

How could Jesus have spent three days and three nights in the tomb?

This essay reveals, using evidence from the Bible, two thousand years after the events, the exact date and time of Jesus' death.

As we know, Jesus died on Friday at 3pm and rose from the dead in the early hours of Sunday morning. This can only mean that He rose from the dead no more than thirty-six (36) hours after His death, a period which includes about three (3) hours that were needed for the anointing of His body with spices and for the actual burial. This, however, contradicts what He foretold in Matt. 12:40: "For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights" This would mean a period of exactly seventy-two (72) hours. So He rose from the dead exactly seventy-two (72) hours after His burial and about seventy-five (75) hours after His death.

If we could prove on the basis of facts that believing what Jesus told us is not only a question of faith but that it happened exactly as He said it would then we could give a suitable answer to those who say that the events in question could simply not have happened in the way described. Some also allege that Jesus actually lied when He foretold that He would spend three days and three nights (in other words: seventy-two (72) hours) in the tomb. Previously this discrepancy between the thirty-six (36) and seventy-two (72) hours has been explained by arguing that Jesus spent only a certain part of each of the three (3) days in the tomb, given that the ancient Hebrews considered even a part of a day to be a whole solar day.

Let us reveal the real circumstances of Jesus' death and resurrection!

It is difficult to get access to the real facts. You might ask why? Well, there are numerous Bible translations in many different languages. Which one should we consider as our basic source? The Old Testament was mainly written in Hebrew, the New Testament in Greek. For almost every aspect of our investigation we need the New Testament. Let us take as our basic text the well-known and internationally accepted Greek translation that was edited by F.J.A. Hort and B.F. Westcott and published in 1881. It is useful to read this standard version and compare it with a word-for-word translation in order to identify any discrepancies.

Let us look at the verses that are the most important for our purposes. These four verses in the standard Bible version begin as follows: "After the Sabbath, when it was growing light on the first day of the week..." [Matt. 28:1]; "And very early on the first day of the week ..." [John 20:1] As we can see all four biblical accounts talk about the first day of the week when they speak about the women visiting Jesus' tomb after His resurrection. A word-for-word translation of the corresponding Greek texts reads as follows: "After but of sabbaths, to the [day] lighting up into one of the sabbaths.." [Matt. 28:1] "And exceedingly early to the one [day] of the sabbaths..." [Mark 16:2]; " To the but one of the sabbaths of dawn deep..." [Luke 24:1]: "To the but one [day] of the sabbaths ..." [John 20:1]; the Greek preposition "to" meaning "on".

As we can see, there is a consistent mistranslation in all four gospels rendering "one of the sabbaths" into "first day of the week". Sabbath [Saturday] is in the plural in all four (4) Gospels. Furthermore, no mention is made of the first day of the week in the original Greek text. There can be only one reason for such a consistent misinterpretation, namely that no translator has ever taken the trouble to work out why the word "sabbath" is in the plural. Instead of doing this they have all mistranslated the text. If the word "Sabbath" is in the plural, this can only mean that there were at least two Sabbaths that week. How is this possible? In Hebrew, the term "Sabbath" was used for every holiday, not only for the weekly day of rest but also for every annual holiday. **Some scholars claim that the word "Sabbath" is often used in Greek to mean a whole calendar week. In their view, which is widely shared, this is the explanation of the use of the plural of the word "Sabbath" in the four Gospels. There is, however, no evidence to contradict the assertion that if the word "Sabbath" is in the plural it could mean at least two "Sabbath" days, one weekly and/or one or more annual ones.**

Bearing this in mind it is not impossible to conceive that there were at least two Sabbaths in the week when

