

"High Day Sabbaths"

By John Lemley

What is a high day Sabbath? Is it simply a way identifying an annual Sabbath? Or, is it a phrase used to describe a special weekly Sabbath? Is it, perhaps, a weekly Sabbath on which an important event occurred or one which coincides with an annual Sabbath? These questions are prompted by the article "The Expression HIGH DAY of John 19:31" by Elder Steve Kurtright in the Summer 1992 Ministerial Forum. They are important questions because they affect our doctrine that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday. John 19:31 declares that Jesus died on the preparation day for the high day Sabbath. If high day has the limited definition of describing a special weekly Sabbath, then the preparation day and Jesus' crucifixion were on Friday. The high day could not have been on Thursday. And the teaching of a Wednesday crucifixion would be wrong.

Elder Kurtright's article supports such a scenario. He also implies that since high^{day} appears only in John 19:31 there are no other examples to compare it with. He suggests that it is wrong to teach that the term high day describes a festival Sabbath and not the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. He emphasizes that there are no Biblical or extra-Biblical references which allow equating Sabbath references in the crucifixion story with annual Sabbaths. Instead, he makes the following claims for the expression high day: (1) it does not carry with it any significance related to a festival Sabbath, (2) it is not used as a scriptural term for the annual festivals of the Old Testament and (3) in John 19:31 high day is simply an expression of the significance of the Sabbath on which the crucifixion of Jesus took place.

But, we DO have a basis for comparison. John 19:31 does not stand alone in its use of high day. This article will list a dozen more Bible examples plus nine from other sources. There is Bible proof that high day is not the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. And, the Bible use of high day as an annual (NOT weekly) Sabbath continues on into and including the accounts of Jesus' crucifixion. Wherever we search - in the Hebrew calendar, the Hebrew or Greek Old Testament, the Greek New Testament, other Greek writings, or Greek grammar the same truth will be found. A high day is simply a way of identifying an annual Sabbath!

The Hebrew calendar shows that high day may fall on any day of the week.

The high day of John 19:31 was on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles of John 7:37. The number of days between these two annual Sabbaths will be counted. If the total is evenly divisible by the number seven, then they describe events on the same day of the week and there will be support for the theory that high day means a weekly Sabbath. If the total is not evenly divisible by the number seven, then they were on different days of the week and there will be evidence that high day is not tied to a weekly Sabbath, but may fall on any day of the week.

John 7:2 records, "Now the Jew's Feast of Tabernacles was at hand." Then, verse 37 reads, "In the last day, that great day of the feast,..." Please notice that the phrase great day, not high day, appears here. But, both phrases are translated from the same Greek words. The Bible gives the date for this great day, the last day of the feast. Leviticus 23:34-41 teaches that the Feast of Tabernacles begins on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Tishri). It lasts for seven days, ending on Tishri 21. It is followed by an eighth day, (Tishri 22). Notice that verse 39 calls both the first and the eighth days Sabbaths. Scholars are not in agreement on whether the great day of John 7:37 is the seventh day (which concluded the Feast of Tabernacles) or the eighth day (which was an annual Sabbath). The eighth day seems most logical because during each of the previous seven days the priests brought water in a golden pitcher from the pool of Siloam and poured it out at the altar. This ceremony was omitted on the eighth day, making Jesus reference to thirst especially relevant. Either day, though, may serve as the starting point for demonstrating that the high day may fall on any day of the week.

The following chart shows the number of days from Tishri 21 (last day of the Feast of Tabernacles) to Nisan 15 (first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) in the current Hebrew calendar. There are three columns for a common year and three for a leap year. The columns are called defective (def), regular (reg) and perfect (per).

The different columns are necessary because the number of days in the months Heshvan and Chisleu are left flexible. Flexibility is built in an order to prevent annual Sabbaths from falling the day before or after a weekly Sabbath. The Hebrew calendar also requires a thirteenth month every few years to keep the months in their correct place with the seasons. Such a year is called a leap year.

