

Chapter 12

The Biblical Sabbath Day Is the Day of the Resurrection

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Chapter 12

The Biblical Sabbath Day Is the Day of the Resurrection

Now (it is the) evening of (the) sabbaths. (At) the lighting up into ONE OF THE SABBATHS came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to behold the sepulcher (Matthew 28:1, *Concordant Literal New Testament*, emphasis added).

And, very (early in the) morning (on) ONE OF THE SABBATHS, they are coming to the tomb (at the) rising of the sun (Mark 16:2, *Concordant Literal New Testament*, emphasis added).

Now (in the) early depths (of) ONE OF THE SABBATHS, they, and certain (others) together (with) them, came to the tomb, bringing (the) spices which they (make) ready (Luke 24:1, *Concordant Literal New Testament*, emphasis added).

Now, (on) ONE OF THE SABBATHS, Miriam Magdalene is coming to the tomb (in the) morning, (there) being still darkness, and is observing the stone taken away from the door of the tomb (John 20:1, *Concordant Literal New Testament*, emphasis added).

In this chapter, we will show that the LITERAL meaning of the Greek text of the Gospel accounts tells us that the resurrection took place on the Biblical Sabbath day (Friday evening to Saturday evening), very early in the morning on Saturday, not on Sunday. The sign of Jonah—three days and three nights—was fulfilled by a Wednesday crucifixion and a Saturday resurrection, not a Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection.

15TH OF ABIB/NISAN (Sunset Wednesday to Sunset Thursday according to our modern way of counting the days of the week)

THE TOMB SEALED BY THE TEMPLE GUARD ON THURSDAY

Yeshua's body was placed in a newly hewn tomb on the Mount of Olives late in the day—sometime before sunset—on Wednesday (14th of Nisan). A large roll stone was placed at the entrance to the tomb, but the religious leaders feared the disciples might attempt to remove the body so the next day they went to Pilate and said:

...“Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.” Pilate said to them, “YOU HAVE A GUARD; GO, MAKE IT AS SECURE AS YOU KNOW HOW.” AND THEY WENT AND MADE THE GRAVE SECURE, AND ALONG WITH THE GUARD THEY SET A SEAL ON THE STONE (Matthew 27: 63-66, emphasis added).

Note Pilate's statement: "You have a guard." Pilate did not post a Roman guard at the tomb but instead directed the religious leaders to use their own Temple Guard for this purpose. It is highly unlikely that a Roman Guard would have lied about falling asleep at their posts (Matthew 28:13).¹ The Temple Guard was made up of Levites, assisted by priests, who also acted as Temple police.² The fact that those who guarded the tomb reported to the chief priests also indicates they were members of the Temple Guard, not Roman soldiers. (It was also the Temple Guard that arrested Yeshua.)

16TH OF ABIB/NISAN (Sunset Thursday to Sunset Friday according to our modern way of counting the days of the week)

THE WOMEN BOUGHT SPICES ON FRIDAY TO PREPARE THE BODY ON SATURDAY

Mark's Gospel account tells us that the day after the Passover Sabbath, Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James), and Salome bought spices to complete the preparation of the body:

And when the Sabbath [Passover/First Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread Sabbath] was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him (Mark 16:1).

Due to the hasty circumstances of the burial, there was not enough time for complete preparation of the body. Mary Magdalene and Mary saw where Yeshua's body was placed (Mark 15:47) but did not have time to purchase spices before the onset of Passover/First Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread, that day being a "high" holy day, meaning an annual Sabbath (John 19:31).

It is important to note that the traditional Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection does not allow adequate time for the women to buy spices, as well as to prepare them before use (Luke 24:1). However, since the crucifixion actually occurred on Wednesday, we can understand that

¹ Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Times of Jesus*, p. 180.

² Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (1979 Softcover Edition), pp. 147-148.

the women waited until after the completion of the Passover Sabbath. The following day, Friday, allowed sufficient time not only to purchase the spices but also to prepare them before the onset of the weekly Sabbath (starting Friday evening). According to Jewish custom, a body can be prepared for burial on the Sabbath day without violating Sabbath laws.