Jesus was impaled (crucified). We should also be aware that the Hebrews called the day preceding every Sabbath the “Day of Preparation”, not Friday. Thus, there were two days of preparation in the week when Jesus was killed. Some “explanatory” or “simplified” versions of the Bible mistranslate the day before the Sabbath as Friday. What kind of Sabbath did follow the impalement of Jesus? The weekly or annual one? As we know, Jesus died on the 14th day of the month of Nisan. In the year 33 A.D. [let us use C.E.= Common Era, instead of A.D., and B.C.E.= Before Common Era, instead of B.C.], the 14th day of Nisan fell on April 1st, a Friday. From this it follows that the day following Friday was simultaneously the annual Sabbath (holiday) and the weekly Sabbath (day of rest). Some claim that John 19:31 refers to the weekly and annual Sabbaths coinciding : “...[for the day of that sabbath was a great one]...”. Jesus could not have been impaled (crucified) in the year 33 C.E. for the simple reason that Friday was followed by one Sabbath and one alone. We should note that at that time of the year sunset began at 6.00 p.m. and ended at 7.20 p.m. So Jesus’ body must have been placed in the tomb by that time at the latest, since it is written in Deut. 21:23: ‘His dead body should not stay all night on the stake, but you should bury him on that day, because something accursed of God is the one hung up;...’.

The most critical gospel is that of Matthew since he writes in Matt. 28:1: ”After but of the sabbaths...” at least a word-for-word translation renders it thus. However, we should also note that the word “After” is an incorrect translation of the Greek word “Opse” since it really means “after a long time” or “in the late part of the period following it.” This implies that the women went from the city to the tomb late on the night of Friday (or day of preparation, which was not necessarily a Friday) to Saturday (or an annual holiday) and arrived at the tomb very early, when it was still dark (John 20:1). That darkness slowly gave way to the dawn of one of the Sabbaths, which was either a regular Saturday or an annual holiday. By that time Jesus had already risen from the dead and the tomb was found to be empty.

We need to determine whether the day on which Jesus died was the day before a weekly or an annual Sabbath. Reference is made in all four gospels to Jesus having died on the day before a festival lasting seven (7) days, the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This festival began on 14 Nisan and ended in the evening of 21 Nisan. The first day (14 Nisan) and the last day were holidays with holy convention involving a religious gathering. We should allow for exactly three whole days of 24 hours each for Jesus’ stay in the tomb. To this end we must try to determine the year that contains two Sabbaths (the weekly one and an annual one) that have a seventy-two (72)-hour period between them. Later we shall see that this year can only be 31 C.E. when 14 Nisan fell on a Monday (March 24th). Nevertheless, if we assume that Jesus died on 14 Nisan at 3.00 p.m., and was buried at about 6 p.m. then four (4) whole days must have elapsed by about 6 p.m. on Friday. Some say that Jesus died on 14 Nisan because 15 Nisan was the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. **This, however, cannot be so because impalement (crucifixion) was not carried out on a day that was a holiday.** The day 14 Nisan was the day of Passover (pashka or paskha) and also the first day of the one-week Festival of Unleavened Bread. If we count the days from the evening of 15 Nisan until the evening of 21 Nisan and 15 Nisan had been the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread then the one-week festival would have only lasted six (6) days, not seven (7). Thus, 14 Nisan was the first day of the festival and also the day of the Passover, an annual Sabbath (holiday). Therefore, 14 Nisan was a holiday being both the day of Passover and also the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread; 15 Nisan was the second day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, not an annual Sabbath or holiday; and 16 Nisan was also a Sabbath, when a sheaf of the first fruits of the barley harvest was brought to the priest. The priest offered such first fruits to God symbolically by waving a sheaf of the grain to and fro, while a healthy one-year-old ram was sacrificed as a burnt offering along with an offering of grain moistened with oil and drink. The day 16 Nisan must have been of great significance, as the Harvest Festival or the Festival of Weeks, also known as “the day of the first ripe fruits”, which is the forerunner of Pentecost, was celebrated fifty days after this day. In the Jewish calendar it falls on 6 Sivan and occurred between the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest. So, as it is written in John 19:31:”... (for the day of that sabbath was a great one)...”

Thus, we can establish that there were three Sabbaths in the week when Jesus was impaled (crucified): a Sabbath on the Monday (14 Nisan), one on the Wednesday (16 Nisan), both of these being annual Sabbaths, and the Sabbath on the Saturday (19 Nisan) (i.e. a weekly one). Jesus died on Tuesday (15 Nisan) at 3.00 p.m., i.e. between the Sabbath on Monday and that on the Wednesday, and rose from the dead on Friday (18 Nisan), (at about 6 p.m., in other words, before the Saturday Sabbath and, if we allow about 3 hours for the anointing with spices and other events leading up to the burial, exactly seventy-two (72) hours after the placing of His body in the tomb). Interestingly, two days later, there was another annual Sabbath (21 Nisan), a Monday, which was the last day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This, however, has nothing to do with the preceding events.

