” — the next day after He came to Bethany. This day He entered Jerusalem riding the ass and the people spread palm branches before Him. Note — this was not “Palm Sunday” but palm Saturday. That day He entered Jerusalem and also the Temple. In the Temple He “looked around about” but did not cleanse it — *Why?* It was the Sabbath and the money changers were not at work (Read Mk. 11:1-11). He did not enter Jerusalem in the so-called “Triumphal Entry” on Sunday but on Saturday. Remember this.

### III. *Sunday, Nisan 11th — the first day of the week.*

Mark 11:12-19 gives His days work very clearly. Verses 12-14. He cursed the barren fig tree. Verses 15-19. He went into Jerusalem and cleansed

the Temple.

Verse 19. In the evening He went out of the city — watch this.

#### **IV. Monday, Nisan 12th.**

Mark 11:20 to 14:11 gives a record of this day. “*In the morning*” (11:20 — after events of 11:12-19). “They came to Jerusalem” (11:27). There He taught and answered questions. Went out to Mount of Olives and gave the “Olivet Discourse (13). 14:1-11. “*After two days* was the feast of the Passover and Unleavened bread.” This is important — it fixes this day as Monday. After two days — after Tuesday and Wednesday — would be Thursday — the High Sabbath — the day called the “Passover.”

#### **V. Tuesday Nisan 13th.**

Mark 14:12-16. “The first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the Passover.” This fixes this day as Tuesday the 13th. The day when all leaven was put out in preparation for eating the lamb that night (Ex. 12:4-8). The lambs were always killed in the late afternoon of the 13th and eaten in the early hours of the night — after 6:00 P.M. when the 14th began. On this Tuesday the disciples asked Him concerning their eating of the Passover and He told them. They went and made ready the Passover for Him — and them.

#### **VI. Wednesday, Nisan 14th — The Crucifixion day.**

Mark 14:17 to 15:47. The events of this day.

14:17 “*In the evening*” He ate the Passover (Lev. 23:5) — “When the *hour* was come” (Lk. 22:14-18) — the hour for eating Passover. He always kept the Law in every detail. After this He instituted the “Lord’s Supper” — then went to the garden where He was arrested. His trial continued through the night. The next day Pilate delivered Him for crucifixion. He was put on a cross about 9:00 A.M. and died about 3:00 P.M. He was buried about 6:00 P.M. of the same day. All of this took place on Wednesday the 14th.

#### **VII. Thursday, Nisan 15th — the High Passover Sabbath.**

Leviticus 23:5-7; Numbers 28:16-19. This 15th — the day following the eating of the lamb — the 14th — was *always* a *High Sabbath*. This High Sabbath began at 6:00 P.M. That is the reason they rushed the crucifixion and burial of our Lord. Remember, this was always a Sabbath regardless of what day of the week it came on. God only records one thing that took place on

this Special Sabbath day — the Jewish leaders asked for and received the Roman guard about the tomb (Mt. 27:62-66) — but the Roman guard could not keep Him. On this High Sabbath when the nation professed to keep the law the Great Lawgiver’s body lay in the tomb.

#### **VIII. Friday, Nisan 16th.**

This was an ordinary day — between Thursday the Passover Sabbath and Saturday the regular Sabbath. As already said in this study I am sure it was on this day the women prepared their spices for His body. Also sure it was this day Joseph and Nicodemus prepared His body for final burial — after the manner of the Jews.

#### **IX. Saturday, Nisan 17th — A Regular Seventh-day Sabbath.**

God’s Word is also silent on this day until we come to the very last minutes — and Matthew 28:1-8 records this. At the very *end* of the Sabbath — as the First Day of the week dawned — at 6:00 P.M. the two women came — not to prepare His body — but to *see* the tomb. But His *three days* and *three nights* — His 72 hours in the grave are over and He rises at the very minute. The angel rolls back the stone and announces His resurrection. But even after all they saw (Mt. 28:1-8) these women did not believe He was risen from the dead (Jn. 20:11-18). That He had actually risen from the dead was hard for them to believe. Even after Peter looked in the tomb and saw the grave clothes he “wondered in himself” (Lk. 24:12). God’s Word is plain to every open mind (Mt. 28:1-8). Jesus rose at the end of the Sabbath — at 6:00 P.M. Saturday evening instead of Sunday morning. There was no “resurrection morning” with Him.

#### **X. Sunday, Nisan 18th — The First Day of the Week.**

We repeat Matthew records the visit of the women on Saturday evening and does not mention their visit Sunday morning. Mark, Luke and John record their visit Sunday morning and do not mention their visit Saturday evening. As already said they went to properly prepare His body for burial. I am definitely sure they did not know this had been done by Joseph and *Nicodemus*. They found the grave open — two angels present — but His body gone. As you carefully read the record you will be convinced the Roman soldiers were not there Sunday morning. After the earthquake, etc. of Matthew 28:1-8 the soldiers quickly reported it all to the chief priests (Mt. 28:9-15). These soldiers were highly paid to tell a lie about His resurrection and relieved from this watch. It all “fits together” when you “rightly divide” it.

This first Sunday was filled with many wonderful things — read the four gospels. The crucified but risen Lord Jesus Christ appeared to His own that day — He died — but He lives.

If this study has been a blessing to you — *give God the glory*. Thank God for His Word — so simple and plain.