17TH OF ABIB/NISAN (Sunset Friday to Sunset Saturday according to our modern way of counting the days of the week)

HOW THE SIGN OF JONAH WAS FULFILLED

The next day, Saturday, was the weekly Sabbath. As will become clear, it was on this day that Messiah Yeshua resurrected. The proof of this is found in Word of God by referring to the original Greek text. One may ask, “What difference does it make?” The answer to this question is that God established His prophetic timetable for the purpose of revealing the identity of the true Messiah. An accurate understanding of the timing of the crucifixion and the resurrection reveals and confirms the identity of the true Messiah. Remember what Yeshua said to the scribes and Pharisees who asked Him for a sign:

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:38-40).

As clearly stated in the Word of God, the sign of Jonah specifies a period of three days and three nights. Some say that a Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection can be counted in such a way (partial days counting as whole days) as to make the claim that the prophecy was fulfilled. But how can two nights (Friday night and Saturday night) prophetically fulfill three nights?

If Yeshua is Who He claims to be, why the discrepancy? Once we have the correct timetable,

this discrepancy disappears and we see that Yeshua did indeed fulfill the sign of Jonah—three days and three nights from His death to His resurrection.

Messiah Yeshua also prophesied that He would be raised up ON THE THIRD DAY:

From that time Jesus [Yeshua] Christ [Messiah] began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up ON THE THIRD DAY (Matthew 16:21, emphasis added).

... “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up ON THE THIRD DAY” (Luke 9:22, emphasis added).

“God raised Him up ON THE THIRD DAY, and granted that He should become visible” (Acts 10:40, emphasis added).

As we will show, according to the literal meaning of the Greek text of the Word of God, each and every Gospel account explicitly states that Messiah Yeshua resurrected on the weekly Biblical Sabbath, the third day as counted from Wednesday to Thursday (Day 1), Thursday to Friday (Day 2), and Friday to Saturday (Day 3).

THE ERROR OF A SUNDAY RESURRECTION

Sunday is the traditional day celebrated as the day of the resurrection and is supported by English translations referring to “the first day of the week”. Even so, the KJV of Matthew 28:1 seems to indicate that the resurrection actually occurred on the weekly Sabbath (Saturday).

IN THE END OF THE SABBATH, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre (Matthew 28:1, emphasis added).

If Mary Magdalene came to the tomb “in the end of the Sabbath” and the resurrection had already occurred, then Sabbath must be the actual day of the resurrection. However, confusion arises due to alternate English translations of this same passage. Most other English versions translate the phrase “the end of the Sabbath” as “after the Sabbath”:

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave (Matthew 28:1).

The difference between the words “end of” and “after” is one day. How, then, can we be certain which day is correct—Saturday or Sunday? Only by referring back to the original Greek text can we know the answer to this question.

THE GREEK SAYS RESURRECTION ON THE SABBATH DAY

UNDERSTANDING WHAT MATTHEW 28:1 TELLS US ABOUT THE “SABBATHS”

A Sunday resurrection is based upon an erroneous idiomatic interpretation of the Greek rather than its literal and true meaning. The Greek text clearly states that the resurrection took place on the Biblical Sabbath day (Saturday), not Sunday. We need a correct English translation of the literal meaning of the Greek text to show that this is true.

For this study, we use the Nestle’s Greek New Testament because it is considered to be “one of the most reliable available today”.³ We also use the *Concordant Literal New Testament with Keyword Concordance* to provide a literal translation of the Greek. We will closely examine the relevant passages in each of the four Gospel accounts.

We start with the traditional English translation in Matthew’s account, including previous verses for context:

And [on Thursday] they went and made the grave secure, and along with the

³ Alfred Marshall, *The Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*, ix.

[Temple] guard they set a seal on the stone. Now after [“end of” KJV] the Sabbath [Passover/First Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread Sabbath], as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave (Matthew 27:66; 28:1).

The first issue that needs to be addressed deals with verse numbers and punctuation:

Neither the chapter numbers, verse numbers, nor the punctuation are inspired. Numbering for verses was begun in the sixteenth century, and for chapters in the thirteenth century. ... The Original contained no conventional marks of punctuation, such as periods, commas, colons, question marks and exclamation points. These have been added by the translators, and are therefore *not infallible*.⁴

In addition, the “oldest manuscripts of the NT [New Testament] are *uncial* texts, that is, ALL LETTERS WERE CAPITALS,”⁵ without spaces between the individual words. We believe that Matthew 28:1 is a good example of the error that can result given the very difficult task of the translator under these conditions.