Month No. Name	Common Year			Leap Year		
	def.	reg.	per.	def.	reg.	per.
7 Tishri (from 21st)	9	9	9	9	9	9
8 Heshvan	29	29	30	29	29	30
9 Chisleu	29	30	30	29	30	30
10 Tebeth	29	29	29	29	29	29
11 Shebat	30	30	30	30	30	30
12 Adar	29	29	29	30	30	30
13 Adar II	--	--	--	29	29	29
1 Nisan (to 15th)	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>
TOTAL DAYS	170	171	172	200	201	202
24 weeks	2	3	4 days			
			28 weeks	4	5	6 days

This chart considers all six possible variations of the calendar. None of them produce a total which is evenly divisible by the number seven. If John 7:37 is not referring to Tishri 21, but to the eighth day (Tishri 22), then the totals would decrease by one day. Again, none are evenly divisible by the number seven. Even considering using the visible observation method practiced in Jesus' time for determining the beginning of months would only allow for the addition of one day to the regular column above. The great day of John 7:37 and the high day of John 19:31 are on different days of the week no matter which starting point or method of counting is used. Both phrases describe annual Sabbaths.

The Hebrew Old Testament helps prove that high day describes an annual Sabbath.

In spite of the claim that high day is not used as a scriptural term for the annual festivals of the Old Testament, its Greek equivalent does appear in the Septuagint for Isaiah 1:13. It reads, "...the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I can not away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." The phrase "solemn meeting" is translated from the same Greek words as "high day" in John 19:31 and "great day" in John 7:37. The Hebrew word for "solemn meeting" is "atsarah". Its occurrences clearly equate "atsarah" with an extra special day. Notice from the following examples that "atsarah" is never used for the more common weekly Sabbath.

Amos 5:1 - a companion text to Isaiah 1:13 about annual Sabbaths in general.

Lev. 23:36; II Chron. 7:9; Num. 29:35 and Neh. 8:18 - the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Deut. 16:8 - the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Joel 1:14 and 2:15 - calling for a special day of prayer and fasting.

II Kings 10:20 - a special gathering called for Baal's worshippers.

Jer. 9:2 - this remaining passage uses atsarah in the wider sense to refer to people around him as an assembly.

None refer to a weekly Sabbath. When the Bible refers to a gathering on a weekly Sabbath the Hebrew word "migra" is used. "Migra" is also used for annual Sabbaths. But, the weekly Sabbath is never given the additional designation of "atsarah" as the annual Sabbaths are. The translators of the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament) were correct to translate "atsarah" with the same phrase that John used in 7:37 and 19:31. "Atsarah", "great day", and "high day" all stand together as designations for an annual Sabbath. The weekly Sabbath was never called, or referred to, by any of these terms.

The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) and New Testament help prove that high day describes an annual Sabbath.

The key Greek phrase previously alluded to in this article is "megale hemera". There are some interesting statistics about the words in this phrase. The word "megale" means "great". It is a common adjective appearing over 840 times and modifying over 200 different nouns in the Bible. It modifies "hemera" 13 times. Only eight of the 200+ other nouns are modified by the adjective "megale" more often. This is noteworthy because of the idea that high day is rare. Actually, it is in the top five percent in frequency of use. The Greek word for "day" is "hemera". Various forms of the combined phrase "megale hemera" occur thirteen times in the Bible. The following list shows the English phrase as it appears in the KJV:

Great Day - Jer. 30:7; Hosea 1:11; Joel 2:11 and 31;
Zeph. 1:14; Mal. 4:5; John 7:37; Acts 2:20; Jude 6 and
Rev. 6:17; 16:14.
Solemn Meeting - Isaiah 1:13.
High Day - John 19:31.

A review of these texts reveals that ten refer to the great day of the Lord and three (Isa. 1:13; John 7:37 & 19:31) refer to an annual feast day. There are no uses of "megale hemera" where a weekly Sabbath is the subject.

Other Greek writings help prove that high day describes an annual Sabbath.

This section is included because of the claim that no extra-biblical references exist to support the assumption that high day designates an annual rather than a special weekly Sabbath. In reality, the opposite is the case. There are no clear examples where a weekly Sabbath is ever called high day in extra-Biblical literature. The connection is assumed in some cases. But, those assumptions are because of presumptions in interpretation, not because of clear textual evidence. The clear context is always an annual Sabbath.