Some other questions might arise in connection with this topic. Let us look at them one by one.

When did Jesus and His disciples eat the Passover meal? It happened “between two evenings” (between sunset and darkness) on the day of the Passover, on 14 Nisan, on a Monday (according to the Jewish calendar it was 14 Nisan 3791 / March 24th 31 C.E.). As this meal was eaten in the evening, after sunset, i.e. after 7.20 p.m. on the Monday, it was considered as having taken place on Tuesday, since the Hebrews counted their days from sunset to sunset. This means that they ate the Passover sacrifice, which would have been a one-year-old male lamb, or a young ram or goat, on the same day that Jesus died. This seems to be at odds with the fact that those who led Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium (Pilate’s Seat of Judgement) early in the day (John 18:28:/the Greek “proi” meaning “at dawn”/), which was a Tuesday, according to both systems of recording the passage of time, did not enter the governor’s palace that they might not be defiled but might eat the Passover meal. The Passover meal they hoped to finish was the remainder of the lamb, which, according to God’s commandment, they had to burn by morning if they hadn’t eaten it by then. The day of 14 Nisan was always the first day of the one-week Festival of Unleavened Bread. The first day of the festival was also a Sabbath, i.e. a holiday on which the Hebrews held a holy convention when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel gathered. This day of 14 Nisan was an annual Sabbath. It ended at sunset. Since Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover sacrifice after sunset, this was now a Tuesday, which was not an annual Sabbath day according to the Hebrews’ sunset-to-sunset system for counting the days. Thus, Jesus was impaled (crucified) on the same day (15 Nisan) and He died at 3.00 p.m. that day. It may be useful to look at the Old Testament to discover the origin of the divine command to celebrate Passover.

The Jewish people were held captive in Egypt until 1512 B.C.E. At the end of their bondage God smote the Egyptians with a total of 10 plagues. God chose the Jewish people to be His people and through them he showed His power and proved that the gods of Egypt were only imaginary and had no power at all. The ten plagues are described in the book of Exodus. The tenth plague was the death of the first-born. God instructed Moses and Aaron to slaughter a one-year-old male lamb, a young ram or goat and to take some of its blood and splash it upon the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of their houses. The houses that were daubed in this way were passed over by God’s angel. The Egyptians were unaware of these instructions so the first-born in their houses, including those of their animals, were struck down dead. Moses warned the Pharaoh of this terrible plague but it was not that the Pharaoh did not listen to him but that God who “let the Pharaoh’s heart become obstinate in order for God’s miracles to be increased in the land of Egypt.” Finally God executed His will and delivered the Jewish people from Egyptian captivity. God commanded His people to commemorate Passover as a festival to God ‘ on the day of 14 Nisan each year. The sacrificial animal had to be killed on 14 Nisan, between the two evenings, i.e. between sunset and darkness and eaten after sunset on 14 Nisan, which is the beginning of 15 Nisan. That day (14 Nisan) had to serve as a commemoration for them. They were to sacrifice lambs, young rams or goats and for seven days they were to eat unleavened bread. On the first day, (14Nisan), and on the seventh day (21 Nisan) of the one-week festival they were to hold a holy convention as mentioned above. These were the antecedents of the Passover celebrations that were going on when Jesus was impaled (crucified).

Matt 26:17 says: “On the first day of the Unfermented Cakes /Unleavened Bread/ the disciples came up to Jesus, saying: ‘Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?’” The day of the Unleavened

Bread could only be the day of 14 Nisan. If we count seven days to the evening of the 21st day (which was also a Sabbath) then it is clear that 15 Nisan cannot be the first day of the festival. It must have been 14 Nisan. The one-week Festival of Unleavened Bread was so much connected with the day of the Passover that the whole one-week festival was often referred to as the Passover. It is also worth mentioning that when Jesus instructed two of His disciples, Peter and John, to prepare the Passover sacrifice, He told them that when they entered the city they would encounter a man carrying an earthenware vessel (Luke 22:10). This could have happened even if it was a Sabbath day, i.e. the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, since work was permitted if it was related to the preparation of food and drink. The disciples would have easily found such a man carrying an earthenware vessel since such work was normally done by women.

