

Acts 20: Chronological Landmark of the New Testament

And upon **the first day of the week** (Greek *μία των σαββατων*, transliteration = *mia tōn sabbatōn*), when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. (Acts 20:7)

Older commentaries on Acts 20:7 exhibit a general consensus that the meeting described here was the first clear-cut example of Sunday worship in church history. Conybeare & Howson state: “This is a passage of the utmost importance, as showing that the observance of *Sunday* was customary,”^[1] One would expect that a fantastic assertion such as this would warrant more than a footnote in a 1000-page book on the life and epistles of Paul. Another example: Charles John Ellicott, commenting on Acts 20:7, says “This, and the counsel given in I Cor. 16:2 are distinct proofs that the Church had already begun to observe the weekly festival of the Resurrection in place of, or where the disciples were Jews, in addition to, the weekly Sabbath.”^[2] Ellicott believes that Paul remained at Troas for seven days in order to “keep the Lord’s day,”^[3] even though it is admitted the term *Lord’s Day* had not yet come into vogue. Here, according to most theologians, is the precedent-setting, earliest case of the transference of the sanctity of the Mosaic Sabbath to the first day of the week. Thankfully many modern scholars have exposed the presumptions inherent in such views. We are pleased to find that at least one theologian of the Reformation knew his Greek well enough to admit that the *mia tōn sabbatōn* in Acts 20:7 is a probable reference to the Jewish Sabbath. We quote from none other than John Calvin [emphasis mine]:

Either doth he mean the first day of the week, which was next after the Sabbath, or else some certain Sabbath, which latter thing may seem to me more probable; for this cause, because that day was more fit for all assembly, according to custom... For to what end is there mentioned of the Sabbath, save only that he may note the opportunity and choice of the time? Also, *it is a likely matter that Paul waited for the Sabbath, that the day before his departure he might the more easily gather all the disciples into one place.*^[4]

When Calvin comments on I Cor. 16:2, which has the same phrase, (albeit anarthrous), he is equally clear in his understanding that the phrase refers to the Jewish Sabbath. The following is Calvin’s highly interesting commentary on I Cor. 16:2, in which he makes it clear that Paul and the other apostles continued to use the accustomed Jewish Sabbath for the sacred assemblies of the Churches:

On one of the Sabbaths. The end is this---that they may have their alms ready in time. [Paul] exhorts them not to wait till he came...but to contribute *on the Sabbath* what might seem good, and according as every one’s ability might enable—that is, on the day on which they held their sacred assemblies. The clause rendered *on one of the Sabbaths* (*μὴν σαββατῶ* Chrysostom explains to mean—the first Sabbath. In this I do not agree with him; for Paul means rather that they should contribute, one on one Sabbath and another on another; or *even each of them every Sabbath*, if they chose....Nor am I inclined to admit the view taken by Chrysostom—that the term *Sabbath* is employed here to mean the Lord’s day, for the probability is, that the Apostles, at the beginning, *retained the day that was already in use*. [emphasis mine]

The Concordant Literal NT agrees with Calvin’s rendering of the Greek:

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.

It is hard to imagine Calvin being unaware of the fact that the Greek in these two passages was the same as in the resurrection narratives. In fact, the $\mu\alpha\nu \sigma\alpha\beta\beta\alpha\tau\omega$ of I Cor. 16:2 matches Matthew's (Matt. 28:1) day of the week when Mary Magdalene came to the empty tomb. When commenting on Matt. 27:57, Calvin seems to agree with the thesis of this book, that there were three days between the death of Christ and the following weekly Sabbath, when he states, without explanation, "Now from the time that Christ died until the Sabbath began to be observed, *there were three free days.*"

Did Yahweh not know in advance there would be an attempt to use a supposed Sunday resurrection of his Son in a deceitful way to theologically undermine his Sabbath command, long before the switch from Sabbath to Sunday became a *fait accompli*? Was He aware that deceived antinomian Christian theologians would put a "spin" on Acts 20:7 in an attempt to legitimize the switch? These are questions for the reader to decide.

I am Elohim (God), none is like Me, declaring the end from the beginning. (Is. 46:10)

Nothing takes Him by surprise. That being the case, we must ask whether Yahweh, in His infinite wisdom, may have hidden away confirmation of the literal meaning of *mia tōn sabbatōn*, in Acts 20:7. This much is certain: This passage is either speaking of a Saturday/Saturday night meeting, or a Sunday/Sunday night meeting. Divergent opinion is reflected in two distinct translations of this passage. We begin with the KJV:

And upon **the first day of the week**, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

Notice that the word "day" is italicized in the KJV because it does not exist in the *Textus Receptus*, or in any Greek text. Nor does the Greek word *mia* mean "first." We challenge the Greek scholar to demonstrate anywhere in the LXX or NT where $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$, $\epsilon\nu$, or $\mu\iota\alpha$ (the masculine, neuter, and feminine forms of the Greek word for "one") means first. Therefore, "first day of the week" is an *interpretation* of the underlying phrase *mia tōn sabbatōn*, rather than a translation, all the more so since *sabbatōn* means "of the Sabbaths," not "of a week." Translators have assumed the phrase to be idiomatic rather than literal. Given the fact that in the preface to the Authorized Version, King James charges the translators with upholding the institutions of the Anglican Church, of which he was the head, institutions such as Sunday worship and Easter Sunday, we are not surprised that they did not venture to consider a more literal rendering of the Greek phrase. A more objective and dispassionate translation of *mia tōn sabbatōn* may be found in the Concordant Literal New Testament:

Now **on one of the Sabbaths**, at our having gathered together to break bread, Paul argued with them, being about to be off on the morrow. Besides, he prolonged the word unto midnight.

If we knew the year in which Paul traveled to Jerusalem in Acts 20, this would go a long way toward helping us to decide which of the two translations of *mia tōn sabbatōn* is correct. This process is simplified because it is possible to eliminate years contiguous to the correct year due to the fact that the calendar information for those years, based on astronomical computer

models, eliminates them by not accommodating Luke's facts. This will become apparent as we meddle with the particulars. We will now assemble relevant linguistic, astronomical, historical, calendrical, and scriptural facts in order to arrive at that year. As it turns out, Luke supplies enough historical-chronological information between chapters 18 and 20 to greatly narrow the year of the collection trip.

Using astronomy software, we can reconstruct the Jewish festival calendar for each of the several possible years that Paul may have traveled to Jerusalem with the collection for the saints. This is possible because the Hebrew religious calendar was based on the phases of the moon, which can be determined for any date in history. The regularity of the moon's elliptical orbit around the earth allow computer programs to calculate the date of the new moon when the Hebrew month of Nisan started in any given spring in history.

Luke, a brilliant historian, Paul's emenuensis and historiographer, was Paul's traveling companion and fellow-prisoner from Troas to Rome, including two years Paul spent in prison in Caesarea, capital of Judea. Paul supplied the details, Luke did the historical research, and together they collaborated on what Sir William Ramsay has called a very reliable historical treatise, the book of Acts.^[5] The historical data which narrows the year of Paul's final trip to Jerusalem indicate that *mia tōn sabbatōn* could not have been a figure of speech referring to Sunday!

The life of Paul in the book of Acts is one synagogue meeting after another in one major city of one Roman province after another. In between Sabbaths he plied his craft of making tents for individuals to earn money so that he was chargeable to no man and no church. Much of the conversion of Jews and Gentiles took place in the open format of the local synagogues. Scholars have noted how prominently the Sabbath figures in the book of Acts, and some have suggested the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) and festival days are a kind of chronological thread knitting the story flow together. When we have reached our conclusion at the end of this chapter, we shall see that the gathering of believers in Troas in Acts 20:7 was part and parcel of this same thread. On "one of the Sabbaths" (μία τῶν σαββάτων), the third of seven Sabbaths counted between the Days of Unleavened Bread (mentioned in previous verse, Acts 20:6) and Pentecost, Paul rendezvoused with the church representatives who were to accompany him to Jerusalem with the collection for the saints. The phrase "one of the Sabbaths" in Acts 20:7 provides a chronological bridge between Acts 20:6, "after the days of Unleavened Bread," and the Jewish festival of Pentecost (the day after the seventh Sabbath) in Jerusalem which prompted Paul's haste and Luke's intense narrative. In Acts 20:16 Paul refuses to tarry at Ephesus, opting to have the elders of the Church come to meet him in Miletus instead of Paul going 35 miles north to them, because he was hastening to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost.