Six of the nine extra-Biblical sources are from the Ante-Nicene series. Of those six, the following four are in the context of a commentary on Isaiah 1:13:

Vol. I p. 175, "The First Apology of Justin" chapter 37.
Vol. IV p. 286, "Origen De Principilis" Book 2, ch.8, para.1
Vol. VII p. 460, "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles"
Book 6, section 5, para. 22.
Vol. X p. 388, "Origen's Commentary on John" Book 10, sec.11

One is a treatment of John 19:31:

Vol. VI. p. 282, "Fragments from the Writings of Peter"
chapter 5, sec. 7.

And, one mentions both Isaiah 1:13 and John 19:31:

Vol. III p. 436 "Tertullian Against Marcion" Book 5
chapter 4

The other three are from sources describing Polycarp's martyrdom. He died in the middle of the second century A.D. on a Great Sabbath. Scholars are not in agreement on whether this was the Feast of Purim or of Unleavened Bread. But, all agree that it was an annual Sabbath. Some go through impressive literary gymnastics and still fail to successfully support their presumption that this Great Sabbath coincided with a weekly Sabbath. The three sources are:

Letter of the Smyraeans - Martyrdome of Polycarp, chap. 8,10
ibid., Chapter 21,1.
Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Book IV, chapt. 15,
sec. 15, line 9.

^{use}
The Ante-Nicene, Nicene and Post-Nicene authors "great day" additional times in reference to the "great day of the Lord." It is definitely not a scarce term in either Biblical or extra-Biblical literature. A search through the Leob series may reveal many more extra-Biblical occurrences of the phrase "megale hemera".

Other Objections to teaching that high day means an annual Sabbath.

Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels by Israel Abrahams has been cited to support the claim that calling an annual Sabbath "high day" is without foundation. In fact, Abrahams does not even mention the words "high day" and the only concept he appears to have for the word Sabbath is a weekly Sabbath. Abrahams' purpose in chapter 10, note 4, pp. 67-69 is to show that the details in the Martyrdom of Polycarp are not to be relied upon as accurate history. Those details are inserted as a clear design of the writer to have similarities between the deaths of Polycarp and Jesus. Similarities such as Polycarp waiting to be betrayed, the active involvement of the Jews, and dating the martyrdom on the great Sabbath are given as examples. He states, "... the narrator gives the right date Feb. 23, and then, in order to equate his story with John 19:31, identifies it wrongly with 'the great Sabbath'." Later, Abrahams writes, "It is extremely doubtful whether the Jews described any (weekly) Sabbath as "the great Sabbath" until later...The entire absence of the term (great Sabbath) from early Rabbinic sources...Much later the Jews applied the title (great Sabbath) to the (weekly) Sabbath before Passover, Pentecost, New Year, and Tabernacles..." Abrahams continues writing, struggling with how to reconcile the Jews' actions with the restrictions of a weekly Sabbath. He is silent about "megale hemera" being a technical way of identifying a special weekly Sabbath. The Anchor Bible comments on Abrahams' intent on page 934 of its volume on the Gospel of John. After suggesting that in the year of Jesus' death Nisan 15 fell on a weekly Sabbath, making it even more solemn, it is forced to admit, "However, we have no early Jewish attestation of the word 'solemn' (literally "great") being used to designate a Sabbath that is also a feast day." Abrahams is cited as a source. Neither Abrahams nor the Anchor Bible are claiming that megale hemera describes a special weekly Sabbath. They are not countering our church position that "megale hemera" is a way of identifying an annual Sabbath. Instead, though they wish it were otherwise, they admit that there are no early sources describing a weekly Sabbath as a great Sabbath.

Another objection states that it is wrong, according to the rules of Greek grammar, to compare John 7:37 and 19:31. The reason given is that John 7:37 places the adjective "megale" (great) in the attributive position and John 19:31 has it in the predicate position. Does the position of the adjective dramatically change the meaning? Please consider these ideas.

An attributive adjective simply describes what a noun is like. It is usually immediately preceded by an article. Of the thirteen verses using "megale hemera", the following place the adjective "megale" (great) in the attributive position:

Joel 2:31 - "the great and the terrible day of the Lord..."
Zeph. 1:14 - "the great day of the Lord is near"
Mal. 4:5 - "the great and dreadful day of the Lord"
John 7:37 - "that great day of the feast"
Acts 2:20 - "that great and notable day of the Lord come"
Rev. 6:17 - "the great day of his wrath is come"
Rev. 16:14 - "the battle of that great day of God almighty"

In Isaiah 1:13 and Jude 6 the noun (hemera) is not preceded by an article, so the adjective (megale) is not either. The context, though, shows that the adjective is describing a quality of the noun. Therefore these two verses are also examples of the attributive position. Notice their wording.