There is something else that we must examine with regard to the period of exactly seventy-two (72) hours. Namely that this period extends from the placing of Jesus' body in the tomb until His resurrection. He lay dead for more than seventy-two (72) hours, since a certain number of things were done before 7.20 p.m., i.e. before the Sabbath began. Joseph of Arimathea needed a certain amount of time to get to the Governor's Palace and to go to Pilate and obtain Jesus' body for burial, to buy linen, to return to Golgotha, to take away Jesus' body, helped by Nicodemus, to bind it with bandages and spices (weighing about one hundred pounds), and to lay His body in the nearby tomb, and the women needed time to see how His body was placed in the tomb and to go to the city to prepare spices and perfumed oils, all this before the start of the Sabbath at 7.20 p.m. The most probable archaeological evidence shows that Golgotha was situated north or northwest of the city. The period from 3.00 p.m. (the time of Jesus' death) until 7.20 p.m. (the beginning of the Sabbath) would have been long enough to carry out the above-mentioned tasks. Here we should also bear in mind Mark 15:42 : "And at a late hour..." (not evening as some claim!)...(43) "came Joseph of Arimathea...and asked for the body of Jesus." The women, after they had prepared the spices and perfumed oils, rested on the Sabbath in accordance with the commandment (Luke 23:57). So, a Sabbath began at 7.20 p.m. This Sabbath was 16 Nisan (a Wednesday in the year 31 C.E.), the day when a sheaf of the first fruits of the barley harvest was waved in the air as an offering. Jesus was impaled (crucified) on Tuesday, 15 Nisan 31 C.E., at 3.00 p.m. and he rose from the dead on Friday, 18 Nisan 31 C.E., at about 6.00 p.m. When the women went to the tomb, very early on one of the Sabbaths (now we can affirm that it happened on the night of Friday to Saturday), they found that Jesus was no longer in the tomb.

Now let us address the question of the corruption of Jesus' body. Jesus' friend Lazarus was dead for more than three days and three nights. When Jesus resurrected him, it was the fourth day he had been in his tomb, which was in fact a cave, like that of Jesus. Ps. 16:10 relates to Jesus when it says: "For you will not leave my soul in the She'ol [common grave of mankind]. You will not allow your loyal one to see the pit [or corruption - according to other Holy Scrolls]." This means that, at least in that climate, a corpse would not begin to smell less than seventy-five (75) hours after death. Thus, Lazarus must have been dead for more than 75 hours before Jesus resurrected him.

We can mention other Biblical evidence that Jesus was at least three whole days in the tomb. Matt. 27:62 says: "The next day, which was after the Preparation the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together before Pilate, (27:63) saying: "Sir, we have called to mind that that impostor said while yet alive, 'After three days I am to be raised up' (27:64). Therefore command the grave to be made secure until the third day,...". The original Greek text includes the preposition "Meta" meaning "After". This can only mean that the chief priests and the Pharisees knew exactly that Jesus was to spend at least three days in the tomb. Though they made no mention of the three nights that Jesus also spoke about their reference to "After three days" seems to indicate three complete days of twenty-four (24) hours each.

Two disciples were on their way to Emmaus, a village situated about eleven (11) kilometres from Jerusalem, and were discussing what had happened, when they met Jesus. Their eyes were kept from recognising Him. In reply to Jesus' question they said to Him (Luke 24:21): "...yes, and besides all these things, this makes the third day since these things occurred." The original Greek text in a literal translation reads as follows:

“but indeed also with all these (things) third this day it is leading from which [time] these (things) occurred.” There is a twofold explanation for the apparent discrepancy in terms of time. One explanation is that the disciples were referring to the period of three days back as such having already occurred by the time they met Jesus. The second explanation is that the number three in the Bible is used at times to express intensity, emphasis or extra strength. Accordingly, the disciples when they referred to the three days may well have meant that the events that they were talking about had happened such a long time ago that as many as three days had gone by since then. This latter explanation is supported by the conversation that the disciples had with Jesus (Luke 24:18): “... Are you dwelling as an alien by yourself in Jerusalem and so do not know the things that have occurred in her in these days?” (Luke 24:19):”And He said to them: ‘What things?’” And then the disciples told Him about those events emphasising that they had already happened and completely finished by a time that was so long ago that three days had gone by.