Before continuing with this thought, let us refer to the literal meaning of the original Greek for the phrase at the beginning of the sentence. The Greek words translated as “now after” or “end of” the Sabbath” are:

Οψε δε σαββατων

The Greek, transliterated into English is:

opse de Sabbaton

Opse is “an adverb of time, besides its meaning at evening or at eventide, denotes late in, or on”.⁶

⁴ *Concordant Literal New Testament with the Keyword Concordance*, p. 612.

⁵ *Concordant Literal New Testament*, p. 619.

⁶ W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Vol. 2, p. 312.

De can mean “and”, “but”, or “now”.⁷ The only meaning for *Sabbaton* is “Sabbath”.⁸ However, even though most English versions translate the singular form “Sabbath”, the Greek word is actually plural, “Sabbaths”. Why isn’t the word literally translated “Sabbaths”?

We think that the reason for this is not clear until the entire sentence is separated into two sentences expressing two separate thoughts. Remember, the placement of periods to separate sentences is a matter of interpretation because the original Greek text does not have periods to separate sentences.

The *Concordant Literal New Testament* provides the literal translation of Matthew 28:1, showing the separation of the two sentences. (Note: Words not in the original Greek text in parentheses.)

Now (it is the) evening of (the) sabbaths. (At) the lighting up into ONE OF THE SABBATHS came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to behold the sepulcher (Matthew 28:1, *Concordant Literal New Testament*, emphasis added).⁹

The *Concordant Literal New Testament* translates the Greek word *opse* as “evening”. As previously stated, *opse* is an adverb designating time and means “at evening or at eventide”. It can also mean “late in or on”. The King James Version translates “in the end of” and other versions translate “after”. We will see that translating this word “evening” opens up a new way of understanding what is being expressed.

The phrase “the evening of the sabbaths”, when taken in context with the following reference to “one of the sabbaths”, may be referring to the onset of seven weekly Sabbath days counted from Passover to Pentecost. According to the *Concordant Literal New Testament*:

“one of the sabbaths” refers to one of the seven weekly sabbaths between Wave Sheaf [offered on the 16th of Nisan, the day after Passover/First Day of Feast of

⁷ Vine, Vol. 3, p. 120.

⁸ Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1579.

⁹ *Concordant Literal New Testament*, p. 86.

Unleavened Bread] and Pentecost”.¹⁰

The Jews at the time would understand such a reference to the seven weekly Sabbath days counted from Passover to Pentecost. They would understand that Friday evening marked the onset of these seven weekly Sabbaths.

Based upon this understanding, the first part of Matthew 28:1 translates as follows:

Now (it is the) evening of (the onset of the weekly) sabbaths (counted from Passover to Pentecost).

Adding the rest of Matthew 28:1 logically follows this context, with reference being made to the FIRST of the SEVEN weekly Sabbath days counted from Passover to Pentecost:

Now (it is the) evening of (the onset of the weekly) sabbaths (counted from Passover to Pentecost). (At) the lighting up into one of (the) sabbaths came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to behold the sepulcher.

With this literal translation of the Greek text, let’s see how it fits the correct sequence of events:

The tomb was sealed and Temple Guard posted on Thursday. Friday evening was the beginning of the weekly Sabbath day (following the annual Sabbath day of Passover/First Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread, Wednesday evening to Thursday evening). Early Saturday morning, the women came to the tomb to complete preparation of Yeshua’s body, having purchased the necessary spices the day before.¹¹

If “sabbaths” in Matthew 28:1 refers to the seven weekly Sabbath days between Passover and Pentecost, “Now it is the evening of the sabbaths” refers to the start of the period of time when

¹⁰ “Greek-English Keyword Concordance”, p. 253.

¹¹ Preparation of the body could be done on a weekly Sabbath day without violating the Sabbath. The Jewish custom was and still is to bury the dead on the same day of death, even on Sabbath. Therefore, whatever preparation was required would also be permissible.

these seven weekly Sabbath days were counted, beginning with the first of the seven weekly Sabbath days. Remember, evening begins the day according to the Biblical/Jewish calendar.

As we proceed, we will see that each of the four Gospel accounts tells us that Messiah Yeshua rose on the first weekly Sabbath of these seven weekly Sabbaths that began to be counted after Passover.