Isaiah 1:13 - "even the solemn meeting"
Jude 6 - "unto the judgment of the great day"

An adjective is in the predicate position in cases where one would say a form of the verb "to be", such as "is" or "are". In the Greek the verb "is" is not written. It is presumed by the position of the adjective. Examples are:

Jer. 30:7 - "Alas, for that day is great"
Hosea 1:11 - "for great shall be the day of Jezreel"
Joel 2:11 - "the day of the Lord is great and very terrible"
John 19:31 - "that Sabbath day was an high day"

Is there a difference in meaning? No! The meaning is the same whether "the day is great" or it is a "great day." The difference is important when dealing with linguistic construction. Care needs to be used when writing Greek to not confuse the two. But, the semantic force of the two positions is comparable. There isn't any real difference in meaning. The order of the words is different. But, the intended meaning has not significantly changed. The following examples will compare the same adjective and noun, first in the attributive and then in the predicate position. Please observe that the two kinds of Greek grammatical constructions simply give two ways of saying basically the same thing.

Attributive - Rev. 6:17 - "the great day of His wrath."
Predicate - Jer. 30:7 - "Alas, for that day is great"
Both contexts are about the great day at the time of the end.

Attributive - Rev. 18:21 - "that great city Babylon"
Predicate - Gen. 10:12 - "And Resen...the same is a great city"
Both are about great cities and fully comparable in meaning.

Attributive - Joel 2:31 - "the great...day of the Lord"
Predicate - Joel 2:11 - "the day of the Lord is great"
Same chapter, same context, two ways of expressing.

Attributive - John 7:37 - "the great day of the feast"

Predicate - John 19:31 - "day was an high day"

Both are about great days in the context of annual Sabbaths.

A third objection suggests that the Seventh-day Sabbath of Passover week was given the magnified title "high day" since it was the Sabbath during which Jesus was entombed. But, the text shows that the day was high in the Jews' eyes. The crucifixion day was the preparation day for their high day. John described the day from a Jewish perspective, not a Christian one. The expression "high day" is a natural way of describing an annual Jewish Sabbath. The plain words of the text describe it as a Jewish designation, not an expression of the significance of the Sabbath during which Jesus was entombed.

Conclusion

This look at the Hebrew calendar, Greek and Hebrew texts, extra-Biblical sources, linguistic issues and other objections all give united testimony that high day Sabbaths are not weekly Sabbaths. There are excellent reasons for continuing to emphasize that the phrase "high day Sabbath" is simply a way of identifying an annual Sabbath. The theory that it is a phrase coined to show when an annual and a weekly Sabbath coincide can not be substantiated. Neither is it a phrase to show the specialness of a certain weekly Sabbath. The booklet, The Time Element in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, p.18 is correct in stating, "the weekly Sabbath (as designated in the Ten Commandments) never was called or referred to as a "high day" ... and, we repeat, the weekly Sabbath never was called an high day." High day Sabbaths are annual Sabbaths.

TALKING ALONG THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

by John Lemley

Luke 24:21 states, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel; and besides all this, today is the third day since these things were done."

Question: Is Sunday the third day "since these things were done?"

Setting

Who: Two men (verse 13), one named Cleopas (verse 18), joined by the resurrected Jesus whom they did not recognize (verses 15 and 16).

Where: Along the approximately seven mile stretch of road to Emmaus from Jerusalem (verse 13).

When: They arrived at Emmaus when it was toward evening (verse 29). If a slow walk (three miles per hour) is presumed, then it took the men about two hours to complete the trip. Sunset is about 6:00 p.m. during the Passover season. So, Cleopas and his companion could have left Jerusalem about 3:00 p.m., met Jesus along the way, and arrived at Emmaus about 5:00 p.m.

What: Walking (verse 13) and talking about all these things which had happened (verse 14). Discussing the "things" led to communing and reasoning (verse 15) and feelings of sadness (verse 17). Cleopas describes the "things" as things which are

come to pass in Jerusalem in these days (verse 18). It is recorded that he specifically mentioned the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus (verse 20) and that it is the third day since "these things" were done (verse 21).