If we concluded our explanation at this point, we would give rise to further questions concerning the time of Jesus’ baptism and the time and circumstances of His birth.

We are justified, then, in asking ourselves the following question:

When was Jesus born?

The answer seems simple. From the Bible we know that Jesus’ earthly life lasted thirty-three (33) and a half years. This means that if we subtract this period from the date of His death, i.e. 25th March 31 C.E., taking away thirty-three (33) full years and half a prophetic year, which is one hundred and eighty (180) days, we come to 26th September 4 B.C.E. (the question why not 25th September will be discussed later in this essay – see the prophetic four hundred and eighty-three (483) years and three (3) and a half years, counting back from Jesus’ death a total of thirty-three (33) full years and half a prophetic year, which is one hundred and eighty (180) days. Nevertheless, this statement must be supported by evidence.

Luke 3:1 says: “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was district ruler of Galilee, but his brother Phillip was district ruler of the country of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was district ruler of Abilene, 3:2 In the days of chief priest Annas and of Caiaphas, God’s declaration came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.” In that year John the Baptist baptised Jesus in the River Jordan. Some believe that this could only have happened in 29 C.E., as Tiberius reigned from 14 C.E. This is true, but we should remember that he also reigned for two years as co-regent with Augustus Caesar. Tiberius insisted that this 2-year period should be considered as part of his reign. Very probably, Luke also took account of those two years when he wrote his gospel. Thus Jesus was baptised in 27 C.E., on September 26th, which was actually the day of His thirtieth (30th) birthday. As has already been said, Jesus must have been born in 4 B.C.E. on September 26th. How can this statement be proved? At that time, Quirinius was governor of Syria. According to Josephus’ account, Quirinius was governor of Syria in 6 C.E. However, on the basis of inscriptions found in Antioch containing Quirinius’ name, many historians acknowledge that Quirinius was also governor of Syria in the B.C.E. period. So, he could have been governor when Jesus was born. Some claim that Jesus could not have been born earlier than early in October in 2 B.C.E.. This assertion becomes untenable in the light of the proof that Jesus died on 25th March 31 C.E.. According to Josephus, Herod died not long after a lunar eclipse and before Passover. There was an eclipse in 1 B.C.E., on 8th January, 18 days before 2 of the month Shebat, the day that Herod traditionally is supposed to have died upon. In the light of this and taking late September 2 B.C.E. as the time of Jesus’ birth, we must conclude that the approximately 120 days between the two events were simply not a long enough period of time for so many events to have occurred. This topic and the events of this period will be considered in more detail later, when the apparent discrepancy between the gospels of Matthew and Luke is addressed.

Now that we have proved that Jesus *could have been* born on 26th September 4 B.C.E. let us explain the obscure circumstances of Jesus’ birth by using the accounts provided by Matthew and Luke. To help us to see more clearly let us answer the following question: Two mice look through a hollow tube in daytime, one at one end of the tube and the other one at the other end, yet they cannot see one another, why? Because one mouse looks through the tube in the morning and the other one looks through it in the afternoon.

After this example we will find it easier to understand the following explanation.

There is a discrepancy between the accounts of Matthew and Luke. According to Luke, Jesus was brought 40 days after His birth to the temple in Jerusalem. According to Matthew, His parents did not go into Jerusalem but passed it by and went straight to Nazareth. Of course, this is an apparent discrepancy.

