

Three Days And Nights

Most Christians have assumed that Jesus Christ died on “Good Friday” and rose from the dead early on “Easter Sunday” morning.

Since Jesus said He would rise “*the third day*” [Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:22-23], some count part of Friday as one day, Saturday as the second, and part of Sunday the third.

To explain this they quote Luke 13:32-33. In this case, “*the third day*” would mean the same as “*the day following (tomorrow)*” – three days, even though only parts of those days are involved.

Not all Christians are totally satisfied with this explanation.

Matthew 16:21 [King James] “*From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.*”

Jesus said He would rise “*the third day*” but He also spoke of this time period and gave it as a specific sign of His Messiahship as being three days and three nights.

Matthew 12:38-40 [King James] “*Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*”

That the expression “*the third day*” can, spiritually, include three days and three nights can be seen in **Genesis 1:4-13**.

While the fact that Jesus Christ did live as a human being, die, and rose again, is infinitely more important than an explanation of the time element involved. But when a Sunday morning resurrection is used to warrant the change of the day of worship from the commanded Seventh Day Sabbath to a Sunday, I feel it is essential we understand the truth.

Since there are twelve hours in the day and twelve hours in the night [John 11:9-10], if we figure the full “*three days and three nights,*” this would be 72 hours.

But was the time element exactly 72 hours?

Mark 8:31 [King James] “*And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.*”

Jesus taught that He would rise “*after three days.*” There is no reason to figure this as less than a full 72 hours.

On the other hand, if Jesus was to be raised from the dead “*in three days*” [John 2:19], this could not be more than 72 hours.

To harmonise these various statements, it does not seem to be unreasonable to assume that the time period was exactly 72 hours.

After all, God is a god of exactness, He does everything right on schedule, nothing is accidental with Him.

Galatians 4:4 [King James] *“But when **the fulness of the time was come**, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,”*

Not one year too early or one year too late.

The time of Jesus Christ’s anointing was fore-ordained by the prophet Daniel. [**Daniel 9:24**]

Also the time Jesus Christ would be “cut off” for the sins of the people. [**Daniel 9:26**]

Those who tried to kill Jesus Christ before His time failed. [**John 7:8**]

Not only the year and time of Jesus Christ’s death was pre-ordained, but the very hour was part of the divine plan. [**John 17:1**]

Since we see that Jesus Christ was living and dying to an exact timetable, there is no problem believing that there was also an exact time period between His burial and His resurrection, 72 hours exactly.

This being true, then the resurrection took place at the same time of day that Jesus Christ was buried, only three days later.

What time of day was this?

Jesus died shortly after “*the ninth hour*” or three in the afternoon. [**Matthew 27:46-50**]

John 19:31-33 [King James] *“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (**for that sabbath day was an high day,**) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs:”*

Note that the Sabbath Day referred to was a high day, not a normal weekly Sabbath but one that was part of a special festival.

Mark 15:42 [King James] *“And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,”*

It was late afternoon that Jesus Christ died, the day before a high Sabbath.

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 [King James] *“And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”*

In the remaining time of that day before sunset when the high day Sabbath began, Joseph of Arimathea obtained permission to remove the body of Jesus Christ, then Joseph and Nicodemus prepared the body of Jesus Christ for burial with linen cloths and spicers, and placed Him in a nearby tomb, all this being completed before sundown and the beginning of the Sabbath. [**John 19:38-42**]

If the resurrection took place at the same time of day as when Jesus Christ was buried, only three days later, this would place the resurrection close to sundown, **not** sunrise, as commonly assumed.

A sunrise resurrection would have required an extra night, three days and four nights.

This was not the case, of course.

Those who came to the tomb at sunrise, instead of witnessing the resurrection at that precise time, found that the tomb was already empty. [Mark 16:1-2]

John's account tells us that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb when it was yet dark. [John 20:1-2]

The gospel writers tell of several different visits made by the disciples to the tomb on that first day of the week. In every instance, they found the tomb empty!

The first day of the week was when the disciples discovered that Jesus Christ was risen, but nowhere does the Word of God, the Christian Bible, actually say that Sunday was the time of the resurrection.

The only verse which seems to teach a Sunday morning resurrection is Mark 16:9 [King James] *"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils."* But this verse does **not** say Jesus Christ was *"rising"* or *"did rise"* at that time. **It says that when the first day of the week came, Jesus "was" risen, the past perfect tense.**

Since there were **no** punctuation marks in the Greek manuscripts from which our New Testament was translated, the phrase *"early the first day of the week"* could just as correctly, some say more correctly, be linked with the time Jesus appeared to Mary.