To assist us in our chronological evaluation of Acts chapters 18-20 we will consult various eminent Bible chronologers—Jack Finegan, F.F. Bruce, George Ogg, Colin Hemer, and Dale Moody. Both Finegan and Moody conclude that Paul's fifth and final trip to Jerusalem (in Acts 20) occurred in 55 AD:

If the relevant materials in the book of Acts are taken as they stand...a relatively detailed chronology, particularly in the later part, can be worked out [for the life of Paul].^[6]

Astronomical data dictating the Passover date in 55 AD are as follows: On Monday, March 17, 55 AD, the new moon would not have been visible, being less than half a day old and near apogee. Disk illumination was only .32%. By the following night, Tuesday, March 18, conditions were ideal for visibility, with 16 degrees separation from the sun at dusk, with 1 hr. 20 min. difference between sunset and moonset. The moon was 1.38 days old, and March 18th was

day 30 from the previous likely new moon. Therefore Wednesday, March 19 was Nisan 1, Tuesday, April 1 was Passover (Nisan 14), and Tuesday, April 8 was the Last Day of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 21). Acts 20:6 says:

And we [Paul and Luke] sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them in Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

It took five days to sail from Philippi to Troas, and the hurried nature of the narrative implies strongly departure on the next day after Unleavened Bread, on Wednesday, April 9. The voyage lasted from April 9-13, Wednesday through Sunday. Paul's week-long visit in Troas would have extended from April 13-19. Using the usual Jewish inclusive reckoning of time, the seven days encompassed Sunday through Saturday, the latter being "one of the Sabbaths", i.e. *μία των σαββατων*) referenced in Acts 20:7.

The year 54 AD is admitted by almost all scholars as compressing Luke's history into too short a space to allow for Paul's 27 months^[7] in Ephesus. In the addendum to this chapter, we provide the astronomy that shows 56 and 57 AD, the only other possible years for the trip, do not allow the seventh day at Troas to fall on a Saturday or a Sunday.

The Historical Evidence in Acts 18 and 19

We are now ready to explore Luke's historical account in Acts 18 and 19, which forms a backdrop for Acts 20. The following historical facts mutually confirm each other. When linked together they create a clear outline of the events leading up Paul's final trip to Jerusalem in Acts 20:

1. Expulsion of Jews from Rome in the 9th year of Claudius Caesar (49 AD), resulted in the arrival of Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth a short time before Paul himself arrived in Corinth (Acts 18:1-2), late 49 AD. (See pages 6-9)
2. Paul taught for 18 months in Corinth, converting many (including the chief of the synagogue) to the faith, resulting in opposition from the Jews. When Gallio became proconsul of Achaia, arriving in late May of 51, the Jews brought charges against Paul, thinking they could take Advantage of Gallio's inexperience. The 18 months extends from about December of 49 AD to the early summer of 51 AD, the time of Paul's arraignment. Gallio dismissed the Jews' charges. (Details on page 10)
3. Paul spent "a considerable number of days" (Acts 18:18) with the brethren in Corinth after the trial. Toward the end of summer he shaved his head to terminate a Nazarite vow. This left him with the ceremonial obligation of presenting himself and his shaved hair at the Temple. No doubt Paul timed the culmination of this vow to coincide with the fall feast that was coming in Jerusalem (18:21), allowing several weeks travel time. The Feast of Trumpets, which is the first day of the seventh month, fell around Sept. 26 in 51 AD. This allows plenty of time for the "considerable days" Paul spent in Corinth after his appearance before Gallio.
4. He no doubt reported to the Jerusalem Church on the success of the second missionary journey, which was just completed. There is no indication he tarried there. He merely "greeted the church," then went down to Antioch (Acts 18:22).
5. He spent "some time," probably the fall and winter of 51/52 AD, in Antioch, which was Paul's "home" church.

6. Just as in the American Southwest and Southeast, spring begins in mid-February throughout the Mediterranean. Therefore Paul commenced his third missionary journey in February of 52 AD, passing consecutively through the Galatian province and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples there as he made his way back to Ephesus to fulfill the promise he had given them the previous summer: “I will return again to you, if God will.” (Acts 18:21)
7. Paul taught for 3 months in the synagogue of Ephesus (Acts 19:8). When the hard-headed among them began to blaspheme the Christian faith, Paul separated the disciples, and defended the truth in the school of Tyrannus for two years.
8. Paul’s teaching over this period spread from Ephesus throughout the entire province of Asia, making serious inroads into the realm of idolatry; so much so that the people got together to burn their books on sorcery and magic. Paul fell into disfavor with the provincial craft union in charge of making silver idols of Diana. The head of the union aroused great fury among the citizens, who rushed into the huge theatre chanting “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”
9. By the grace of Yahweh the town clerk, who was the most powerful local official, used great tact and wisdom to calm the mob, who likely would have stoned Paul and his fellow travelers. He does so by the threat of Roman displeasure. Paul has not spoiled any temples, nor blasphemed (at least directly) their goddess. He then makes the point that no formal charges have been filed, for which there are day courts in session (v. 38). Lastly, if they don’t like the verdict of this court, they can appeal *to the proconsuls* (plural).
10. The proconsuls, *anthupatoi* of which the town clerk speaks, are a vital clue to understanding the time of this tumult in Ephesus that brought a culmination to Paul’s ministry there. Had the town clerk simply made a reference to the pro-consul (singular), we would have no chronological clue. It just so happens that there were three deputy proconsuls in Asia by November of 54 AD as a result of the assassination of the Roman proconsul Silanus. Since Paul spent the following winter in Corinth (I Cor. 16:6), and a new replacement proconsul’s appointment and arrival would have taken place by late May of 55 AD, the only time for the Ephesian riot that accommodates proconsuls plural and the third year of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus is the fall of 54 AD. This is the only time when there were multiple proconsuls and Paul present simultaneously. (Details are given for point # 10 on page 11.)
11. After wintering in Corinth (I Cor. 16:6), the Church there sent Paul forward with the collection to Jerusalem. Due to a plot against him by the Jews, he detoured through Philippi (setting sail from the port of Neapolis) the day after Unleavened Bread, which was Wednesday April 9, 55 AD. Sailing against the southerly spring winds for five days they came to Troas on Sunday, which began a perfect seven day week in Troas. The seventh day of that week was indeed a weekly Sabbath, *mia tōn sabbatōn*, “one of the Sabbaths” as one counts to Pentecost. The disciples got together for a fellowship meal, after which Paul taught, prolonging his dialogue until midnight,^[8] when the sleepy Euthychus fell down from a loft and was restored via Paul’s prayer.

The above then is an outline presenting the case for the events of Acts 20 taking place in 55 AD. After showing the likelihood that Paul’s Roman epistle was written from Corinth during

the winter of 54/54 AD, prominent historian C. K. Barrett summarizes the argument for Paul's collection trip taking place the following spring, 55 AD:

Paul was brought before Gallio in or about July in A.D. 51 ...it is implied that the bulk of Paul's [18-month] stay fell before his appearance in Gallio's court...it seems probable then that Paul reached Corinth in March 50, and left in Sept. 51 (each date being very proximate). This would enable him to sail, by one of the last boats of summer, to Syria (Acts 18:21 f.)...He probably renewed his travels with the return of favourable weather in the spring of the next year(Acts 18:23) and thru the 'upper country' (Acts 19:1) might well last most of the following summer; he would reach Ephesus (Acts 19:1) in the autumn. The length of his stay there is given by Acts 19:8 (3 months) and 19:10 (2 years); the Pentecost therefore which he was anxious to keep in Jerusalem will have been that of 55, and his three months in Greece (Acts 20:3) must have come to an end a few weeks earlier...The chronology of Paul's movements cannot be settled beyond dispute, but on the whole no view meets with fewer difficulties than that which places the 'three months' of Acts 20:3 in or about January-March 55. We have reason to think that the Epistle to the Romans was written in this interval.^[9]

For those interested in a more involved discussion of arguments supporting the chronological outline above, the following section provides notes elaborating on some of the above points.