Matthew gives an account of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Now we already know that this occurred on 26th September 4 B.C.E. At that time of the year the weather was fairly mild and so the shepherds were outside with their flocks. When Jesus was born the angel of the Lord first told the shepherds of this joyful event. They had the privilege of seeing Jesus first. Luke 2:1 says "Now in those days a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus for all the inhabited earth to be registered", Luke 2:2 "this (registration) first occurred when Quirinius was governor of Syria/the original Greek text also allows for the following interpretation: this registration occurred when Quirinius was governor of Syria for the first time/; "and all people went travelling to be registered, each one to his own city." Joseph had to go to his own town, Bethlehem. They were unable to find accommodation in a house but instead found shelter in a stable, and Jesus was lying in a manger when the shepherds came to see Him. Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day and taken to the temple in Jerusalem forty (40) days after His birth. Subsequently, His parents went to Nazareth with Him. As Luke 2:41 says: "Now his parents were accustomed to go from year to year to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover." This means they were in Jerusalem by the 28th March 3 B.C.E., i.e. by the beginning of the Passover and the first day of the Festival of the Unleavened Bread (both being 14 Nisan, a Saturday). The reason they travelled to Jerusalem was now not for the registration but for the festival of Passover. Jesus was about six months old at that time. Jerusalem is about one hundred and ten (110) kilometres south of Nazareth. Bethlehem is situated on the extension of a straight line drawn through the towns of Nazareth and Jerusalem and lies ten (10) kilometres south of Jerusalem. It is unlikely, however, that Jesus' parents, with their six-month-old baby, would have journeyed roughly an extra ten (10) kilometres in order to lodge in the same house that they had stayed in six months before, when Jesus was born. The fact is that they stayed in a house and not in a stable when the astrologers from the East visited Jesus. According to Matthew, the astrologers went to Jerusalem to see the newborn king of the Jews, saying that they had seen His star in the east. On hearing this King Herod became agitated and the whole of Jerusalem with him. He gathered the chief priests and scribes and inquired of them where the Christ, i.e. the Messiah, was to be born. Matt. 2:5 says: "they said to him: 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is how it has been written through the prophet', Matt. 2:6: "And you, O Bethlehem of the land of Judah, are by no means the most insignificant among the governors of Judah; for out of you will come forth a governing one, who will shepherd my people, Israel." Then Herod spoke to the astrologers in secret and learnt from them when the star had appeared in the east. Interestingly, Herod's men knew the place where the Messiah was to be born and the astrologers knew the actual time of His birth. (Later in this essay, when addressing the question of the sixty-nine (69) week-years, i.e. the four hundred and eighty-three (483) years mentioned in the Book of Daniel, we shall discuss why the chief priests and scribes did not know the exact time when Jesus was to be born.) The star had appeared in the east about six months before. We are justified in assuming that the Magi who saw the star were Persians and that their homeland was about two thousand (2,000) to three thousand (3,000) kilometres from Jerusalem. Their journey might well have taken several months, not to mention the time spent preparing for such a long journey. When the Magi caught sight of the star in the east, Jesus had just been born in Bethlehem, was lying in a manger and had been visited by the shepherds, all this at the time of the registration decreed by Caesar Augustus. Herod sent the astrologers to Bethlehem to find Jesus and asked them to report back to him on the whereabouts of the child. Matt. 2:9 says: "... the star they had seen in the east appeared again and went ahead of them, until it came to a stop where the young child was." There was no certainty that the baby Jesus and His parents were in Bethlehem. They could have been elsewhere. The star led the astrologers to the place, to a house. They went in and presented Jesus with gifts. In a dream they were given divine instructions not to return to Herod but to go back to their own country. Joseph was also told to leave the place and to flee to Egypt with his small family. Herod realised that (Matt. 2:16): "...he had been outwitted by the astrologers, fell into a great rage, and sent out and had all the boys in Bethlehem and in all its districts done away with, from two years of age and under, according to the time he carefully ascertained from the astrologers." It sounds terrible! However, the original Greek text makes no mention of