In previous editions of this book, we proposed that the plural “sabbaths” in Matthew 28:1 referred to the annual Sabbath of Passover/First Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread (Wednesday evening to Thursday evening) and the weekly Sabbath (beginning Friday evening). If this is the case, “Now it is the evening of the sabbaths” refers to the passing of the Passover Sabbath and also to the passing of part of the weekly Sabbath. However, our new understanding as explained above seems a better way to understand the actual meaning in the fuller context of the seven weekly Sabbath days counted after Passover.

Either of these two possible ways of understanding the use of the plural “sabbaths” in Matthew 28:1 is consistent with the resurrection occurring on the first of the seven weekly Sabbaths counted from Passover to Pentecost, as we will show and prove.

LITERAL TRANSLATION OF GREEK PROVES SABBATH DAY RESURRECTION

Now let’s focus on what each of the four Gospel accounts tells us concerning the day of the resurrection, starting with the traditional English translation:

... as it began to dawn toward **THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK**, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave (Matthew 28:1, emphasis added).

And very early on **THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK**, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen (Mark 16:2, emphasis added).

Now after He had risen early on THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons (Mark 16:9, emphasis added).

But on the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared (Luke 24:1, emphasis added).

Now on THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb (John 20:1, emphasis added).

According to the traditional (idiomatic) English translation, all four Gospel accounts state that the resurrection occurred on “the first day of the week”. However, this is not the literal translation from the Greek. In order to understand the correct literal translation, let us first examine the Greek text.

For Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, and John 20:1, the Greek words translated as “the first day of the week” are:

μια των σαββατων

The English transliteration of the Greek is:

mia ton Sabbaton

Word for word, the literal English meanings are: *mia* means “one”,¹² *ton* means “of the”,¹³ and *Sabbaton* means “Sabbaths”.¹⁴ Accordingly, the literal translation is:

one of the Sabbaths

¹² Vine, Vol. 3, p. 137.

¹³ George C. Divry, *Divry's Modern English-Greek and Greek-English Desk Dictionary*, p. 714.

¹⁴ Liddell and Scott, p. 1579.

One may wonder how the literal translation, “one of the Sabbaths”, has been transformed into “the first day of the week”. This issue will be discussed later in the chapter. But for now, let us continue by comparing the above with the Greek translated as “the first day of the week” in Matthew 28:1 and Mark 16:9.

In Matthew 28:1, the Greek is:

εις μιαν σαββατων

The English transliteration is:

eis mian Sabbaton

The first word, *eis*, used as a preposition, has various meanings, including “to”, “in”, “at”, “into”, “upon”, and “on”.¹⁵ The second word, *mian*, a form of *mia* and the feminine form of the word (*h*)*eis*, means “one”.¹⁶ The last word, *Sabbaton*, is plural, meaning “Sabbaths”. Therefore, the literal meaning of this Greek phrase is:

on one (of the) Sabbaths

Note that the words “of the” are understood and so appear in parenthesis.

In Mark 16:9, the Greek is:

πρωτη σαββατου

The English transliteration is:

proti Sabbatou

¹⁵ Divry, p. 488.

¹⁶ Vine, Vol. 3, p. 137.

Proti comes from the root word *protos*, meaning “first”.¹⁷ *Sabbatou* is in the singular form, “Sabbath”. Therefore, the literal translation is:

first Sabbath¹⁸

Without exception, the literal translation of the original Greek in each of the Gospel accounts refers to Sabbath (Saturday) as the day of the resurrection. Specifically, reference is made to “one of the Sabbaths”, a direct reference to the seven weekly Sabbath days counted between Passover and Pentecost.¹⁹ The resurrection occurred on the first of these seven weekly Sabbath days. This is the reason Mark 16:9 refers specifically to “the first Sabbath”.

THE WORD OF GOD CONFIRMS THE LITERAL TRANSLATION “ONE OF THE SABBATHS”

Further support for both the literal translation, as well as the understanding that “one of the Sabbaths” refers to one of the seven weekly Sabbath days between Passover and Pentecost, is found in Acts 20:6-7 (*Concordant Literal New Testament* translation):

Yet we sail off from Philippi AFTER THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, and came to them in Troas (in) five days, where we tarry seven days. Now on ONE OF THE SABBATHS, (at) our having gathered to break bread, Paul argued (with) them, being about to be off on the morrow (Acts 20:6-7, emphasis added).²⁰

Unfortunately, most English versions mistranslate *mia ton sabbaton* as “the first day of the week” instead of the literal meaning, “one of the sabbaths”. Two exceptions are *The Interlinear Bible*²¹ and *The Interlinear KJV-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*²² that both use the literal translation “one of the sabbaths”. The context confirms the accuracy of the literal

¹⁷ Vine, Vol. 2, p. 103.