Elaboration of Point 1: Historical Notes Confirming the Approximate Time of Priscilla and Aquila's Arrival in Corinth.

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila...recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. (Acts 18:1-2, ESV)

The Christian historian Orosius tells us that his copy of Josephus placed the expulsion of Jews from Rome by Emperor Claudius in the 9th year of his reign^[10] (Jan. 24, 49 AD. to Jan. 23, 50 AD). Here is what we know about Orosius' credibility: He was a Christian presbyter from Portugal who wrote "the first self-enclosed and literarily sophisticated world or universal history."^[11] He stands as the "founder of Christian universal historical writing."^[12] He had a wide range of sources available to him due to the nearness of the bishop's library of Hippo Regius, et. al., and used his sources with precision.^[13] He is very high among the ranks of ancient historians.^[14]

Acts 18:1-2 tells us that Priscilla and Aquila, as a result of Claudius' edict, arrived in Corinth from Rome shortly before Paul came there from Macedonia. Acts 18:11 indicates Paul made disciples in Corinth for 18 months, until the new proconsul Gallio arrived. We are able to backdate the arrival of Paul in Corinth to December (give or take a month) of 49 AD, due to the chronological certainty of the datum in the following section.

There are at least two other Roman historians who mention Jewish civil unrest in Rome under Claudius, Dio Cassius (early 3rd C.) and Seutonius (ca. 110 AD). Dio Cas-sius 60.6.6-7, discussing Claudius' actions during his first year, says this:

As for the Jews, who had increased so greatly that by reason of their multitude it would have been hard without raising a tumult to bar them from the city, Clau-dius did not drive

them out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life, *not to hold meetings*.

These limited restrictions by Emperor Claudius took place in his first year, 41 AD, as Gerd Luedemann and others have shown.^[15] Though Dio provides no clue as to why they were debarred from holding synagogue meetings, I have little doubt it was due to controversy over the life and teachings of Christ. On this point we quote F. F. Bruce:

Perhaps [in 41 AD]... there were already signs of that unruly and turbulent behaviour which led him, about eight years later, to decree their absolute expulsion from the capital. Christianity was not the only messianic movement abroad among the Jews in this period, although it is as probable that it had reached Rome by the beginning of Claudius' reign as that it had reached Alexandria by that date...if Claudius had already experienced some trouble with the Jews of Rome [in 41], we can understand better *the sharpness with which he warned the Jews of Alexandria* not to foment a similar plague there by an illegal increasing of their numbers [via migration from Palestine and Antioch].^[16]

Bruce is referring to Claudius' *Letter to Alexandria*, written in the autumn of 41 AD, in which he accuses the Jews of "making a general nuisance of themselves throughout the empire," and that if they did not behave in the future, they would incur imperial wrath. The severe tone of this letter contrasts with the conciliatory attitude back in the winter of this same year. When Claudius replaced Caligula in late January of 41, he issued executive orders reversing Caligula's abuses, and warning the Greeks in various cities to refrain from their persecution of Jews. Some have compared this favorable approach with the revocation of the right of assembly mentioned by Dio Cassius for 41, and have come to the erroneous conclusion that one or the other must be untrue. It is likely, however, that this suspension of the right of assembly in Rome took place much later in the year. Furthermore, Claudius' initial actions re-establishing Jewish civil and religious rights were directed at abuses of their adversaries *in the East*, in Alexandria, Antioch and elsewhere.^[17] Herod Agrippa, recently installed as king of Judea, had tremendous favor with both Caligula and his successor Claudius, but the emperor's first responsibility was to maintain order *in Rome*. F. F. Bruce explains this paradoxical situation adroitly:^[18]

No amount of goodwill on the emperor's part [toward the Jews] or personal influence on Herod Agrippa's part could make the emperor close his eyes to anything that seemed to threaten the public peace of the capital.

It is hard to imagine what else, besides the proselytizing activities of the new faith fermenting within the dozens of synagogues throughout Rome, could have brought about this restriction. But it is apparent from Claudius' *Letter to Alexandria* that the Jews were beginning to acquire a reputation of being tumultuous. Fourteen years later the Jewish orator Tertullus tries to deflect blame for this unrest onto the Apostle Paul, painting him as "a mover of sedition among *all the Jews throughout the [Roman Empire]*." (Acts 24:5) When tumultuous debates over Christ were repeated in 49, Claudius had no choice, despite his demonstrated good will toward the Jews, but to expel them from Rome itself, at least for the time being.^[19] E. M. Smallwood explains:

Claudius' action in 49, like its forerunners [in 41], was a police action taken in the interests of the peace of the capital, a purely local restriction imposed in answer to local disturbances but not one implying any change in the permanent and universal protection which the Jews normally enjoyed.^[20]

That events became tumultuous is attested by the Roman historian Seutonius (110 AD): “Since the Jews constantly made tumults at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome.”^[21]

Was Seutonius really talking about conflagrations over Christ? “The only reasonable interpretation of Suetonius’ sentence is that the reference is to Christianity.”^[22] *Chrestus* is a modified and corrupt form for *Christus* (Christ). “Christus [was] not unnaturally confused with the common slave-name *Chrestus*.”^[23] George Howard points out the considerable amount of evidence of “confusion over the pronunciation of Christ’s name in the early centuries of the Christian era.”^[24] Sir William Ramsay says this:

The strange term *Christos* was vulgarly modified to *Chrestos*, the Greek adjective meaning “good, useful,” which seemed to popular fancy a more suitable and natural name for a leader or a deity. “Chrestians” was the form in which the name was often used; and it occurs in inscriptions.^[25]

A prime example of ‘Christian’ being spelled ‘Chrestianos’ is Codex Sinaiticus^[26] (Acts 11:26, 26:28, and I Peter 4:16). In the early second century, Tertullian (*Apol.* 3.5) complained about pagans mispronouncing the name “Chrestianos”. Lactantius (Divine Institutions 4.7) spoke of the same phenomenon (Chrestus instead of Christus). Hence, we have every reason to believe that Seutonius has made the same mistake when giving the namesake that was the cause of Jewish expulsion from Rome in 49. From these facts we concur with George Howard’s conclusion:

It may be concluded that some time before 49-50 AD Christianity had reached Rome, and become sufficiently disseminated within Roman Jewry to cause fierce struggles between those who espoused the new faith and those who clung to the old.^[27]

Seutonius thus indicates that the same kind of tumults over ‘Chrestus’ were going on in the sizable Jewish community in Rome in the late 40’s as are described in a number of places in Acts. As a result of powerful preaching, a mob at the temple brought about the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 6:12, 7:57, 8:1). After this event, there was great persecution against the church that scattered the brethren everywhere (Acts 8:2-4), and likely led to the preaching of Christ in Rome before 40 AD. Paul was thrust out of Psidian Antioch (southern Galatia) by the Jews (Acts 13:50). Jealousy caused the Jews to incite tumult in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5), down the road in Berea (17:13), and later in Ephesus (Acts 19).

