The Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus

Alpheus Davison

To cite this article: Alpheus Davison (1906) The Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus, Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 38:2, 124-129, DOI: [10.1179/peq.1906.38.2.124](https://doi.org/10.1179/peq.1906.38.2.124)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/peq.1906.38.2.124>

Published online: 20 Nov 2013.

Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)

Article views: 14

View related articles [↗](#)

Eleazar, son of Geni—with considerable doubt with regard to the last name, which might possibly be גבי. The name Eleazar has

Fig. 3.

already been found at Gezer on an ossuary inscription, possibly denoting the same individual.

THE CRUCIFIXION, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

By ALPHEUS DAVISON, Esq., U.S.A.

I HAVE read with considerable interest much of the discussion relative to the location of Golgotha which has been published in the *Quarterly Statement* of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and I have never yet seen anything absolutely positive in the matter ; all is more or less inferential and speculative, and in all my reading I have never seen anything more satisfactory on that point than the remarks of Rev. James T. Barclay, in his book entitled *The City of the Great King*, which is the most exhaustive description of the dear old city and its environs and points of interest that I have ever met with ; and although it is now nearly fifty years old, I find it one of the most reliable sources of information relative to the city and its surroundings I have ever gained access to. Dr. Barclay was a Christian minister, a missionary, and United States Consul at Jerusalem for several years. He was evidently an educated, conscientious man, seeking to record only the absolute truth for the benefit of his readers. He believed the place of the crucifixion of our Lord was north of the city, on or near the hill in which the

Grotto of Jeremiah was located, and he occupies several pages of his book in giving his reasons for his view.

But it is not the exact site of the crucifixion that I wish to speak of just now, but the time of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as spoken of in the article on Golgotha on page 58 of the *Quarterly Statement* for January, 1903, where I find the following :—

The body [of Jesus] was placed in it [Joseph's tomb] because they were pressed for time—the Sabbath was nigh, and the tomb was close at hand. According to John (xix, 39, 40) the body when taken down from the cross was bound “in linen cloths with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury”; and the preparation for burial, though hurried, was apparently complete. Matthew, Mark, and Luke state that the body was wrapped by Joseph in a linen sheet, but mention no spices. All four evangelists describe the visit of the women to the sepulchre on the first Sunday morning : Mark says that “when the Sabbath was past, the women brought spices that they might come and anoint Him”; Luke states that after the entombment they “returned and prepared spices and ointments,” and that on the first day “they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared.”

The above statement, taken in connection with other well-known facts, becomes a mass of incongruous assertions, and in at least one instance absolutely contradicts the sacred record; for Matthew (xxviii, 1) does not say the two Marys went to the tomb on the first day of the week—(Sunday, the day on which the heathen worshipped the sun, is not mentioned)—but he expressly says, “in the end of the Sabbath,” or, as the Revised Version has it, “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.” Read on to the 7th verse, and it will be seen that Jesus had already risen and left the tomb. Now if He was crucified on the day before the weekly Sabbath, the day now called Friday, and rose again at the time indicated by Matthew, then he only lay in the tomb about twenty-four hours, whereas when the Jews asked Him for a specific sign that He was the Messiah, He said unto them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given to it but the sign of Jonah the Prophet; for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. xii, 40). This was a specific sign given to the Pharisees, the leading sect of the Jews in that day, and if He did not fulfil it to the letter, then they had a right to say He was an impostor. How then

shall we harmonise these varying facts and statements? Let us see.

Besides the weekly Sabbath sanctified by God at the creation, and included in the ten commandments recorded by Him on tables of stone, and put in the Ark of the Covenant, He ordained several annual Sabbaths, which were observed more or less strictly by all the tribes until their division into two nations, the House of Israel and the House of Judah (1 Kings xii, 1-16), and by the Jews until the destruction of their temple and city by the Romans (see Lev. xxiii, 4-8, 27-32, 38-41).

It will be noticed that these annual Sabbaths were set on certain days of the month, and hence did not always occur on the same day of the week. Matthew xxvi, 17, 18; Mark xiv, 12; Luke xxii, 1, 2, and the history given by John, all show conclusively that the arrest and trial of Jesus and His crucifixion took place on the preparation day for the Feast of the Passover, called also the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted seven days, the first and seventh being annual Sabbaths, the first occurring on the fifteenth day of the month Nisan, *i.e.*, the first full moon after the spring equinox.

Time and space prevent me from making lengthy statements and quotations to sustain my position; but suffice it to say that the Passover Sabbath that year was observed on the fifth day of the week, now called Thursday, and John (xix, 31), says "that Sabbath was a high day," which would be an inappropriate expression if it had simply been the weekly Sabbath. Hence Jesus was crucified on the fourth day of the week, now called Wednesday, dying about three o'clock in the afternoon. As it was unlawful for the body to hang on the cross over the Sabbath, there was but little time to prepare it for burial; but Joseph of Arimathea seems to have been equal to the emergency, for he obtained from Pilate, the Roman governor, authority to take charge of the body, and Nicodemus came also, bringing a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes with which to embalm Him; and when they had wrapped Him in clean cloths, they laid Him in Joseph's new tomb, in a garden near by (see Matt. xxvii, 57-61; Mark xv, 42-47; Luke xxiii, 50-56). From all these accounts it is clear that it was a hasty and temporary burial; and, further, it is shown that the women followers were near by watching the proceedings, and when they saw the body laid in the tomb, and the door safely closed by its owner, "they returned [to their home or stopping place, as some of them had come from

Galilee with Jesus to attend the Passover ceremonies], and prepared spices and ointments." Now all this was done so late on the preparation day for the Passover Sabbath that there was no time for them to purchase the spices, &c., necessary for the embalming. Neither could they have purchased them, nor would they have prepared them, during the hours of the Passover Sabbath, which extended from sunset on Wednesday evening until sunset on Thursday evening; but from Thursday sunset to next day (Friday) sunset was secular time—the preparation day for the weekly Sabbath—when they had ample time to purchase and prepare the necessary spices, &c., for the embalming—and then "on the [weekly] Sabbath they rested according to the commandment." Now read what Matthew (xxviii, 1) says: "Now late on the [weekly] 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*" (read on to the 7th verse).