Possible Solutions for Wednesday Considered

1. Not all of "these things" that Cleopas told Jesus were recorded by Luke. Luke only lists the chief priests and rulers delivering Jesus to be condemned to death and crucifying Him. Cleopas did tell Jesus that they were discussing what had happened in these days. Note his use of the phrase "in these days" rather than saying "three days ago," indicating that the discussion included more than the crucifixion day. Perhaps their communications included mention of the sealing of the tomb and setting a watch (Matthew 27:66) which happened the day after the crucifixion, or Thursday. Sunday is "three days since" Thursday.^{1,2}

2. Translation of text - The Greek word *semeron*, translated "today," is not found in the best Greek manuscripts of this text.^{3,4,5} The phrase forms an idiom which cannot be neatly rendered.⁶ The Anchor Bible, volume 28A, page 1564 expresses the difficulty as follows: "The

translation of the Greek words... is problematic."

The Greek word *agei*, translated "is," is the third person singular of *ago* which is found in the New Testament 71 times. This is the only place where it is translated as "is." The common translation of *ago* is "bring."⁷ The scenario is described in the following manner.

Sunday brings or leads the third day since these things were done, which was the Sabbath. The Sabbath brought or led the second day since these things were done, which was Friday. Friday brought or led the first day since these things were done, which was Thursday. Thursday brought or led the day these things were done, which was Wednesday. The word "ago" in one of its forms, also occurs in the Septuagint about 300 times and is translated most of the time by the word "bring." Other frequent words are keep, lead or carry.⁸

The Berkeley version translated the text in this manner: "...However, three days have already passed since all those events occurred."⁹

Both possible solutions have merits. The first solution gathers details to fill in "all these things" from information given by the other gospel writers. It also considers from the context that events of recent days were discussed.

The second solution provides evidence that this is a difficult verse to translate. A basic rule of Bible translation is that clear passages should be used to interpret the more difficult or obscure passages. Luke 24:21 is not an easy verse to translate; therefore, it is not one on which to base a premise. Commentaries are divided as to whether the subject is "today" or "Jesus." Whether or not the word "today" even belongs in the verse and what to do with the verb *agei* are other questions considered by translators. By comparison, the wording of Matthew 12:40 is not questioned; how the words are to be interpreted is debated. The witness of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus does not take away a literal understanding of Matthew's three day and three night phrase.

Possible Solution for Friday Considered

The Bible uses both inclusive and exclusive methods for counting time. If the inclusive method is used in Luke 24:21, then Friday could be the first, Sabbath the second, and Sunday the third day. What is meant by an expression of time can include the question of semantics. Also, individuals interpret such expressions subjectively. Which method was Cleopas using when he said, "Today is the third day since these things were done"? Much time could be spent researching examples from first century Palestine. It may also be

helpful to check the Greek word *apo* from which "since" is translated.

I suspect, however, that both studies would strongly allow for understanding the phrase in the exclusive way. The clear texts from the Gospels support this conclusion. John 19:31 describes the crucifixion as the day before an annual, not weekly, Sabbath. Matthew 12:40 tells how long the entombment would last. Comparing Mark 16:1 with Luke 23:53 shows that the day of buying and preparing spices was between two Sabbaths (one annual and one weekly). Finally, Matthew 28:1 describes the resurrection as occurring at the end of the of the Sabbath.

Conclusion?

What did the two disciples on the road to Emmaus mean by the statement, "it is the third day"? The context and other Gospel accounts provide evidence that they meant either (1) Sunday is the third day from Thursday when the tomb was sealed, or (2) Sunday was a day of extra concern because three days had passed and

a day of perplexity because there was a rumor that Jesus had been seen alive. Either way, the clear, prophetic words of Jesus in Matthew 12:40, "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," are not compromised.

Footnotes

1. Lewis, A.H. *Sabbath and Sunday Biblical Teachings*. American Sabbath Tract Society. Alfred Centre, New York, 1888, pp. 61-62.
2. *Time Element in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ*. Bible Advocate Press, Denver, pp. 24-25.
3. *The Duration of Jesus' Entombment*, Bible Advocate Press, Denver, pp. 6-7.
4. Nestle, Eberhard. *Greek New Testament*. American Bible Society, New York, 1935, p. 227.
5. Aland, Kurt. *The Greek New Testament*. United Bible Societies, American Bible Society, New York, 1968, p. 316.
6. Vincent, Marvin. *Word Studies in the New Testament*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1911, p. 435.
7. Watson, P.S.G. *Prophetic Interpretations*. Baptist Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1880, p. 187.
8. Hatch, Edwin and Redpath, Henry. *A Concordance to the Septuagint*. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1983, pp. 9-10.
9. Verkuyl, Gerrit, ed. *The Holy Bible: The Berkeley Version in Modern English*. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1959, p. 91.

