

THE ONLY SIGN

When did Jesus' death, burial and resurrection take place? The traditional and prevalent view is that He died and was buried on Friday afternoon, and resurrected on Easter Sunday morning. But is this the biblical teaching?

Let us now go to the Word of God and see whether or not the traditional and prevailing view is the biblical view. For it is written, "Buy the truth, and do not sell *it*, *Also* wisdom and instruction and understanding" (**Proverbs 23:23 NKJV**).

Mat 12:38 (NKJV) Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

Mat 12:39 (NKJV) But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Mat 12:40 (NKJV) For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Jonah 1:17 (NKJV) Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

I remember reading someplace where a commentator made the comment: "*Of course we know that Jesus was actually in the tomb only half as long as He thought He would be!*" It's incredible that a Bible commentator would make such a statement, for in so doing he discredits the ONLY sign Jesus gave to that "evil and adulterous generation."

Mark 8:31 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.

Mat 27:63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

John 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, **Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**

John 2:20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

John 2:21 But he spoke of the temple of his body.

We do not need a dictionary or Bible commentary to ascertain the meaning of "three days and three nights." We can certainly do without the *opinion* of theologians. We can very easily find the answer in the Scriptures. Let us look at the first chapter of Genesis.

Gen 1:4 And God saw the light, that *it was* good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

Gen 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening [*darkness*] and the morning [*light*] were the first day.

Gen 1:6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

Gen 1:7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament: and it was so.

Gen 1:8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening [*darkness*] and the morning [*light*] were the second day.

Gen 1:9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry *land* appear: and it was so.

Gen 1:10 And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that *it was* good.

Gen 1:11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, *and* the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed *is* in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

Gen 1:12 And the earth brought forth grass, *and* herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

Gen 1:13 And the evening [*darkness*] and the morning [*light*] were the third day.

Notice carefully what we just read in **Genesis 1:4-13**.

Verse 5, One *night* (evening) and one day (morning) equals ONE DAY.

Verse 8, A second *night* (evening) and a second *day* (morning) equals TWO DAYS.

Verse 13, A third *night* (evening) and a third *day* (morning) equals THREE DAYS.

There you have it! How much plainer could it be? Three days and three nights mean exactly that, *three days and three nights*. It is not possible to get three days and three nights (72 hours) from Friday evening to early Sunday morning without perverting the plain meaning of words. The best we can do is about 36 hours. Do you remember the quote of the commentator earlier? Permit me to quote it again. *"Of course we know that Jesus was actually in the tomb only half as long as He thought He would be!"* It never fails to amaze me the lengths to which some will go in an effort justify their traditions. Do you realize what it means if Jesus was mistaken about this? If He was mistaken about this, what else might He have wrong about?

Here is another plain statement from the lips of the Savior:

John 11:9 (NKJV) Jesus answered, "**Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.**"

If there are 12 hours in the day there are also 12 hours in the night. Therefore, Jesus was three twelve hour nights

($3 \times 12 = 36$ hours), and three twelve hour days ($3 \times 12 = 36$ hours), which equals 72 hours ($36 + 36 = 72$ hours). What is there about three days and three nights that's hard to understand? Permit me to give an example to illustrate my point. If I were to say to you, "*I'm going down South and will be in Mississippi three days and three nights,*" you would have no problem understanding what I meant. But due to long held beliefs and traditions, when we read three days and three nights in the Bible we can't accept the plain and simple meaning these words were intended to convey. We must find a way to make them conform to what we think we know. Is it possible that tradition has blinded so many to the obvious?

THE TIME OF JESUS' DEATH AND BURIAL

If we can find the time of day of His burial it would be a simple matter to discover the time of day of His resurrection. Whatever time of day His burial took place, the resurrection would take place at the same time of day three days and three nights, 72 hours, later.

Mat 27:46 And about the ninth hour [3:00PM] Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Mat 27:47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This *man* calleth for Elijah.

Mat 27:48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink.

Mat 27:49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

Mat 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit.

Jesus was buried between 3:00PM and sunset of the same day He died.

Mat 27:57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:

Mat 27:58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

Mat 27:59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

Mat 27:60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed.

Luke 23:52 This *man* went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

Luke 23:53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

Luke 23:54 And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on.

John 19:42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation *day*; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.

The body of one that was hanged had to be taken down and buried the same day.

Deut 21:23 (NKJV) ... his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day,

Another reason they hastened to get Him buried before sunset was because that sunset would be the start of a High Day Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (**Lev. 23:4-5**).

John 19:31 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.

This was not the weekly seventh day Sabbath, but one of seven annual Sabbaths observed by Israel (**Lev. 16:30-31; 23:1-39**). These seven annual high day Sabbaths were based on certain dates on the calendar, not a certain day of the week.

Jesus was crucified on Passover

Mat 26:2 (NKJV) "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

Passover took place on the 14th day of the 1st month (Abib), followed by a high day Sabbath, the 1st day of Unleavened Bread, on the 15th day of the first month. This means there were two Sabbaths that week, the high day Sabbath on Thursday and the weekly Sabbath on Saturday.

