

"On the 'third day' He rose again from the dead..."

Most of us would be familiar with that particular quotation, but in fact **it does not come from scripture**. It comes from the minutes that were taken at a convention of churchmen who were very determined to make sure that nobody, except they, would direct what had by that time become almost a government department of the Roman Empire - at least the eastern portion of it, located in the renamed city that for centuries had been known as Byzantium. This was now known as Constantinople, named after a bloodthirsty emperor - **Constantine** - who had transferred his seat of rule from Rome, and had claimed to have had a Christian conversion through seeing a cross-shaped cloud pattern in the sky immediately before taking part in a battle in which he had won decisively. According to one version of history, that was what apparently converted him to Christianity as it was then practiced. It was he who issued edicts, or instructions, that the then leaders of all of the churches should come together in a meeting, and standardise all their beliefs, and one suspects with a certain amount of heavy-handed "**leaning**" upon them to ensure that they followed the line he wished them to follow. There were certainly some disagreements, and it is worth remembering that at many of these conferences, some delegates excommunicated others, and vice-versa.

The particular conference was the one at Nicea, from where the statement of faith issued in AD311?? known as the **Nicene Creed** was formulated. The quotation comes from there.

It was in the sixties AD that the church shifted, in the main, from being an organisation of followers of Jesus the Nazarene, with many trying hard to include elements of Judaism into worship and other behaviour practices. The pendulum then swung the other way, with the Jewish origins being rather lost, amongst which was the following of the Jewish calendar in the celebrations of feasts, which if one believes the bible, was given by God to His people to follow, and stems from the book known as Exodus in the Old Testament where God told Moses that from the time of their departure from Egypt, they would name and number their months differently, starting at that point as their "**New Year**". Their calendar would from then on be tied to the lunar or moon's cycle as opposed to the Egyptians' which was tied to the sun. This was to be the first of many subtle - and less subtle - differences between God's people, and the rest of the world, but as so often happened, the majority of God's people paid little attention to God's will, and went their own ways regardless. Sounds familiar?

Dr. J. H. Hertz - at one time the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire - in his commentary on the Pentateuch (the first five books of the bible) - says quite a bit about the calendar, and it's well worth reading it. Now this makes quite a difference to the way in which we may look at the scriptures which refer to what is often referred to as "**Holy Week**".

The Jews' calendar was different from ours; theirs had months that lasted for 29 or 30 days, and each "**New Moon**" was a minor festival. The actual month length was based on the lunar cycle, and was therefore a bit over 29½ days, so an accumulated error built up over the year of twelve months, which was about 354 and a third days long - eleven days less than the solar year. This accounts for why the Jewish feasts move in relationship to our calendar - theirs follows a different cycle from ours, which is similar to the one the Egyptians and other heathen nations observed.

Velikovski explores Old Testament history from a non-believing viewpoint in two of his books, called "**Worlds in Collision**" and "**Ages in Chaos**" respectively, and makes a very good scientific case for the possibility of a twelve-month year made up of thirty days each being the original almanac, and also a rotational axis of zero originally, which would have resulted in less climatic change in the northern and southern hemispheres, and he pinpoints the changes historically to firstly the time of the flood, and secondly to the time of Joshua marching his troops around the city of Jericho. His theory was that there were two "natural" cataclysms which the

primitive peoples attributed to a "God", but I see no reason why that conclusion couldn't easily be the other way round, namely that God used natural forces in His implementation of changes He figured were needed by mankind.

As each of the Jewish festivals had to be celebrated in the right seasons of the year, a harmonisation was obviously necessary, which was done by an extra month known as "**Adar**" as and when necessary, each leap year, creating seven thirteen month years in every nineteen yearly cycles. The months of Kislev and Chesvan have either 29 or 30 days, so ordinary years could vary between 353, 354 and 355 days, and leap years between 383, 384 and 385 years. The mathematical exactness of the Hebrew calendar was thus assured. This, however, could not fix the movement of the first day of festival months among the seven days of the week. The particular festival Sabbath, therefore, could not always fall on the evening of the sixth day of the week every year - simple arithmetic makes that point obvious. However, they had a solution for that also.

Jewish practice was to have "**special**" Sabbaths in those weeks, so that (for example) the seventeenth?? day of the first month, on which Passover (Peschar) is particularly celebrated, would always be a Sabbath, even if it was the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day of the week. There was, therefore, an **extra Sabbath** called the "**intermediate Sabbath**" provided, which late 20th Century rabbinical advice received by this writer suggests was the Friday night weekly Sabbath rather than the festival Sabbath, and which was held regardless of which day of the week on which it fell; the Jewish liturgical calendar provides for these special days with special readings, special prayers, and so on.

That being the case, the chances are only one in seven (fairly low, just 14.3 percent) that there was only one Sabbath in the week that led up to the **five trials** (yes, count them*), and subsequent execution of Jesus of Nazareth. Many people, including this writer, have been unconvinced with the theory that the three days between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection includes both ends, thus permitting His death to have been on the ("Good" or rather "God's") Friday and yet the tomb found empty not even thirty-six hours later. One of the problems with this theory is that Jewish reckoning wasn't done this way. It could, however, be accounted for quite easily if there was an extra Sabbath on either the Thursday or the Sunday; for there to have been intermediate Sabbaths in that week, we would have a probability of nearly 29 percent, that is to say nearly one chance in three. Two consecutive shabbatim would have precluded any activity at all connected with death, dying or burial, by Jesus' followers, for forty-eight consecutive hours, plus the twelve hours of the night following, plus the several hours before the first shabbat, and then we have a fairly close approximation to a three twenty-four hours' consecutive time block between His death and the discovery of His empty tomb. It is worth considering, also, that rabbinical tradition also makes each of the eight days of the Peschar (Passover) Feast special feast days, and this was one of the factors which greatly complicated the way in which the Jewish legislature ("**Sanhedrin**") needed to act, very swiftly, to eliminate this huge threat to their very existence.

It may also be worth note that the gospel narrative in one of the gospels does refer to the following day being a special Sabbath, though not having the benefit of either a Greek or Jewish education, I cannot vouch for the significance of that remark, nor its correct translation.

***The five trials were:**

- 1: Late night court before midnight, after Jesus' capture in Gethsemane.
- 2: Late night court, but early the next morning, which was technically needed to satisfy the law, showing that Jesus had been tried on two consecutive days, which was a requirement for a capital charge.
- 3: Arraignment before Pilate at an early daylight hour.
- 4: Appearance before Herod because Pilate figured he wouldn't have to try him that way.
- 5: Back at Pilate's court, mid-morning, because Herod wouldn't accept responsibility.

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