REMINDER!

**Submit your article
for the next issue of the Forum
BEFORE
September 15, 1995!**

RESPONSE TO MATTHEW 28:1

by John Lemley

Here are some thoughts that came to mind as I read the response to Matthew 28:1 by Mark Burnham.

The Greek phrase for "In the end of the Sabbath" is *opse de sabbaton*. All the reference materials I have access to show that this phrase belongs with Matthew 28:1 and not as a conclusion to 27:66.

The Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words by W. E. Vine provides some helpful information on the word *de*. The Greek *de* can be adversative (distinguishing a word or clause from that which precedes), as in Matthew 5:27-28, or it can be copulative (an introductory word which provides story flow and harmony to the surrounding phrases), as in Matthew 1:2.

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon informs that *de* serves to mark a transition to something new: by the use of this particle, the new material is distinguished from what goes before. It is used universally by way of opposition and distinction. It also may introduce explanations. The only time it continues a previous discourse is after a parenthesis or an explanation has led away from the subject under discussion as in Matthew 3:4. This exception is not the case in Matthew 28:1.

The New Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament states that *de* is used to mark the commencement of a subject, as in Matthew 1:18. It can be continuative or connective, as in Matthew 21:15, but it is never descriptive of a previous statement. It

shows moving on to the next scene in the account.

A letter from Fred Coulter on January 8, 1980 adds these thoughts on the Greek word *de*. *de* is known to be an introductory word, most often used at the beginning of a new thought or sentence, thereby indicating that the sentence arrangement in the Greek was indeed a proper place to begin a new thought, rather than having the first part of Matthew 28:1 as a continuous part of Matthew 27:66.

I have found complete agreement with this among the theology teachers at Walla Walla College.

The Latin Vulgate renders this phrase, *Vespere autem sabbati*." The Latin Dictionary for School, written by Charlton T. Lewis in 1888, states that the word *autem* is like the Greek *de*. It distinctly sets the word which it follows, or clause in which it stands, beside something already expressed or implied, whether as a contrasted thought or merely as a new and different one. In the genitive it is used in transitions, adding a new theme or stage.

All the sources I can find support the phrase, "In the end of the Sabbath," as being an introductory or descriptive part of Matthew 28:1 and not a conclusion to Matthew 27:66. The words *de* and *autem* clearly picture the beginning of a new set of events. I find no example of either the Greek *de* or Latin *autem* being used in direct relationship to a previous statement.

Ω

THE PREPARATION OF THE PASSOVER
John Lemley

In the 1991 winter issue of the Ministerial Forum, there was an article entitled "The Technical Use of the Word 'Preparation' in the Gospels." The purpose of this article was to show that the Greek word "paraskeue" from which the English word "preparation" comes, is in reality a technical term which referred to the sixth day of the week. In this article we raise the question. Is the Greek work "paraskeue" really a technical synonym for the sixth day of the week? Where did this idea come from? Does the Bible, either textually or contextually, give credence to this useage of "paraskeue"?

The Forum article runs remarkably parallel to the section "Preparation Day," pages 35 to 39 of Samuel Bacchiocchi's book The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Mr. Bacchiocchi contends that the Greek term "paraskeue" is a technical designation for Friday. He cites Charles C. Torrey, "The Date of the Crucifixion According to the Fourth Gospel," Journal of Biblical Literature, 1931, Part IV, pp. 227-241, as his source.

WHAT DID CHARLES C. TORREY SAY?

What did Charles Torrey say about the Greek word "paraskeue" in the article from which Mr. Bacchiocchi quoted as his authority? Mr. Torrey wrote, "the middle days of the week were designated by numbers, 'third, fourth, fifth,' but Friday was always arubta; there was no 'sixth day' of the week; ... Its Greek equivalent, paraskeue-Friday, was likewise adopted, from

the first, by the Greek Church." Torrey, pp. 234-5; Bacchiocchi, pp. 36-37. Torrey summarizes his thoughts with this sentence: "The paraskeue in John 19:14 is not the colorless Greek word, "preparation," but the Jewish technical term," page 237.