any slaughter of young boys. It actually says: “..he was outwitted by the magi was enraged greatly, and having sent off [most probably soldiers] he took up all the boys the (ones) in Bethlehem and in all the districts of it from two years and down more, according to the time which he carefully ascertained beside of the magi.” This is a word-for-word translation of the original Greek text. The expression “took up” is by no means the equivalent of “done away with”. There are Bible versions that translate the expression “took up” as “killed” or “slaughtered”. The tradition of commemorating the “death” of those young boys on Holy Innocents Day (on December 28th) must originate from such misinterpretations. Matt.2:18 says: “A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and much wailing; it was Rachel weeping for her children, and she was unwilling to take comfort, because they are no more.” So there is no parallel between the “slaughter” of young boys and Rachel’s children. The parallel is rather between the “taking up” of young boys, most probably with the aim of selling them into slavery, and Rachel’s children, who had been taken to Babylon as slaves, and this was why they were no more. They were not killed. This is what constitutes the parallel with the young boys in and around Bethlehem. We may ask why Herod drew the line at two-year-old boys. Very probably, he did not believe what the Magi had told him and wanted to be sure.

Joseph and Mary, with baby Jesus, fled into Egypt and stayed there till they were told to return to Israel, since Herod and those who had wanted to destroy Jesus were dead. As Herod died most probably on 26th January 1 B.C.E. Jesus was over two and a half years old when His parents took Him back to the land of Israel. The events described above could not have happened within a period of about 120 days, assuming that the birth of Jesus was around the end of September 2 B.C.E. It is quite simply impossible. Matt. 2:22 says: “But hearing that Archelaus ruled as king of Judea instead of his father Herod, he [Joseph] became afraid to depart for there. Moreover, being given divine warning in a dream, he withdrew into the territory of Galilee, 2:23 [saying] and came and dwelt in a city named Nazareth,...”. From Luke 1:26 we know that they had also lived in Nazareth before they went to Bethlehem, so Matthew’s expression "withdrew into" might well be construed as "returned to". Reference is made to their previously residing in Nazareth in Luke 1:26: “In her sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent forth from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,”

It is clear that the gospels of Luke and Matthew are not parallel accounts. They tell of events that followed one another. The events recounted in Luke’s gospel precede those that Matthew gives an account of in his gospel. It is as simple as that. The uncertain chronology of the events that happened around the time of Jesus’ birth has now been clarified.

Our story ends at this point, at least with respect to the New Testament.

We ought, however, to return to the time of the Old Testament and, in particular, to the Book of Daniel. Daniel foretold the approximate time when the Messiah was to be born, as we see in Dan.9:25: “And you [Daniel] should know and have the insight [that] from the going forth of [the] word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah [the] Leader, there will be seven weeks, also sixty-two weeks.” This is a prophecy pointing to the time of the Messiah. The important thing here is the word "until". The verse in Daniel says simply "*until* the Messiah". Not, until His birth or appearance, or baptism, or beginning of His ministry, or death, but "*until*" Him. In this way, God did not make it possible for the date of Jesus’ birth to be calculated. No one could calculate that date. The only thing the chief-priests and scribes knew was that the four hundred and eighty-three (483) years (sixty-nine (69) weeks x seven (7) year-weeks) pointed to some event concerning the Messiah. We can read about the time when the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem was going forth in the Book of Nehemiah, Chapter 2. Today, we can actually identify the event that the period of four hundred and eighty-three (483) years points to. It is the baptism of Jesus. The reason why this event could not be determined in advance was that God wanted to conceal the exact time of Jesus’ birth in order to protect His son’s life. Two factors were unknown: firstly, Jesus’ lifetime on earth of thirty-three (33) and a half years, secondly, the event that is signified by "until the Messiah" in Daniel’s prophecy concerning the four hundred and eighty-three (483) years. These made the date of Jesus’ birth impossible to calculate. According to the Book of Nehemiah (2:1), the word to rebuild Jerusalem was going forth in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes in the month of Nisan. This happened on 13 Nisan in 457 B.C.E., at 3.00 p.m.. The fact underlying this event is the day of Jesus’ baptism. There are three sources of evidence:

from Greek, Persian and Babylonian sources. However, our most solid starting point is what Holy Scripture says about it. Of course, we could play around with cardinal and ordinal numbers until we come up with the year underlying the evidence for the baptism of Jesus in 27 C.E. But, it would just be a game. The so-called historical evidence, even if it does come from three sources, has a margin of error of two (2) years, so in no way can it be regarded as solid.

With that, we have come to the end of our explanation.