Violent zeal over religious matters was a large reason for general antipathy towards the Jewish race, expressed by almost every pagan writer. Though only a small percentage of the Jews were fanatical, they succeeded in tarnishing the reputation of the rest as being unruly and pestilential (Acts 24:5). Josephus brings out their willingness to protest and die for even the smallest of offenses during the time of Herod and Pilate. Messianic and apocalyptic fervor (flamed by Emperor Caligula’s attempt to place his statue inside the Temple in 40 AD) was a strong element in Jewish society in the late 40’s AD, so debates over John the Baptist’s and Christ’s mission could have easily made their way to Rome by 49 AD. When Paul came to Psidian Antioch (47 AD), his reference to John presumes they have already heard much about him. (Acts 13:24)

The riots described in Acts were largely the result of jealousy and envy on the part of Pharisaic or Hellenistic leadership in the synagogues, the loci of Paul’s evangelistic opportunities. But Christians *faced increasing opposition from the Zealots* between the death of Agrippa I (44 AD) and the revolt of 66 AD. The effects of the Zealot movement were felt as far

as the Diaspora in Antioch in 48 AD and **Rome in 49**.^[28] Reisner believes that the Zealots despised Christianity on two counts: (1) Zealots believed that evil could only be overcome via the sword; hence the pacifism of Christ and Paul was a dangerous diversion from the will of God.^[29] (2) Stripping down the barriers between Jew and Gentile was a threat to a) the authority of Phariseism's two greatest teachers Hillel and Shammai, and b) the integrity and ritual purity of the Jewish race, and c) promoted collaboration with the enemy, Rome.

When Paul came to trial in Caesarea before Governor Felix near Pentecost of 55 AD (Acts 24:1-5), the Jewish orator Tertullus tried to blame Paul as a “mover of sedition among ALL the Jews *throughout* the world.” It is *as if* Tertullus knew that Felix was aware of the world-wide commotion over Christianity, and tried to say to him, ‘We have here their main ringleader; without him us Jews would not be so unruly.’

The foregoing is the historical context of Priscilla and Aquila's arrival in Corinth in early fall of 49 AD as a result of riots in Rome over Christ. I quote F. F. Bruce to summarize our findings:

Our inference from Seutonius that the riots were due to the recent introduction of Christianity into the Jewish colony at Rome agrees well enough with our independent inference from the New Testament that Aquila and Priscilla were Christians before they came to Corinth...Ambrosiaster was no doubt right in saying that the [earliest] Roman believers ‘had embraced the faith of Christ, albeit according to the Jewish rite, although they saw no sign of mighty works, nor any of the apostles’.^[30]

Elaboration of Point 2: The Proconsulship of Gallio—Anchor Point for Pauline Chronology

[Paul] continued [in Corinth] a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them. But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul, and brought him before the tribunal. (Acts 18:11-12, ESV)

The standard term of office for the proconsul of a senatorial province was one year.^[31] Claudius Caesar made a law that the governors must begin their journey to take office by mid-April.^[32] Therefore, Gallio took office in Corinth, the seat of administration for Achaia, sometime in May, 51 AD. The evidence for this date comes from the restoration of inscription fragments at Delphi. A century ago, a stone was discovered with both L. Junius Gallio and Tiberius Claudius Caesar's name and their respective positions. The inscription thereon is a record dating Gallio's tenure at Corinth to the time when Claudius had received the “imperial acclamation” for the 26th time. Other inscriptional evidence^[33] may be adduced to prove that the 26th imperial acclamation dates to the first half (Jan-July) of 52 AD.^[34] Since the Delphi Inscription declares Gallio as both friend (*amicus Caesaris*) and “proconsul of Achaia in the first half of A.D. 52, he must have entered upon that office in the early summer, say May/June of the year 51.”^[35] F. F. Bruce, George Ogg, Jack Finegan, Dale Moody, Colin Hemer are five among an overwhelming consensus of historians who have concluded that Gallio was proconsul between May 51 and May 52 AD.^[36] I quote prominent English scholar Colin Hemer^[37]:

It is sufficiently clear [from this inscription] that it [Gallio's proconsulship] must be assigned to the spring or summer of 52 and is addressed to the Delphians *at the close* of Gallio's tenure or to his successor immediately after his arrival. In either case the implication is that Gallio was proconsul in 51-52. ...Gallio's proconsulship of Achaia is otherwise attested in the writings of [Seneca].

F. F. Bruce states: “A date not later than May, 51 AD is indicated for Gallio’s entrance on his proconsulship...the narrative of Acts implies that Paul was accused before him shortly after his arrival as proconsul...”^[38] The language of Acts 18:11-12 leads one to believe that Gallio arrived after Paul had stayed in Corinth for 18 months. The Jews thought they could take advantage of the new governor’s inexperience, and so it is likely Paul was brought before Gallio’s tribunal in June of 51 AD. Thus we are able to backdate Paul’s arrival in Corinth to the winter of 49/50 AD, which harmonizes well with Orosius’s placement of the Claudian expulsion decree in 49 AD. Finegan says “Paul’s finding of Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth when he himself came probably in Dec. A.D. 49 agrees well.”^[39] Dale Moody concurs.^[40] The above dates are anchor points for the entire chronology of Paul’s missionary life accepted by most scholars. Our dates are further corroborated by Paul’s earliest epistle, that of I Thessalonians, written only a few months after he had left Thessalonica^[41] for Berea, Athens and Corinth. In this letter, written in early 50 AD, Paul states that the wrath of God had finally *caught up with* the Jews (I Thes. 2:16). The aorist aspect of the verb εφθασε points to an overt act having transpired which indicated to Paul Yahweh’s sore displeasure with Jewish hindrance of the Gospel. The imperial wrath which Claudius had threatened early in that decade finally materialized in his expulsion edict of 49.

Elaboration of Point 10: Consideration of Luke’s Use of Proconsuls (plural)

If therefore, Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. (Acts 19:38, ESV)

Most scholars deny that Luke used *proconsuls* literally to refer to the plurality of deputy proconsuls, preferring to put “There are such people as proconsuls” in the mouth of the town clerk (19:38).^[42] Other scholars admit the surprising nature of the plural *anthupatoi*,^[43] since there was never more than one proconsul at a time. Ernst Haenchen dismisses the plural as simply “generic,”^[44] which George Duncan admits as “possible.” However, Duncan seeks another explanation:

In the speech of the Ephesian municipal secretary [town clerk] there is a strange reference to ‘proconsuls’ (in the plural)...[Did] “the two agents of the murder exercise authority prior to the arrival of the new governor[?] If so, it would mean that the death of Silanus was anterior to the Demetrius riot [and] the Demetrius riot was later than the proconsul’s death in 54.... The year when Junius Silanus, the proconsul at Ephesus, met his death was the year 54. Paul’s residence at Ephesus was apparently from 52 to 54.^[45]

Luckrock states: “There are...reasons to believe that it is a strictly accurate statement, and that it testifies to wholly exceptional circumstances.”^[46] There is no historical record of more than one holding office at once in the same place.^[47] What led to this plurality of deputy proconsuls in the senatorial province of Asia, and when did it take place? Agrippina, the wife of Claudius Caesar, maneuvered to have her son Nero appointed her husband’s successor. The Roman historian Tacitus says this:

The first victim of the new reign was Junius Silanus, Proconsul of Asia. His death was brought about by Agrippina’s devices, unknown to Nero; nor was it provoked by any turbulent element in [Silanus’] character. He was a man of sluggish nature, and previous Emperors had treated him with contempt...But Agrippina was afraid of him. She feared he might avenge the death of his brother Lucius, which had been her doing; and popular talk kept saying that instead of a lad like Nero, barely out of his teens, who had won the Empire by a crime, it would be better to have a man of ripe age, of blameless life and

noble blood...for Silanus too [like Nero] was a great-great-grandson of divine Augustus. Such were the reasons for his death. The deed was done by Publius Celer, a Roman knight, and a freedman called Helius, who had charge of the Emperor's affairs in Asia; these two administered poison to the Proconsul at a banquet, in a manner too open to escape detection.^[48]

