

# Three Days and Three Nights Contradiction

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Jesus was raised on the third day (Mt. 16:21; cf. 17:23; 20:19; Lk. 9:22; Ac. 10:40; 1Cor. 15:4).

Jesus was raised after three days and three nights (Mt. 12:39-40).

There has been much written concerning the timing of Christ's death and resurrection. Several opposing views have been asserted due in part to several scriptures that on the surface appear to contradict one another. However, when specific details are carefully examined it becomes evident that the scriptures in question are in complete harmony.

For the sake of this article, an abbreviated explanation of the timing of Christ's death and resurrection will be provided. For a more comprehensive examination, please see the study: The New Covenant Passover Sequence.

The dilemma in question exists for two primary reasons:

- 1) The method for determining the beginning and end of the day;
- 2) The accepted but incorrect identification of the timing of Christ's death and resurrection.

## The correct beginning and end of the day.

According to Almighty God, each day begins at dark during the evening portion of the day.

God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. **And there was evening** and there was morning, one day (Gen. 1:5; NASB throughout unless noted; emphasis added).

It came about that just **as it grew dark** at the gates of Jerusalem **before the Sabbath**, I (Nehemiah) commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the Sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates *so that* no load would enter on the Sabbath day (Neh. 13:19, Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

See also: Gen. 15:17-18; Lev. 23:27-32; De. 21:22-23; Jn. 20:1, 19; Ac. 27:27, 33.

Likewise, each day ends at dark.

## The correct timing of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was very specific when he declared the only sign he would give to prove that he was the Messiah.

**For just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea creature **three days and three nights**, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth **three days and three nights**** (Mt. 12:40; RNT; emphasis added).

Was Jesus Christ raised to life precisely as he had prophesied? Yes. Was he mistaken or did he lie? No. Either Christ's words are true or they are not. If not, he is unreliable and therefore would not qualify to be the savior of the world (1Jn. 4:14).

When calculating the duration of Christ's time in the grave we must either accept his words concerning the only sign he gave to prove who he was, or provide a provable alternative explanation to be preferred. We shall leave the latter for those who wish to argue Jesus Christ's own words and instead choose the former approach as it seems only correct and logical to begin our study based upon acceptance of the written Word.

The Bible is clear that Jonah was in the belly of a sea creature for precisely three days and three nights. There is no contradictory evidence or reason to believe otherwise.

And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and **Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights** (Jon. 1:17; emphasis added).

The duration of, “three days and three nights” is the only evidence Christ said he would give to prove he was the Son of God (Mt. 12:38-40). It is not qualified or explained further. Thus we have no other choice but to accept his words at face value, i.e. that he was referring to three daytime periods between sunrise and sunset and three nighttime periods between sunset and sunrise. As each period is approximately 12 hours in duration and three of each period equals a total of 6, we can safely conclude that the duration Christ spent in the tomb was 6 twelve hour periods, corresponding to 3 full twenty-four hour days.

We also know that Christ was laid in the tomb very late in the day, just before dark when the next day would begin - just before a Sabbath day was to commence (cf. Jn. 19:31). This Sabbath day was an annual “High Day” associated with Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread and is thus referred to as a Sabbath (Jn. 19:31; cf. Lev. 23:5-7). For additional information, please see the study: The New Covenant Passover Sequence.

The scriptures are also clear that Christ had already risen very early on the first day of the week, “while it was yet dark” (Jn. 20:1). As he was buried three days and three nights earlier, just before dark, we can logically conclude that his resurrection likewise occurred three days and three nights later, at the same time, just before dark. Consequently, a Sunday morning resurrection is excluded. Instead, Christ was

raised late on the weekly Sabbath just before the beginning of the first day of the week.

Therefore, all that is required to accurately identify the day of Christ’s death is to count back precisely three days and three nights from the time of his resurrection to determine the correct day and time of his burial, namely, late on the fourth day of the week, what this world refers to as a Wednesday night.

With these explanations in place we are now able to examine the apparent contradiction in question.



**AND THE LORD APPOINTED A GREAT FISH TO SWALLOW JONAH, AND JONAH WAS IN THE STOMACH OF THE FISH THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS.**

*John 1:17; emphasis added*

If Jesus Christ was indeed raised from the dead after being entombed for three full days and nights, how can the other scriptures also be correct which state he would be raised “on the third day”?

The answer is rather simple. If Christ was buried late on a Wednesday night, just before dark and the commencement of the next day, we need only count precisely three days and three nights to arrive at the time he was raised. However, it is also important to recognize that the count must begin just prior to the first nighttime period as that was the time of his burial. Thus we count three nighttime periods first and then three daytime periods to find ourselves at the exact same time - late on the third day, just before dark, the correct time of his resurrection. Consequently, there is no other conclusion we can reach other than the fact that following three nights and three days, Christ rose near the end

of, but still on, the third day. Therefore, we see that the scriptures which state he was raised on the third day are correct and in harmony with Christ's own prophecy of his resurrection occurring after three days and three nights.

The correct understanding of the timing of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ not only dispels the apparent scriptural contradiction regarding the three days and three nights, it also affirms his prophecy and correctly identifies this Jesus as the true Christ. The observance of Good Friday and Easter Sunday are thus shown to be erroneous and the Jesus-figure associated with it a counterfeit or false Christ (Mt. 24:5, 24).

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