Thus it is plain that Jesus was crucified and died at the very hour when the Passover lamb—of which He was the great antitype—was being slain at the Temple, thus exactly fulfilling the symbol; and that He lay in the grave just three days and three nights—from Wednesday evening to Thursday evening, one night and one day; from Thursday evening to Friday evening, two nights and two days; from Friday evening to Saturday evening (the weekly Sabbath), three nights and three days. Thus He completely fulfilled the only specific sign He gave to the Jews of His Messiahship.

As to the disciples and women going to the tomb early on the first day of the week to embalm the body of Jesus, we have no statement in the New Testament to explain the apparent inconsistency of such a course, especially on the part of the two Marys, who had visited the tomb the previous evening, and were told by the angel that Jesus had risen and gone. Now read Matt. xxvi, 31, 32; Mark xvi, 1-7, "when the Sabbath was past"! What Sabbath? Ignore the chapter heading, and read this statement in connection with the narrative in the preceding chapter, and it will be clearly seen that the Passover Sabbath is here referred to. Then notice that John fails to say anything about the weekly Sabbath and the preparation day (Friday) before it, but passes on to the morning of the first day of the week. Again ignore the chapter heading, and read Luke's statement (xxiv, 1-9) in connection with

his narrative of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus as given in the previous chapter. Now read John xx, 1-18, in connection with his previous account of the burial, and it is plain that he simply omits mentioning anything that occurred in connection with the matter between the time of the burial and the visit to the tomb in the morning of the first day of the week.

To account for the women going to the tomb of Jesus on the morning of the first day of the week, after their experience in their visit the evening previous, I imagine it was something like this: After their return to the city they evidently talked with some of the disciples and other friends, relating their experience, and there was great excitement and evident doubt, if not absolute unbelief as to the correctness of their statement, as is shown in the different narratives; so they planned a visit to the tomb the next morning. The women who had prepared the spices may have been ridiculed for their statement, and urged to take them to the tomb in the morning. That they did so is recorded, but the real reason, in the light of Matthew's statement, is mere conjecture.

Attention may be called to another matter not mentioned in the discussion of the points above referred to, but intimately connected therewith: why did Jesus and His disciples eat the Passover Supper the night before the great body of the Jews ate it? Some have contended that they did not do so, because they could not get a lamb slain by the priests at the Temple, and at the regular time, as their law required, which was the afternoon of the preparation before the Passover Sabbath (Deut. xvi, 5-7). Notwithstanding the contrary assertion, I am fully convinced that the statements of the Evangelists show conclusively that they did eat the Passover Supper the night before the general preparation day when Jesus was crucified (see Matt. xxvi, 17, 18; Mark xiv, 12-18; Luke xxii, 7-15). After their Supper was over they retired to the Garden of Gethsemane, across the brook Kedron, on the side or at the foot of the Mount of Olives, where Jesus spent some time in prayerful agony while His disciples slept, and at the close of which He was arrested and taken before the High Priests, Annas and Caiaphas, and thence to Pilate; but the Jewish officials would not enter the Roman palace, or the Praetorium, lest they should become ceremonially unclean, and thus not entitled to eat the Passover Supper (John xviii, 28). This was about noon on the preparation day for the Passover Sabbath for the great body of the Jews (John xix, 14)

but Jesus and His disciples had eaten it the night before, as we have already seen.

Now two questions arise—Who were in the right, Jesus and His disciples, or the Jews? and, how could Jesus and His disciples procure a lamb slain at the Temple before the general preparation day? I have never found but one reasonable solution of the matter, and that was obtained from a learned Christianised Jewish Rabbi over thirty years ago. His explanation was as follows: Before the Babylonian captivity there were no sects or divisions among the Jews, they being practically all of one mind in religious matters. They had little knowledge of astronomy, and the time of the new moon, by which the times of their festivals were regulated, was ascertained by sending several men out to different points to watch for it about the time it was due. When they came in they were examined separate and apart, and when two of them agreed in their statements as to having seen the new moon in a certain position, that was the time by which the Temple service was regulated. While captives in Babylon many of them learned enough astronomy to be able to calculate the correct time for the appearance of the new moon, and these persisted in observing their festivals at the time indicated by their astronomical calculations; but the old custom of fixing the time still prevailed at the Temple. Hence there was frequently a difference of one to three days in the observance of their festivals by the astronomical party and the Temple adherents, especially when the weather was cloudy, preventing the watchers from seeing the new moon. To accommodate the astronomical party, who were considered to be as conscientious in the matter as the others, the practice at the Temple was so modified as to furnish the Passover lamb at the date indicated by their calculations.

I have often queried with myself as to whether God did not permit the matter to come about as it did for the very reason that it brought about the death of Jesus at the very hour when the Passover lamb—of which He was the great antitype or fulfilment—was being slain at the Temple.