*Given that prophecies are very precise and exact, what we can establish is that Jesus died exactly at 03.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 25 March 31 C.E., was placed in the tomb around 06.00 p.m. on the same day and resurrected around 06.00 p.m. (however exactly seventy-two (72) hours after the placement of His body in the tomb) on Friday. The prophecy included in Daniel's Book identifies – through the four hundred and eighty-three (483) years – the month of September 27 C.E. as the month of Jesus' baptism. Nevertheless, to get the exact time of Jesus' baptism, we have to count back from the time of Jesus' death, which is a solid base to start from, so, by adding up three (3) full years and a prophetic half-year of one hundred and eighty (180) full days, plus twenty-six (26) full years plus two hundred and sixty-eight (268) full days till 25 September midnight, plus fifteen (15) full hours till 26 September 03.00 p. m., plus four hundred and fifty-six (456) full years, plus ninety-one (91) full days that we get by subtracting two hundred and sixty-eight (268) full days from the prophetic year of three hundred and sixty (360) full days, plus nine (9) full hours on the ninety-second (92nd) day, we come to 13 Nisan 3303, 09.00 a. m., corresponding to 2 April 457 B.C.E., 09.00 a. m. The number of "minus years" on a straight line representing years tends to grow as we move away **from** the "0" point but the months in any one "minus year" tend to grow as we move **toward** the "0" point, i. e. in the reverse direction. From the time of Jesus' death at 03.00 p. m. on 25 March 31 C.E. we can also establish the exact date of His birth, which occurred on 26 September 4 B.C.E., at 03.00 p.m. exactly thirty-three years and a prophetic half-year of one hundred and eighty (180) days before His death. We may note that since Jesus ate the Passover meal on Monday in the evening and was impaled (crucified) on Tuesday, it is easy to calculate that the traditional **Palm Sunday** was in fact **Palm Wednesday**, since Jesus was in Bethany six days before the Passover, i. e. on Tuesday, and the next day, i. e. on Wednesday, He entered Jerusalem where He was greeted by the crowd with branches of palm trees.*

There is no evidence to support the proposition that Jesus was baptised at exactly 3.00 p.m., however, there is nothing that contradicts it. We should note that Luke 3:23 says: " Furthermore, Jesus Himself, when he commenced [His work] was about thirty years old..." He must have been exactly thirty years old when He was baptised on 26 September 27 C.E., in order to fulfil the 69-week-year (483 year) prophecy of Daniel. According to Luke 4:2: "...for forty days, while being tempted by the Devil." Thereafter Jesus returned, in the power of the spirit, into Galilee, where he began to teach in the synagogues. As regards the exact time of Jesus' birth being 3.00 p.m., we can point to the following: Luke 2:8 says: "There were also in that same country shepherds living out of doors and keeping watches in the night over their flocks." Luke 2:10 continues: "But the angel said to them: (11) because there was born to you today a Saviour, who is Christ [the] Lord, in David's city." Later, the shepherds said to one another: "Let us by all means go clear to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place (i.e. Jesus' birth)...Luke 2:16 says: "And they went with haste..." Luke's Gospel does not mention that the angel appeared to them in the night. This would have been unlikely anyway, as they would not have driven their flocks during the night. They went (all of them) with haste because it was not dark yet, and they wanted to reach the outskirts of Bethlehem to stay the night there with their flocks after having seen the newborn child. The logical conclusion we are led to after looking at these events is that Jesus was born in the afternoon and that the proposition that He was born at 3.00 p.m., which is in exact agreement with the prophecy, is not contradicted.

I hope the circumstances of Jesus' death and birth (this is the right chronology when we investigate the events) have now become clearly comprehensible to the Reader. The author would welcome any remarks and comments concerning his explanation, in the hope of elucidating as many details as possible for the

benefit of all those seeking biblical truths.

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Remarks by the author:

Are the facts concerning the circumstances, date and time of Jesus' death of any real importance? I think they are, especially to those who have ears to hear, who are open to receive the truth. Jesus said that the period He was to spend in the tomb was the sign of Jonah. He also said that there would be no other sign. Happy are those who believe that He actually was three days and three nights in the tomb as He had foretold. A.B.M.

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