¹⁸ *Concordant Literal New Testament*, p. 135.

¹⁹ *Concordant Literal New Testament*, “Greek-English Keyword Concordance,” p. 253.

²⁰ *Concordant Literal New Testament*, p. 336.

²¹ Jay P. Green, Sr. (Translator-Editor), *The Interlinear Bible*, p. 843.

²² Marshall, p. 413.

translation by referring to “the days of unleavened bread”, meaning Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread (15th to 21st of Nisan). This links “one of the sabbaths” to the seven weekly Sabbath days between Passover and Pentecost.

Also, according to the *Concordant Literal New Testament* translation, reference is made to “one of the Sabbaths” in 1 Corinthians 16:2:

On ONE OF (THE) SABBATHS let each of you lay (aside) by himself (in) store (that in) which he should be prospered, that no collections may be occurring then, whenever I may come (1 Corinthians 16:2, emphasis added).²³

Unfortunately, the Greek, *kata mian sabbatou*, is incorrectly translated as “first day of every week” (or some minor variation thereof) in most English versions. However, reading the passage in context shows a reference to Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8), again confirming the literal translation of “one of the sabbaths” as referring to one of the seven weekly Sabbath days between Passover and Pentecost.²⁴

Since misinterpretation of the Word of God resulted in an erroneous Friday crucifixion (assuming Sabbath referred to the weekly Sabbath rather than to the annual Sabbath of Passover/First Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread), a real dilemma would result with the literal translation. For how could Yeshua have fulfilled the sign of Jonah, given a Friday crucifixion and a Saturday resurrection? Perhaps this is why the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) resurrection, so clearly stated in the literal translation of the Greek text, was changed to a Sunday resurrection, claiming an idiomatic meaning of the Greek.

In addition, to justify a Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection, the sign of Jonah had to be interpreted in a way to claim fulfillment by counting partial days as whole days. But two nights does not fulfill the three-nights requirement.

²³ *Concordant Literal New Testament*, p. 419.

²⁴ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 3, p. 338. Robertson states that this episode occurred a year before the one described in Acts 20:6-7.

THE WORD OF GOD DISPROVES THE ERRONEOUS “IDIOMATIC” INTERPRETATION

In accordance with the Genesis account of Creation, the Jews referred to the days of the week by their order in the week, for example, “first day”, “second day”, “third day”, etc. Only the seventh day had a name, “Sabbath” (Hebrew, *Shabbat*), referring to the day of rest. The Greeks followed the same way of designating the days of the week, the Greek word *Sabbaton* meaning “Sabbath”.

The Romans named the seven days of the week in honor of their gods, who were associated with the sun, moon, and five planets known at that time (for example, Sun’s-day, Moon’s-day, Mars’-day). This basic system was adopted by the Christian world, with the later English names for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday being derived from the names of Norse gods.²⁵

In the Greek language, there exist words that mean “first”, “day”, and “week”. They are respectively, *protos*²⁶, *(h)emera*²⁷, and *(h)ebdomas*.²⁸ Therefore, the phrase “first day of the week” could easily be expressed in a literal fashion. This being the case, why would the New Testament writers resort to an idiom rather than a clear, literal meaning, especially regarding such a crucial event?

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible used by Hellenistic Jews at the time of Yeshua, we can find examples of the use of the Greek word *(h)ebdomas* meaning “week” (for example, Daniel 9:27). However, we can find no examples of any idiomatic usage of the word “Sabbaton” to mean “week”.

In the Hebrew, there are two related (derived from the same root word), but clearly distinct, Hebrew words for “Sabbath” and “week”. The Hebrew word *Shabbath*,²⁹ “Sabbath”, refers to

²⁵ *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Vol. 21, p. 146.

²⁶ Vine, Vol. 2, p. 103.

²⁷ Vine, Vol. 1, p. 270.

²⁸ Divry, 380.