Should Mr. Torrey, who claims that paraskeue is a technical term meaning Friday, be unquestionably quoted and believed? In the same article he states the following:

- (1) regarding John 13:1, "What our Greek text declares is certainly not what the author wrote. It is nonsense..."
- (2) the word pascha does not mean the "sacrificial meal held on the fourteenth of Nisan" but rather designates the Feast of Passover as a whole.
- (3) "eat the Passover" does not allude to the Paschal lamb, but to the festival offerings which were sacrificed during the entire seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Do we accept these statements because the scholarly Charles Torrey made them?

Is Mr. Torrey's statement about the use of "parask~~ue~~^{keue}" as a technical term unequivocal? No, it is not! He also admits:

- (1) "each of the two terms (paraskeue and pascha) is capable of more than one meaning." p. 232.
- (2) "the possibility may be admitted that it (paraskeue) was given an equally early application to the principal festal days." p. 236.

So, Torrey is not as dogmatic as those who refer to him would like him to be on the technical quality of the word "paraskeue."

WHAT DO OTHER SCHOLARS SAY?

1. Solomon Zeitlin wrote a rebuttal to Torrey's article in the very next issue of the Journal of Biblical Literature. See, "The Date of the Crucifixion According to the Fourth Gospel",

Handwritten note:
I am not sure if you should
include this article or
delete it.

JBL, pp. 263-271, Vol 51, 1932. He summarizes Torrey's main points then states,

"Torrey's contention (paraskeue in John 19:14 is not a colorless Greek word 'preparation', but the Jewish technical term, and refers to Eve of the Sabbath) is open to many objections:

(1) the word paraskeue is not a Jewish technical term at all." Generic examples from Josephus (A.D. 37 - 100) and Philo (died about A.D. 50) are given.

(2) "the word paraskeue, which has in Greek the meaning of preparation, became a pagan technical term for the Eve of the Sabbath as well as for the Eve of other holidays. So only the pagan writers used the word paraskeue in referring to the Eve of the Sabbath or to the Eve of Holidays."

2. Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, p. 486 defines paraskeue as:

- (1) making ready, equipping
- (2) that which is prepared, equipment
- (3) in the N.T. in a Jewish sense, the day of preparation, i.e. the day on which the Jews made the necessary preparation to celebrate a Sabbath or a feast."

3. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol III, p. 953-4. article 'Preparation, Day of' states:

"A technical term for the day before the Sabbath...Passover is the greatest of the special sabbaths in the Jewish year."

The article goes on to suggest a Last Supper on Tuesday evening.

4. The New Standard Bible Dictionary, p. 727, article Preparation Day, states:

"This term (paraskeue) signifies any day which preceded a great feast...in a very narrow sense, it came to be the name of the single day of the week which precedes the sabbath...John uses the qualifying expression 'of the Passover' as if the day preceding the Passover was customarily called 'the preparation of the Passover' irrespective of whether it fell on Friday or any other day."

5. Greek Lexicon by Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 627.

"paraskeue, the day of preparation for a festival."

This listing could get out of hand. Let's let the Bible reveal what is meant by paraskeue. We will not play the game, "my list of sources is larger than your list"

CONSIDERING THE TEXTS

Matthew 27:62 - the "day of preparation" was followed by the day the chief priests and Pharisees asked Pilate to secure the tomb because Jesus had prophesied, "After three days I will rise again."

Mark 15:42 - "the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath" Joseph of Arimathaea asked Pilate for Jesus' body. Which Sabbath was this? A weekly or an annual one? Is the Sabbath in 16:1 the same one referred to in 15:42? If it is, then it was followed by three of the women buying sweet spices for anointing Jesus' body. If it is not, what day is it? Time constraints for preparing spices rule out this being a weekly Sabbath. Their task necessitates there being a workday between the annual and weekly sabbaths.

Luke 23:54 - "that day was the preparation and the sabbath drew on." This doesn't add any further clues. It simply agrees with Mark that the preparation day was followed by the sabbath. Which Sabbath?