We frankly find it rather inexcusable that more historians and chronologers have not taken Luckrock's thesis more seriously. After all, mid-autumn of 54 A.D. is a full three years and some months removed from Paul's departure from Corinth for the fall festival in Jerusalem of 51 AD, which is plenty of time to accommodate (1) Paul's fall and winter 51/52 hiatus in Antioch, (2) his revisiting the Churches of Galatia and Phrygia from February to June, let's say, of 52 AD, and then (3) the 27 months spent at Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10). Some scholars have unnecessarily interspersed an entire extra year for Paul's layover in Antioch, and/or stretched his revisiting of the churches in Asia Minor prior to Ephesus into 8-12 months. To do so is to misread the spirit of Luke's account. Would Paul promise to return to the Jewish brethren in Ephesus who had urged him to stay and teach them, and then spend 17-18 months in Antioch? Would Luke use a word like *dierchomenos* (διερχόμενος, passing through), to describe a trip that took 8-12 months? The sense of the terse narrative (18:23) is that nothing of note occurred, no beatings or stonings, no imprisonments, just passing from one church house to another confirming and strengthening the brethren. But the eye of the narrator and his protagonist is set on the terminus of Ephesus. Yahweh is about to, through his bondservant Paul, do some serious damage to Satan's seat of idolatry in the province of Asia.^[49] We close this section with a quote from Luckrock concerning Luke's accuracy in Acts 19:38:

In the case of Luke we have a right to expect nothing but what is absolutely correct, because he is the chosen historian of Christ's Church at a most critical period, when every detail is of momentous interest; and it is a cause of no little joy and satisfaction to receive, year by year, renewed proofs that he was guided by the Holy Spirit "into all truth." With confidence, then, may every faithful student of this Book say, "O Lord, thy word is tried to the uttermost, and Thy servant loves it." (Ps.119:140)

Elaboration on Point 11: Did Paul Depart From Philippi Immediately After The Days of Unleavened Bread?

But we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days came to them in Troas, where we stayed for seven days (Acts 20:6, ESV).

Paul had hoped to make it to Jerusalem with his collection for the saints in Jerusalem by Passover of 55 AD, but because of a Jewish plot against his life (Acts 20:3), he could not travel directly from Corinth to Syria, but had to go northeast back through Macedonia (where he rejoined Luke), and sail out of Philippi instead, increasing his travel time. Therefore, he determined to make it to Jerusalem by Pentecost. So *they* (Paul and Luke) sailed away from Neapolis, seaport suburb of Philippi, after the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6). In the year 55 AD, the very year Paul made this trip, the Passover and the Last Day of Unleavened Bread fell on Tuesday. The five day trip—Wednesday thru Sunday--bucking the southerly winds of spring took twice as long as his trip the opposite direction (over the same sea lanes) in chapter 16. He arrived in Troas on Sunday and spent seven days there. Take note that the "us/we" accounts resume in Acts 20:5-6, because Luke himself sailed with Paul from Philippi. Since Luke is an eyewitness to the final trip through Troas to Jerusalem, all arguments against

the veracity of the details are futile. The men—Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Timothy, Tychicus, Trophimus,—were waiting for Paul and Luke in Troas (Acts 20:5). They were men from different cities and provinces who had been appointed by their churches to gather the collection of the saints and carry it to Judea. Ramsay states:^[50]

The purpose of this numerous company is not stated in this part of Acts; but in 24:17 Paul says: ‘I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings.’

The importance of the mission that Paul and his men were embarking upon, and the fact that Paul knew his delegation was awaiting his arrival, argue for a next day departure the Wednesday after Unleavened Bread was over. Yet at the same time the need to stay and observe the feast of Unleavened Bread with the Macedonian Church is in view also. The success of the collection trip underscored the unity of the Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian church. The Gentiles had benefited from the spiritual things of the Jews—salvation itself was “of the Jews,” as Christ himself had said to the Samaritan woman—now the Gentiles were about to show their appreciation, as they had done at Antioch earlier through Paul and Barnabas, by rendering their physical blessings.

In the vast majority of cases, Hebrew/Jewish counting is customarily inclusive. Hence, the day Paul arrived, Sunday, is counted as the last day of the journey from Philippi to Troas, as well as the first day he spent in Troas. Saturday was the seventh day he spent in Troas.

ONE-TO-ONE CORRESPONDENCE OF TIME DESIGNATION IN JOHN 20:19 AND ACTS 20:7

Acts 20:7--And upon *mia tōn sabbatōn*, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

John 20:1—Now on *mia tōn sabbatōn*, comes Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and sees the stone taken away...

John 20:19—Then the same day at evening, being *mia tōn sabbatōn*, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst...

The Greek describing when the believers in Acts 20:7 met is identical to the Greek in John 20:1 and 20:19.^[51] If John 20:19 is a Sunday evening meeting, then Acts 20:7 has to be a Sunday evening. However, there are a number of scholars who believe, along with the Christian Sabbath-observing groups, that Acts 20:7 is referring to Saturday night. An article by A. T. Robertson on I Corinthians^[52] written almost a century ago argues that the meeting in Acts 20:7 could not have been a Sunday night, as Ramsay believed,^[53] because of “the Jewish phraseology.” Conybeare and Howson say “it was the evening which succeeded the Jewish Sabbath,”^[54] and then jump to the very hasty conclusion that the passage is of the “utmost importance” for showing “that the observance of Sunday was customary.” Both of these major scholars say that the *sabbatōn* in *mia tōn sabbatōn* makes it “Jewish/Hebraistic phraseology,” and therefore not likely to refer to Sunday night. If these and numerous others are correct that the Hebrew phraseology forces this to be a Saturday evening, then we must conclude that the original purpose of the meeting on *mia tōn sabbatōn* on Acts 20:7 was the observance of a typical Jewish Sabbath no different than any other in the Gospels or Acts when believers

gathered during the day for food, fellowship and worship. As with Calvin (p. 1-2), we would love to know how Robertson and Conybeare & Howson could have missed the fact that if the *mia tōn sabbatōn* of Acts 20:7 is a Saturday night, then John 20:19 also has to be a Saturday night. And if John 20:19 is a Saturday night, then the visit to the empty tomb 19 verses earlier *on the same day* has to be a Saturday morning. These great scholars *may not have been aware of* the parallels between John 20:19 and Acts 20:7, otherwise they, for reasons of doctrine and Church tradition, might never have suggested that Acts 20:7ff was a Saturday night! Even church scholars with a vested interest in promoting modern Sabbath-keeping,^[55] who emphasize the fact that Acts 20:7 is a Saturday night and not a Sunday night, have also missed the parallel language describing the time of the events of John 20:1, 19 and Acts 20:7. The Greek text of Acts 20:7, as well as historical information dictating the likely year when this trip occurred, point to a seventh day Sabbath as the seventh day Paul spent in Troas.

Having now established the parallel language and context between Acts 20:7 and John 20:1, 19, we are in turn led to believe the visit of Mary Magdalene to the empty tomb of John 20:1 to be a Saturday morning, which is the thesis of this book!

When Did the Acts 20:7 Meeting Occur?

The first presumption to be dispelled is that the meeting in Troas began after sundown. Common meals in the Middle East were eaten before sundown. The phrase “break bread” was a common idiom in Greek secular literature for that which takes places at mealtime, breaking off a piece of bread from a loaf, or breaking off grapes or tomatoes from a vine/stem. The idiom is used in this way in Acts 2:46 (ESV):

And day by day [the disciples] attending the temple together, and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.

It can be shown from countless Jewish sources of the first and second centuries that common meals began well before sunset.^[56] Notice Matt. 14:15-17:

Now evening coming on, the disciples come to Him, saying, ‘This is a desolate place, and the [dinner] hour has already passed. Dismiss the crowds so that they can depart into the villages and buy food for themselves.’