²⁹ James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, #7676.

weekly or annual Sabbaths. In contrast, the Hebrew word *shabuwa*³⁰ (other forms: *shabua* and *shebuah*) refers to a period of seven days ending with the Sabbath.

The Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, makes a clear distinction between the Hebrew words for “Sabbath” and “week”. In Exodus 34:22, Deuteronomy 16:10, and 2 Chronicles 8:13, the “Feast of Weeks” (Pentecost) is mentioned. According to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, “Feast of Weeks” transliterates from the Hebrew as *Hag Shab‘ot*; in Greek, it is:

εορτη εβδομαδων³¹

The English transliteration of the Greek is:

eorte ebdomadon

The first word, (*h*)*eorte*, translates as “feast” or “festival”, and is also used in the New Testament, including seventeen times in John’s Gospel.³² The second word, *ebdomadon*, is plural and refers to a period of seven days. It translates as “weeks” and is a form of the word *ebdomas*, meaning “week”.³³

This is a definitive case where there is a clear distinction between the Hebrew words for “Sabbath” and “week” in the Greek text. Given a clear distinction, how could the same word (*Sabbaton*) be inconsistently translated one place as “Sabbath”, and another place as “week”, even within the same sentence (Matthew 28:1)? **The answer seems to be that the translators interpreted this and other related passages within the context of later tradition rather than within the original Hebraic context of the Word of God.**

We would like to address one final passage that has been cited as an example of the idiomatic usage of the word “Sabbath” to mean “week”. It is found in Luke 18:12.

³⁰ Strong, #7620.

³¹ *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9, p. 592. This reference can also be found online under “Pentecost” in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1906 Edition) at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14815-weeks-feast-of>

³² Vine, Vol. 2, p. 86.

³³ Liddell and Scott, p. 466.

‘I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get’ (Luke 18:12).

The Greek word *Sabbatou* has been translated as “week”. Let us compare the NASB version above with the *Concordant Literal New Testament* translation below:

I am fasting twice of (a) sabbath. I am taking tithes from all whatever I am acquiring.³⁴

Here, the literal translation of the word “sabbath” is used. Also, a period, rather than a semicolon, divides the Greek into two separate thoughts. We agree that the literal translation of “Sabbath” is correct and that two main thoughts are being expressed. However, we think that the break comes before rather than after the word “Sabbath”. To clarify this point, let us focus on the first three Greek words before the word “Sabbath”:

νηστευω δις του

The English transliteration is:

nesteuo dis tou

The first word translates as “I fast” or “I am fasting.” The second word, *dis*, as an adverb, can be translated as “twice” or “doubly”.³⁵ The third word, *tou*, can be used as a pronoun or a preposition. As a pronoun, it can mean “him” or “it”; as a preposition, it can mean “of the”.³⁶ In the context of the passage, we think the accurate translation for this word is “him”. Translated, the English is:

I am fasting doubly as him. Sabbath, I am taking tithes from all whatever I am acquiring.

³⁴ *Concordant Literal New Testament*, p. 196.

³⁵ Liddell and Scott, p. 436.

³⁶ Divry, p. 707.

Putting the meaning back into context, the Pharisee is comparing himself to the tax collector mentioned in the previous verse (Luke 18:11). In a self-exalting prayer, he thanks God, believing he is more righteous than others because he fasts more and tithes more.

Since tithes were generally brought to the Temple on Sabbath, placing the period before the word “Sabbath” fits this context. Similarly, Paul’s instructions to believers to set aside their offerings on the weekly Sabbath (the day for synagogue assembly) is also in agreement with this practice (see the literal translation of 1 Corinthians 16:2 in the above section, “The Word of God Confirms the Literal Translation ‘One of the Sabbaths’ ”.)

CONSTANTINE CHANGED THE SABBATH DAY TO SUNDAY

Of interest and importance in this inquiry are the historical developments that affected the Church and its members during the early centuries of Christianity:

For the first three centuries of the Christian era THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK WAS NEVER CONFOUNDED WITH THE SABBATH; the confusion of the Jewish and Christian institutions was due to declension [falling away] from apostolic teaching (emphasis added).³⁷

Early Christians observed the Biblical Sabbath (Friday evening to Saturday evening) according to the Biblical commandment. The Biblical Sabbath observance continued until the time of Constantine when Sunday was substituted for the Biblical Sabbath. The First Church Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325:

...widened the breach between Christianity and Judaism by forbidding the celebration of the Christian Sabbath on Saturday and tried to prevent the coincidence of Easter and Passover.³⁸

³⁷ Vine, Vol. 3, p. 312.