John 19:14 - It was about noon on the preparation of the passover when Pilate said to the crowds, "Behold your King!" Mark and Luke call it the preparation of the Sabbath. John

describes it as the preparation of Passover. Putting the two together produces "preparation of the Passover Sabbath." A use that Mr. Torrey allows for the Greek term "paraskeue" (preparation).

John 19:31 - It was the preparation. The Jews didn't want the bodies to be on the cross on the sabbath day (that sabbath day was as high day). They approached Pilate about having the legs of the crucified ones' broken so they would die sooner. This preparation day comes before a day that is high because it is a Passover Sabbath.

John 19:42 - "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day..." What kind of a high Sabbath is Jewish? A weekly or an annual one? Contrast Mark 2:26. Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man..." with the following texts:

John 2:13 "the Jews' Passover was at hand"
John 5: 1 "there was a feast of the Jews"
John 7: 2 "the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand"
John 11:55 "the Jews' passover was nigh at hand"
John 19:42 "the Jews' preparation day"

The weekly Sabbath is never called Jewish in the Bible. The weekly Sabbath was made for all mankind for all time before there were any Jews. The Jewish days John refers to are simply that - Jewish - not universal.

WATCH THE WOMEN

The six occurrences of "paraskeue" (preparation) in the New Testament are all about the same day; the day on which Jesus died. The activities of the women strongly indicate that the preparation day preceded an annual, not a weekly Sabbath. Jesus died about 3:00 pm (Matthew 27:46). That left three hours

remaining for the preparation day before the sun would set. The following things happened during that time:

An earthquake - Matthew 27:51
Veil of temple torn in two - Mark 15:38
The centurion confesses, "Surely this was the Son of God." - Matthew 27:54
The Jews ask Pilate for the legs to be broken. John 19:31. Did they have to walk from the cross to Pilate in Jerusalem?
Pilate gives permission
The Jews took the permission back to the soldiers at the cross or, if the soldiers were with Pilate, they had to go back to the crucifixion site.
The soldiers come and break the legs.
A soldier pierces Jesus' side.
Joseph of Arimathaea goes to Pilate - Matt. 27:58.
Another walk from the cross to Pilate.
Joseph asks for Jesus' body - v. 58
Pilate gets confirmation of Jesus' death from the centurion. Mark 15:44. Was the centurion with Pilate, or did a messenger make the trip from the cross and back to Pilate with the centurion's confirmation?
Pilate grants Joseph's request - v. 58
Joseph buys fine linen. - Mark 15:44
This took travel, selection and purchase time.
Joseph travels back to the cross.
Joseph removes the body. - Mark 15:46
Nicodemus brings a 100 pound mixture of myrrh and aloes
John 19:39
Joseph wraps the body in a clean linen cloth.
Joseph lays the body in his own new tomb
Joseph rolls a great stone to the door.

Now notice what the women were doing:

Matthew 27:55 beholding afar off
61 sitting over against the sepulchre
Mark 15:47 beheld where He was laid
Luke 23:55 followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

The women were grief stricken observers during all the coming and going around the cross and tomb. Jesus was buried hastily in a nearby tomb because the preparation day was ending. According to Luke 23:56, after watching Jesus' entombment, the women left. The next recorded activity is preparing spices and

ointments. There wasn't time for such a project between the entombment and sunset. Preparing ointments was a time consuming process involving heating water and soaking the various herbs and spices to steep the ointment out. There was an annual Sabbath that week with a work day between the annual and weekly Sabbaths. It was during that work day that the women bought (Mark 16:1) and prepared (Luke 23:56) spices and ointments.

CONCLUSION

The Greek term *paraskeue* (preparation) is not a technical term at all. It is simply a term describing a day prior to a special day requiring advanced preparation. It could be either an annual or a weekly Sabbath. Each of the six occurrences in the gospels are in reference to the day before the annual Passover Sabbath (the first day of the feast of unleavened bread) which fell on Nisan 15. While it is true that the day before the weekly Sabbath was never called a preparation in the Bible, it is used in that sense by other writers of the same time period. John 19:14 declares that the crucifixion day was the preparation of the Passover. Also, observing the activities of the women helps determine that the crucifixion day was the preparation for an annual sabbath, followed by a work day, followed by their resting "the Sabbath day according to the commandment " *Luke 23:56,*