Luke 24:29 is another indication that late afternoon is mealtime. Scholars realize that “breaking bread” refers to a common meal rather than to the Lord’s Supper,^[57] and often symbolized their social and spiritual solidarity. “Such meals were opportunities to gather together for community prayer and to hear inspired teaching (cf. Acts 2:42).”^[58] Paul’s discussion or lecturing [dielegeto] is the central activity of worship in Acts 20:7. Because of time constraints, his desire to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost, caused him to prolong his speech until midnight. Paul’s life-saving action, which appears as a mere hiccup during his teaching ministry, would seem to indicate that the two actions—teaching and miracle-working—form a coherent whole to express a common resurrection theme. By way of contrast, Judaic scholar Joachim Jeremias demonstrates that the Last Supper was a special Passover meal because it began well *after* sundown:

Nowhere else in the gospels do we hear that an ordinary meal was held at night...in fact, it was customary to have two meals a day: a very simple breakfast between 10 and 11 a.m. and the main meal in the late afternoon...Discussions about the words of blessing used to usher in the Sabbath

(kiddush) provide ample evidence that in the early times with which we are dealing the main meal was taken in the afternoon (*beminhah*), both on Friday and on the Sabbath.^[59]

We are led to conclude that Acts 20:7 took place some time after noon on a seventh day Sabbath. Given the farewell nature of Paul's visit on this occasion, and the importance of delivering the collection, there is an air of anticipation and moment to this gathering. This was no ordinary Sabbath. Scholars have noted numerous parallels between Paul's final trip to Jerusalem and Yeshua's final ascent to the holy city during Passion Week. Who can doubt the eagerness which caused the disciples to gather earlier and stay later to eat again and converse (20:11) than they might otherwise have? Little wonder, then, that "there remains therefore the keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God,"^[60] words probably penned by Paul some years later. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the stay in Troas, as in Tyre on the Phoenician coast two weeks later, was prolonged seven days (despite the urgency of getting to Jerusalem by Pentecost) so that the grand finale would occur on a Saturday Sabbath! Even John Calvin (quoted on page 1), a Sunday keeper, could not escape this same deduction.

Given the preponderance of evidence for Sabbath meetings in the rest of Acts leading up to chapter 20, it is odd in the extreme for any theologian or historian to presume that Paul spent seven days tarrying in Troas (when he was in a hurry to deliver the collection by Pentecost), then upon the final day there, a Sabbath, which it was his custom to keep and observe (Acts 17:2), simply told everybody to do their own thing until sundown! Are we expected to believe that the seventh day in Troas was "the evening of the Jewish Sabbath," but that Luke simply omitted any and all reference to worship and activity on the actual day-portion of the Sabbath?

Notice what the *Anchor Bible* says about *miav sabbatōn* in Matt. 28:1:

The notes of time in our gospels concerning the resurrection, together with the confused chronology of Holy Week, make it hazardous to say with any confidence whether the evangelists wished us to understand Saturday or Sunday at this point [Matt. 28:1].^[61]

If all scholars were as honest as this *Anchor Bible* commentator (W. F. Albright), they would have to admit that translators may have erred. Such transparency is evident in *Word Biblical Commentary*, which states that *mia tōn sabbatōn* literally means "one of the Sabbaths."^[62] Greek experts Philip W. Comfort and Robert K. Brown, in their New Greek English Interlinear New Testament (Tyndale House Publishers), a word-for-word translation, renders *mia tōn sabbatōn* in Acts 20:7 as "one of the Sabbaths." Yet when they translate the same phrase in the Gospels (Matt 28:1, Mark 16:2, Luke 24:1, and John 20:1, 19), they switch the translation inconsistently to "first day of the week," which just goes to show the scholarly ambivalence toward this crucial phrase. For an advanced discussion of the syntax and grammar of the seven occurrences of *mia tōn sabbatōn* in the NT, the reader will want to read our study devoted to this subject. Certainly the matter requires further investigation circumventing assumptions from post-apostolic tradition or Church history, since the Church apologists of the second and third century viewed the Law of Moses and the Sabbaths and holy days of Yahweh quite differently than the Apostles did.^[63] The idea that somehow the Apostles transferred the solemnities of the Sabbath to Sunday, and somehow adopted the Mithraists' nomenclature "Lord's day" to describe the new institution, is an anachronistic fable.

The Preponderance of Sabbath Meetings in the Book of Acts

We challenge the reader to find one instance in the book of Acts where *sabbatōn* is used to refer to anything other than a Sabbath. *Sabbatōn* was the long-standing Greek transliteration of

the Hebrew word Sabbath, used dozens of times in the third century B.C. Septuagint. Why should the addition of the Greek words *mia tōn*, meaning “one of the,” transform *sabbatōn* into a completely different day? We should like to know what precedent exists before the second century of any Greek author employing *sabbatōn* to refer to any day other than a Jewish Sabbath. Acts 17:2 says:

Paul, as he was accustomed (το ειωθος = customary habit), entered to them (in the synagogue) reasoning three Sabbaths (*sabbata tria*) with them out of the scriptures.

Luke used το ειωθος to describe Yeshua’s custom of entering into the synagogue on the Sabbaths in Luke 4:16. So Paul was no different. Many realize that when Paul was called by God’s grace, he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor with those who were apostles before him in Jerusalem, but instead spent considerable time in Arabia, no doubt at Mt. Sinai, with Christ Himself (Cp. Gal. 1:16-17 and 4:25). There he received the Gospel, as Christ wanted it taught to the Gentiles, directly by revelation from Yeshua the Messiah (Gal. 1:12). Yet there is no evidence that meetings were switched from Saturday to Sunday (cp. Acts 13:42, 44). John Calvin thinks the apostles switched to Sunday sometime after Acts 20:7, but provides no evidence whatsoever. Given all the time the risen Christ spent with the apostles, it should seem odd that He left them no instruction in this regard. And if Paul had made the switch to Sunday in Acts 20:7, as so many theologians claim, then why would Luke use such a strong word, το ειωθος to identify Paul’s custom with that of Yeshua’s, attendance at synagogue on Sabbath. I suspect that the English word *ethos*, derived directly from the Greek το ειωθος, has the same strong connotation today as το ειωθος did back then. Both designate the fundamental character or spirit of a culture that informs its beliefs, customs and practices.

At the conclusion of the first Apostolic Conference (49 AD) in Acts 15:21, James said that the new Gentile converts would be able to grow in righteousness by having Moses read to them in the synagogues across the empire every Sabbath day (κατα παν σαββατον). At the start of their commission from the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas came to Salamis (Acts 13:5), the first port they reached on the east end of Cyprus. They preached the Word of the Lord in the *synagogues* of the Jews (another reference to the Sabbath, albeit oblique). In Acts 13:14 Paul and his company entered into a *synagogue* with a sizable Gentile constituency in Antioch of Psidia. The Jews largely rejected the forgiveness of sin that was offered them through Paul’s powerful presentation of Yeshua, but the Gentiles received the Word gladly, and (Acts 13:42) “besought Paul that these words might be preached to them *the next Sabbath* (το μεταξυ σαββατον). The following Sabbath, almost the whole [Gentile] city came together, to the chagrin and envy of the Jews. In Acts 14:1 Paul and Barnabas went *into the synagogue* in Iconium, resulting in many new believers, a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks. Paul and his new companion Luke attended a prayer meeting on the Sabbath by a riverside outside of Philippi in Macedonia (Acts 16:10). A certain lady named Lydia was there that day, whose occupation was selling purple fabric, a very profitable trade. Much of Paul’s financial support for the balance of his mission in Greece will come from her and other Macedonians (Phil 4:15-16). In short, the entire gamut of Paul’s missionary work revolves around Sabbath and synagogue meetings, so that once we get to Acts 20:7, we are prepared for Paul’s final rendezvous with the brethren of Europe and Asia to be on a Sabbath. From the standpoint of the literary structure and organization of Paul’s work in the East, the Acts 20 passage is definitely the denouement of what has gone before, not a time for introducing brand new institutions and days of worship. The seal and consummate proof of his apostleship is now brought to bear, under the Lord’s direction, upon Troas, on another Sabbath day, *mia tōn sabbatōn*, where representatives from Galatian, Macedonian, Achaian, and Asian

churches convene with monies collected over the past three years. This holy offering evidenced the grace of God working in Gentile hearts, giving out of their poverty to the needy Jewish saints in Jerusalem. There can be no question that the final chronological “way-station” to the Pentecost delivery of the collection is “one of the Sabbaths,” or as John Calvin put it, “some certain Sabbath,” at Troas. An amazing story which began on Pentecost in Jerusalem with Peter prophesying^[64] that the time had come for Yahweh to pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, including the Gentiles (Acts 2:17), is now about to see Peter’s reference to Joel confirmed. Paul and his men carried with them the evidence that Yahweh had expanded his Covenant to include the Nations. They would deliver the fruit of God’s grace working in countless non-Israelites to the needy saints in Jerusalem on Pentecost, 55 AD, two dozen years down the line from the Pentecost of 31 AD. Pentecost, Jerusalem, Sabbaths, and Troas form the framework around which Luke hangs his narrative. It is evident that he has done so for theological reasons identical to the ones he puts on display in the Gospel of Luke. There, unlike the other synoptic Gospels, he omits Christ’s cursing of fig tree in conjunction with his account of the cleansing of the Temple and begins and ends his Gospel at the Temple (Luke 2:22ff and 24:53). Luke consciously avoids an overly negative portrayal of Judaism for his Gentile audience and upholds the legitimacy of “the Law of the Lord.” In Luke 2:21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 39, 42, we see the themes of the Temple, the Law of the Lord, Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit all woven together and reinforcing each other in a very positive way.