³⁸ Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder (Editor), *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 214.

We are not attacking the practice of Sunday worship. Any day of the week is acceptable for fellowship, worship, and study the Word of God. Messiah Yeshua is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5). The believer's rest is in Him at all times. However, God established the Biblical Sabbath day at Creation and has never changed it.

In order to much better understand the awesome way that Yeshua fulfilled (and will continue to fulfill) foundational Biblical prophecies as the promised Messiah, the Biblical Hebraic context of the Word of God must be restored. To understand the origin of Christian traditions, we need to understand the history of Christianity.

In particular, the fourth century was especially crucial for the development of Christianity. At that time, the Roman Emperor Constantine understood the advantage of using religion as a powerful and effective political tool to unite the Roman Empire. He is credited with legitimizing Christianity but an enormous price was paid in terms of compromising Biblical truth. Under his direction and influence, Christianity was mixed with paganism as the foundation of the Church of Rome. Constantine retained the pagan high priest's title, Pontifex Maximus,³⁹ a title later adopted by the Papacy. Over time, more and more pagan customs and beliefs were assimilated.

Those who would not compromise Biblical truth, doctrines, and practices were marginalized and eliminated by those with greater political power and influence. In this way, foundational Biblical truths were lost as Christianity moved further and further away from its Biblical Hebraic roots.

The substitution of Sunday in place of the Biblical Sabbath is an example of how pagan holidays and practices became incorporated into the religious system of the Roman church. *Dies Solis* ("day of the Sun") was named in honor of the sun god. In A.D. 321, Emperor Constantine issued a law declaring Sunday a legal holiday.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, in the process of "Christianizing" paganism, Christianity became more and more paganized. Pagan holidays (including Easter and Christmas) were substituted for God's Biblical Holy Days. As a result, the true Biblical prophetic timetable was lost. This is how the truth about

³⁹ Dr. Tim Dowley (Editor), *The History of Christianity*, p. 140.

⁴⁰ Roberston, Vol. 6, p. 290.

the Sabbath resurrection was obscured and lost, the Sabbath resurrection replaced with a Sunday resurrection, Sunday being the day honoring the pagan sun god.

Had the early Gentile (non-Jewish) translators understood the Word of God in its Hebraic context, the literal meaning of “one of the Sabbaths” would certainly have been better comprehended. Even the traditional concept of a Friday crucifixion may have resulted from a limited understanding of the annual Biblical Holy Days that were also Sabbath days. For example, how would John 19:31 have been interpreted?

The Jews therefore, because it was the DAY OF PREPARATION, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross [tree] ON THE SABBATH (FOR THAT SABBATH WAS A HIGH DAY), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away (John 19:31, emphasis added).

The Day of Preparation was interpreted as preparation day for the weekly Sabbath. However, the Word of God clearly states that this particular Sabbath was a “High Day”, a reference to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an annual Sabbath day, not the weekly Sabbath. No distinction was made between the Passover “preparation day”, the day the Passover lambs were sacrificed, and preparation for the weekly Sabbath. Likewise, no distinction was made between the annual Passover Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath.

Since Friday was deemed to be the day of the crucifixion, the translators were faced with a serious dilemma if they literally interpreted the passages dealing with the day of the resurrection. For how could Yeshua fulfill the sign of Jonah if He were crucified on Friday and resurrected on the following day? Adopting an “idiomatic” interpretation of the Greek rather than accepting its literal meaning concealed this blatant inconsistency.

WHAT TIME OF DAY DID THE RESURRECTION HAPPEN?

The Gospel accounts indicate that the resurrection occurred sometime before dawn. (The following translations are from the NASB, corrected by replacing the “first day of the week”

with “one of the sabbaths”.)

...as it began to DAWN on one of the Sabbaths, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave (Matthew 28:1, emphasis added).

And VERY EARLY on one of the Sabbaths, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen (Mark 16:2, emphasis added).

Now after He had risen EARLY on one of the Sabbaths, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons (Mark 16:9, emphasis added).