By simply placing the comma after the word *"risen,"* this verse would read, *"now when Jesus was risen, early the first day of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene."*

This seems to be the meaning originally intended, for the verses that follow show that Mark was recording the various appearances that Jesus made, **not** explaining on what day the resurrection took place.

When Sunday morning came Jesus had already risen, the resurrection having taken place just before sundown on the day before, the Lord's Day, Saturday Sabbath.

Counting back three days would bring us to Wednesday. Would this make three days and three nights between the burial and the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Yes.

Wednesday night, Thursday night and Friday night. Three nights. Also, Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Three days, a total of 72 hours.

"The third day" after Wednesday would be Saturday.

There is also an interesting prophecy in Daniel which I feel relates to what we are studying.

Daniel 9:27 [King James] *"And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and **in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease,** and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."*

The Messiah was to cause all the sacrifices and oblations in general to cease utterly.

Jesus Christ died in the "midst of the week," Wednesday, the One sacrifice all the animal sacrifices pointed towards!

Luke 24:21 [King James] *"But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done."*

Because Jesus appeared to these two disciples on the first day of the week [v13] and this was "the third day since these things were done," would this indicate that Jesus died on a Friday?

This would depend on how you count. If parts of a day are counted as a whole, Friday could be meant.

On the other hand, one day “since” Friday would have been Saturday. The second day “since” Friday would have been Sunday, and the third day “since” Friday would have been Monday! This method of counting would **not** indicate Friday.

In seeking to offer an explanation, I suggest the following –

They had talked about “*all these things which had happened*” [verse 14], more than just one event. **If “these things” included the arrest, crucifixion, burial and setting of the seal and watch over the tomb, all of these things were not done until Thursday.**

Matthew 27:62-66 [King James] “*Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.*”

Jesus Christ, as we have noticed, was crucified on the preparation day as all the lambs for the Passover were killed [Wednesday]. “*The next day*” [Thursday] that followed the day of preparation the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate. For the reason they remembered Jesus Christ’s words they had the tomb sealed and guarded.

“*These things*” were **not** fully completed until the tomb had been sealed on the Thursday of that week, a high Sabbath day.

Sunday would then be “the third day since these things were done,” but **not** the third day since the crucifixion.

Since Jesus Christ was crucified on the day before the Sabbath we can understand why some have thought of Friday as the day of the crucifixion.

But the Sabbath that followed the death of Jesus Christ was **not** the weekly Sabbath, but an annual Sabbath.

John 19:14, 31 [King James] “*And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!*” ... “*The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.*”

The term “*high day*” depicts that it was an **annual Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This Sabbath could fall on any day of the week and that year it was on a Thursday.**

Jesus Christ was crucified and buried on the preparation day [Wednesday] as all the lambs for the Passover were killed, the next day was the High Day Sabbath [Thursday], then Friday, followed by the weekly Sabbath [Saturday].

Understanding that there were **two** Sabbaths that week explains how Jesus Christ could be crucified on the day before the Sabbath, was already risen from the tomb when the day after the Sabbath came, yet fulfilling His sign of three days and three nights.

A careful comparison of Mark 16:1 with Luke 23:56 provides further evidence there were two Sabbaths that week, with a common working day between the two [Friday].

Mark 16:1 [NIV] *“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body.”*

The women bought **after** the Sabbath.

Luke 23:56 [NIV] *“Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.”*

After preparing the spices they bought they rested on the weekly Sabbath.

Since they couldn’t prepare the spices until first they had purchased them, the evidence for the different Sabbaths that week seems conclusive.

Though strongly holding to the Friday crucifixion, the Catholic Encyclopaedia says that not all scholars have believed this way. [**Catholic Encyclopaedia**, volume 8; page 378, article ‘*Jesus Christ*’]

The Companion Bible published by Samuel Bagster in its appendix 156 explains that Jesus Christ was crucified on Wednesday.

There is absolutely nothing in favour of Friday crucifixion but everything in the scripture is perfectly harmonised by Wednesday crucifixion.

To use a Sunday resurrection of Jesus Christ to make the change of worship day from Sabbath to Sunday is totally misguided and corrupting the scriptures of God’s Word, the Christian Bible.