In conclusion, if the last winter of Paul’s final missionary expedition in the East was 54/55 AD, and Paul left Philippi on the day after the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, which ended on Tuesday April 8 in 55 AD,^[65] then the five day trip from Philippi to Troas was from Wednesday through Sunday, and the time spent there were a perfect seven-day week spanning that Sunday through the following Sabbath. Therefore the seventh day at Troas--called *mia tōn sabbatōn*--was a Sabbath, one of seven successive Sabbaths counted in order to arrive at Pentecost. That certain Sabbath was a fitting epitaph to a ministry that had been punctuated from start to finish with one memorable Sabbath and synagogue engagement after another. It was Yahweh’s way of affirming that Yeshua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8), and that the New Covenant had not abandoned the Sabbath for Sunday.

Addendum A: Astronomy Prohibits 56 and 57 AD for the Collection Trip

If one believes that Paul left Philippi on the day after the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, then that Feast would need to fall in a year when the seventh day at Troas fell on Saturday or Sunday night some twelve days after Unleavened Bread—five days for the boat trip to Troas, 7 days for the actual time there--to accommodate one of the two possible meanings scholars have deduced for *mia tōn sabbatōn*. One of the “back door” proofs that means “one of the Sabbaths” is the fact that when we let Yahweh speak from heaven, the astronomy is not very kind to those who have opted for the Sunday night meeting. The great Lucan historian Sir William Ramsay is a good case in point. Ramsay was one of the first scholars who felt Luke supplied the necessary chronological information in Acts 18-20 to pinpoint the year of Paul’s final trip to Jerusalem:

In AD 57 Passover fell on Thursday, April 7. The company left Philippi on the morning of Friday, April 15, and the journey to Troas lasted until the fifth day, Tuesday, April 19. In Troas they stayed seven days, the first of which was April 19, and the last Monday, April 25.^[66]

For Passover, Nisan 14 to have fallen on Thursday, April 7, in 57 AD, the lunar crescent had to be seen on Thursday night, March 24. But computer models show only 42 minutes between sunset and moonset on March 24, and only 8 degrees separating the two bodies. This is below

the minimum parameters determined by Karl Schoch and J. K. Fotheringham for visibility of a young new moon.^[67] In addition, the moon was in complete apogee, within 2000 km of its furthest distance from earth. In these cases, the translation period from conjunction to visibility is invariably a minimum of two days. Therefore the earliest the Last Day of Unleavened Bread could have fallen in 57 AD is Friday, April 8, and this would make the seventh day at Troas a Tuesday. So 57 is hardly a workable year for Paul's trip. Had the Feast ended on Friday, no doubt he would have waited until Sunday to travel anyway. We are confident that the venerable Ramsay, had he been the beneficiary of astronomy software available today, would have altered his chronological scheme to accommodate the facts presented in this addendum.

Now let us consider 56 AD, which is considered a possible year for the trip by a handful of scholars. Since the Passover cannot fall before the spring equinox, March 20 (which is two days before the equinox) is too early. The full moon was 10:15 pm March 19, 2.5 days before the equinox. Hence, 56 AD was an intercalary year. Tuesday April 6 was Nisan 1, Passover fell on Monday, April 19, and the Last Day of Unleavened Bread was Monday, April 26. The five day trip from Philippi to Troas would have been from Tuesday through Saturday. The seven days at Troas, therefore, could not have ended any later than Friday or Saturday of the following week. Therefore, if indeed Paul made the collection trip in the year 56 AD, then *mia tōn sabbatōn* is forced to mean "one of the Sabbaths" again, as with 55 AD. On that chance that they did not intercalate that year, making the Passover March 20 (a Sabbath), this would cause the fast of Acts 27:9 to fall on Sept. 10, which is too early for sailing to be considered dangerous, leaving too many months after shipwreck on Malta before they set sail for southern Italy (Acts 28: 11).

Addendum B: Does Saturday Night Constitute an Additional Day at Troas?

Saturday night was the conclusion of the seven days spent at Troas, and Paul departed on foot the next day (Acts 20:13). A critical question with which we must deal is whether Saturday night was viewed separately from the Sabbath itself as an additional day. Most students of the Bible are quite aware that Scripture often reckons days as beginning and ending at sundown, as pointed out in the chapter on the Hebrew calendar.^[68] However, most are not cognizant of the fact that "in the NT in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts the day seems usually to be considered as beginning in the morning."^[69] This becomes appar-ent to anyone studying the use of the Greek words for tomorrow (αυριον, *aurion* and επαυριον, *epaurion*). That *aurion* is a different day from today can be seen from James 4:13: "Come now, those saying, today or tomorrow (αυριον) we will go into this city..."

There are several instances where evening comes, and yet the next morning is called επαυριον, i.e. the next day (see Mark 11:11-12). Julian Morgenstern has demonstrated satisfactorily from Acts that Luke uses morning to morning reckoning of days.^[70] In Acts 10:23, for instance, Peter invites Gentiles into his house, lodges them for the night, and on the morrow (τη δε επαυριον) leaves with them for Caesarea. In Acts 4:3, 5 (very similar to the wording in Mark 11), it was already evening, ην εσπερα, when the Temple authorities seized Peter and John, yet the morrow is called *the next day, aurion*. In the LXX of Exod. 19:10f, at the giving of the Ten Commandments, a passage likely familiar to Luke and the apostles, *aurion* is the day between today (σημερον) and the third day. In Acts 23:31-32 Paul is transported under heavy Roman guard *by night* to Antipatris, and on the next day (τη επαυριον) Paul was led to the governor of Judea.

When one carefully notes Luke's story of what transpired at Troas, it is plain Paul's departure took place "on the morrow" (τη επαυριον, Acts 20:7), yet that departure took place at

dawn (αυγης), at which point the all-night conversation and bread-breaking ended (20:11). The next day, τη επαυριον, is the day beginning at dawn. Therefore the events post-sundown in Acts 20:7-11 all belong to the evening of *mia tōn sabbatōn* (just as with John 20:19), and the new day is reckoned at “break of day” (αυγης), when Paul departed for Assos. The Apostle John’s narrative in John 20:1, 19 is analogous. There John describes the Eleven gathered in an upper room for fear of the Jews after having spent the Sabbath together. It is now evening of the same day (μια των σαββατων) referenced in 20:1. Yet the former is a Sabbath morning, but the latter technically belongs to a new Jewish day which began at Saturday sundown. The Saturday evening belonging to that Sabbath morning (20:1) is called the “evening of that day, *mia tōn sabbatōn*.” These are literary conventions which John and Luke employ for their Greek-speaking readers, and must be observed before assuming that additional calendar days are being reckoned in Acts 20:7-12.