But on one of the Sabbaths, at EARLY DAWN, they came to the tomb, bringing spices which they had prepared (Luke 24:1, emphasis added).

Now on one of the Sabbaths, Mary Magdalene came EARLY to the tomb, WHILE IT WAS STILL DARK, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb (John 20:1, emphasis added).

The literal translations of all Gospel accounts indicate an early morning resurrection. Words including “dawn”, “very early”, “early dawn”, and “while it was still dark” support this literal interpretation.

However, an idiomatic interpretation of “as it began to dawn” in the KJV version of Matthew 28:1 may be mistaken to indicate that the resurrection occurred on the Sabbath just before sunset. (Note: “first day of the week” replaced with “one of the Sabbaths”.)

...as it began to dawn on one of the Sabbaths, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave (Matthew 28:1, KJV).

According to the idiomatic interpretation, “as it began to dawn” refers to sunset, the beginning of

a new day, in keeping with Jewish thought. However, this interpretation does not fit Matthew's account regarding the lie that Yeshua's body was stolen by His disciples at night:

... "You are to say, 'HIS DISCIPLES CAME BY NIGHT AND STOLE HIM AWAY WHILE WE WERE ASLEEP' " (Matthew 28:13, emphasis added).

The Greek word translated "by night" is *nuktos* and cannot be confused with "day" or "daylight".⁴¹ This fits a predawn resurrection. Also, Mark makes specific reference to the sun having risen (16:2). Here, the Greek word translated "sun" is *eliou* and refers to the literal sun.

Lastly, after all the events of that momentous day, the apostle John reports that Yeshua appeared to His fearful disciples in the evening. Again, the Greek (*mia ton sabbaton*) literally translates as "one of the sabbaths":

(It) being, then, (THE) EVENING (OF) THAT DAY, ONE OF (THE) SABBATHS, and the doors having been locked where the disciples were gathered (together), because (of) fear of the Jews, Jesus [Yeshua] came and stood in the midst and is saying to them, "Peace to you!" And saying this, He shows them (His) hands also, and (His) side. The disciples, then, rejoiced (at) perceiving the Lord (John 20:19-20, *Concordant Literal New Testament*, emphasis added).⁴²

What a message of peace and joy to all disciples of Yeshua—past, present, and future—because the believer's faith (trust) is built upon an unshakable foundation of truth that Yeshua is the Messiah!

⁴¹ Marshall, p. 101.

⁴² *Concordant Literal New Testament*, p. 279.

THE EMMAUS JOURNEY DID NOT VIOLATE THE SABBATH DAY RESTRICTION ON TRAVEL

A possible objection to a Sabbath resurrection might be made because two disciples, Cleopas and Simon, traveled the same day of the resurrection to Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13-35):

And behold, two of them were going **THAT VERY DAY** to a village named Emmaus, which was about **SEVEN MILES** from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13, emphasis added).

According to *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*:

The location of Emmaus is uncertain, although two possible sites have been suggested. (1) Josephus mentions an *Ammaous* thirty stadia (three and a half miles) from Jerusalem. **IN THIS CASE LUKE COULD BE DESCRIBING A ROUNDTrip DISTANCE.** (2) There is an Arab village seven miles northwest of Jerusalem on the road to Lydda named El-Qubeibeh, where the Crusaders built a fort called Castellum Emmaus. While this village is the right distance from Jerusalem, no first-century evidence attaches the name “Emmaus” to it (emphasis added).⁴³

We believe that *Ammaous*, referred to by the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, is the correct identification of Emmaus. Since the two disciples not only went to Emmaus but also immediately returned to Jerusalem after Yeshua revealed Himself, seven miles as the roundtrip distance reported by Luke fits the context of the story. The disciples could have left shortly before sunset (about 6 pm) without violating the Sabbath restriction on travel (2000 cubits = approximately 3000 feet = approximately 0.6 miles). (The average time required to walk three miles is one hour.)

⁴³ Vol. 1, p. 499.

By the time the disciples arrived in Emmaus, it was evening. The Greek word (*h*)espera in Luke 24:29 translates as “evening”.⁴⁴ Twilight is the period of time from sunset to darkness when there is still some light in the sky after sunset. This is the period of time Luke describes so it is consistent with the disciples leaving a little before sunset so that their journey did not violate the Sabbath restriction on travel.

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⁴⁴ Vine, Vol. 2, p. 44.

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