How do we explain the apparent discrepancy in day reckonings between the OT and NT? It is plain from Mark 1:28-32 that the Sabbath day ends at sundown, i.e. calendar days still end “at the going down of the sun.” In Acts 27:27-33, Luke confirms this ancient principle that calendar days are comprised of daytimes which belong with the previous evening (see Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19). However, when we consider that Luke and the other evangelists are writing day-by-day narratives whose activities oftentimes extend into the evening (as in John 20:1-19), it made sense to join the evening to the previous day. When you add to this the fact that Luke and the other Gospel writers are writing to a target audience of Greek-speaking common people throughout the Roman Empire, for Gentiles, Greeks, Galatians, and for Roman officials, then the only convention that mattered was how *they* regarded days. No matter the reason, Luke reckoned diary and narrative days from morning to morning, with the next day beginning at dawn.

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[1] Conybeare & Howson, *The Life & Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 206, n. 2.

[2] *Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1959), p. 138.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] John Calvin, Commentary on I Cor. 16, www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom40.ii.i.html.

[5] *St. Paul the Traveller*, 27.

[6] Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 390.

[7] Acts 19:8, 10

[8] For the purposes of daily activity, Luke reckons days as beginning and ending at sunrise, as Julian Morgenstern has shown, *Crozer Quarterly*, 26 (1949): 232-240. Therefore, Paul’s departure at daybreak of Sunday dawn is not reckoned as any kind of eighth day at Troas. Just as the evening of *mia ton sabbaton* in John 20:19 is reckoned as an extension of that same day which began in John 20:1, Luke in Acts 20 is reckoning the evening activity of prolonged dialogue, teaching, raising the dead, and fellowship meal as part of the previous day, and counts the new day as beginning at sunrise. See Addendum B (end of chapter) for fuller explanation.

[9] C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Harper & Row, NY, 1957), 4-5.

[10] Orosius baldly cites an inextant section of Josephus as his source.

[11] F. Wotke, *PRE II 35* (1939), 1192.

[12] B.R. Voss, *KP IV* (1972), 350.

[13] F. Wotke, *PRE II 35* (1939) 1192. H. W. Goetz, *Die Geshichtstheologie Des Orosius* (1980), 18.

[14] Rainer Reisner, *Paul’s Early Period*, 180.

[15] Luedemann, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (Philadelphia, 1984), p. 164, n. 67. Also, F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, Doubleday (1969), 295-96.

- [16] F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, Doubleday (1969), 296.
- [17] This increase in anti-Semitic behavior among the Greeks in Alexandria, Antioch, and elsewhere in the East was encouraged by Caligula's attempt to set up an image of himself in the Jewish Temple in 40 AD. Greeks in these cities started vandalizing synagogues and setting up small statues of Caligula in them.
- [18] *Ibid.*, 297.
- [19] By the mid-50's, Prisca and Aquila were probably back in Rome (Rom. 16:3).
- [20] E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule* (E.J. Brill, 1976), 216.
- [21] *Life of Claudius*, xxv.4. Seutonius is credible, since he had access to the imperial archives. This expulsion should not be confused with Dio Cassius' account of the Jews in Rome early in Claudius' reign (41 A.D.), where the emperor showed tolerance toward the Jews. Seutonius refers to a later period when more stringent measures were needed. Howard, "Note on Seutonius," *Restoration Quarterly* (1981), 175.
- [22] Smallwood, *op cit.*, 211.
- [23] Bruce, 297.
- [24] George Howard, "Note on Seutonius," *Review Qumran* 24 (1981), 176.
- [25] W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller*, (NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), 48.
- [26] The oldest (mid-4th C.) complete manuscript of the NT ever discovered.
- [27] Howard, *ibid.*, 177.
- [28] Reisner, *ibid.* p. 281.
- [29] Reisner, p. 280.
- [30] Bruce, 298.
- [31] Finegan, 391.
- [32] Dio Cassius 60.17.3, cited by F. F. Bruce, art. "Chronolog. Questions in Acts" *BJRL* (Vol. 68), 283.
- [33] Aqua Claudia, an aqueduct ded. Aug. 1, 52 AD, links Claudius' '12th Tribunician power' (Jan 25, AD 52—Jan 24, AD 53) with his seventh imperial acclamation. Since Claudius had received his seventh imperial acclamation prior to Aug. 1, 52, his 26th imperial acclamation must have come within the first half of the *tribunicia potestate XII*, i.e. between Jan. 25, AD 52 and Aug. 1 of AD 52. Therefore, the Delphi inscription with Gallio's name referring to Claudius' 26th imperial acclamation must be dated in the 1st half of AD 52.
- [34] Finegan, 392.
- [35] *Ibid.*, 393.
- [36] Ogg, *Odyssey of Paul*, 111.
- [37] *Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, Mohr, (1989), 168-69.
- [38] Bruce, "Chronological Questions in the Acts of the Apostles" *BJRL* (Vol. 68, 1986), 283.
- [39] Finegan, *op cit.* 393-394.
- [40] Moody, "A New Chronology for the Life & Letters of Paul," *Chronos, Kairos, Christos*, 225.
- [41] Ernest Best, *Commentary on the 1st & 2nd Epistles to the Thessalonians* (Harper & Row, 1972), 7-9.
- [42] Trebilco, *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, 356.
- [43] *Ibid.* 356.
- [44] Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, Westminster Press (1971), 576.
- [45] George S. Duncan, *St. Paul's Ephesian Ministry* (Scribner, 1930), 106.
- [46] Luckrock, *Footprints of the Apostles As Traced by St. Luke*, II (1897), 189.
- [47] *Ibid.*
- [48] Tacitus *Annals*, Bk. XIII, opening paragraph.
- [49] The official seat of Satan's throne was Pergamum (Rev. 2:13), some 150 miles north of Ephesus. However, prior to Augustus making Asia a senatorial province and Ephesus its capital, Pergamum had been the capital of Roman Asia. Both were centers of the imperial cult. The proconsul regularly held court in both cities. Silver mining and idolatry were a big part of their economy. (Acts 19:24-25)
- [50] *St. Paul the Traveller*, 221.
- [51] Scholars and pastors in Adventism and the Church of God Sabbatarian organizations for 150 years have maintained that Acts 20:7 was a Saturday night meeting, yet seem oddly unwilling to accept the truth that this forces John 20:1 to be a Saturday morning, not a Sunday morning.
- [52] Vol. I, *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 485.
- [53] Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller* (1895), 221-222; also *Expositor*, (May 1896).
- [54] *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Vol. II (Scribner & Sons, NY, 1887), p 206.
- [55] Seventh Day Adventists, Church of God Seventh Day, the many off-shoots of Worldwide Church of God, Messianic Sabbath-keepers, Assemblies of Yahweh, Seventh Day Baptist.

- ^[56] S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archaologie III*, Leipzig, 1912, 29: “in the hours before evening”; Billerbeck II, 204, 206; IV, 615: in the ‘later hours of the afternoon.’ Tos. Shab. 12.16. Ber. 8.5.
- ^[57] *New Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. X, 277.
- ^[58] *Ibid.*
- ^[59] Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Chas. Scribner, NY., 1966), p. 44-46, n. 1 and 4. See conclusive proofs
- ^[60] Hebrews 4:9
- ^[61] *The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, W. F. Albright & C.S. Mann. (Doubleday, New York (1971), p. 358.
- ^[62] *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 35, p. 1188.
- ^[63] The proliferation of heresies, Gnosticism, hellenistic philosophy, and pagan customs even during apostolic times and increasing during the second Century, makes post-apostolic documents like the Didache, Ignatius and Justin unreliable for defining apostolic practice or terminology.
- ^[64] Peter based this prophecy upon the words of Joel 2:28.
- ^[65] See footnote #
- ^[66] Ramsay, op. cit., 221.
- ^[67] J. K. Fotheringham, “Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion.” *Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 4, 1934, 161-62.
- ^[68] “The Hebrew Calendar,” www.americaspropheticdestiny.com.
- ^[69] Finegan, op. cit., 8.
- ^[70] Morgenstern, *Crozer Quarterly*, 26 (1949): 232-240.