It seems quite obvious from the Scriptures that Jesus resurrected as the weekly Sabbath was drawing to a close and it was *dawning toward the first day of the week*. Keep in mind that the biblical day began and ended at sunset. This means that in order for Him to fulfill the ONLY sign that was going to be given to that "evil and adulterous generation" He would have to be in the grave a full three days and three nights, or to be more precise, 72 hours. The only way this could happen would be if He were crucified on a Wednesday.

This means He was buried just prior to sunset on a Wednesday. The women and His disciples rested on Thursday the high day Sabbath. They then bought and prepared the spices for His burial on Friday, as well as making their preparations for the weekly Sabbath. They rested on Saturday, the weekly Sabbath, and, according to **Matthew 28:1**, some came to the tomb toward the end of the Sabbath to *see the sepulcher*.

Mat 28:1 In the end^(G3796) of the sabbath,^{G4521} as it began to dawn^{G2020} toward^{G1519} the first^{G3391} *day* of the week,^{G4521} came^{G2064} Mary^{G3137} Magdalene^{G3094} and^{G2532} the^{G3588} other^{G243} Mary^{G3137} to see^{G2334} the^{G3588} sepulchre.^{G5028}

Notice the meaning of the word *end* in the above verse:

G3796, end, Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary

οψέ

opse

op-seh'

From the same as G3694 (through the idea of *backwardness*); (adverbially) late in the day; by extension *after the close* of the day: - (at) even, in the end.

There *appears* to be some difficulty concerning the appearances of the women at the tomb. **Matthew 28:1** doesn't seem to fit with the accounts in Mark and Luke. For example, in **Matthew 28:1**, two women came to see the sepulcher. Nothing is said about anointing His body as in Mark and Luke. Notice the meaning of the word *see* in this text:

G2334, see

θεορέο

Thayer Definition:

1) to be a spectator, look at, behold

1a) to view attentively; take a view of, survey

- 1a1) to view mentally, consider
- 2) to see
 - 2a) to perceive with the eyes, to enjoy the presence of one
 - 2b) to discern, descry
 - 2c) to ascertain, find out by seeing

Part of Speech: verb

There is nothing in the meaning of the word 'see' that contradicts the following explanation.

Mark and Luke inform us that several women came early in the morning of the first day (Sunday) to anoint His body.

Mark 16:1 And when the Sabbath was past, [about 12 hours past] Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

Mark 16:2 And very early in the morning the first *day* of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.

Luke 24:1 Now upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

Perhaps Mary Magdalene and another woman came to view the tomb and tarried around for a time of mourning

before returning home. Until the stone was actually rolled back, they would not have known whether Jesus was inside or not.

The next morning they returned with the women mentioned by Mark with the intention of anointing His body and found the stone already rolled back and the tomb empty. Whatever the circumstances, the tomb was empty when they arrived early on the first day of the week because He had resurrected at the end of the Sabbath the previous evening. Whatever the case may be nobody actually saw Him resurrect. All accounts agree on this point, He was gone when they obtained access to the tomb early Sunday morning. He had resurrected some 12 hours earlier.

There is no indication in scripture as to the exact time when **Matthew 28:2; Mark 16:4; Luke 24:2; John 20:1** took place. The stone was rolled back so the disciples could see and enter into the tomb that they might know that He had indeed resurrected. Jesus did not need the stone rolled back in order to exit the tomb. He could appear inside a room where the doors were closed (**John 20:26**). He also vanished from the sight of the two disciples who met Him as they were on their way to Emmaus (**Luke 24:13-31**). The Scriptures simply will not support a Friday crucifixion and a Sunday resurrection.

Let us now look at another incident that took place after His resurrection. It is found in the Book of Luke and

definitely took place in late afternoon of the first day of the week, the day now known as Sunday.

Luke 24:13 (NKJV) Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem.

Luke 24:14 (NKJV) And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

Luke 24:15 (NKJV) So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

Luke 24:16 (NKJV) But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

Luke 24:17 (NKJV) And He said to them, "**What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?**"

Luke 24:18 (NKJV) Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"

Luke 24:19 (NKJV) And He said to them, "**What things?**" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

Luke 24:20 (NKJV) and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.

Luke 24:21 (NKJV) But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.

Notice carefully the underlined words. It is obvious the events described above did indeed take place on the day we now call Sunday. We have already shown that the crucifixion and burial took place on Wednesday. If we count back three days from Sunday we come to Thursday. How do we explain this apparent inconsistency? It is really quite simple. Let us now go back to the Book of Matthew for the solution.

Mat 27:62 (NKJV) On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate,

Since Jesus was buried toward the end of the day of preparation, these events would have taken place after sunset on Wednesday when they came to Pilate with their request, in other words, Thursday.

Mat 27:63 (NKJV) saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, '**After three days I will rise.**'"

Mat 27:64 (NKJV) Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him *away*, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."

Mat 27:65 (NKJV) Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make *it* as secure as you know how."

Mat 27:66 So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

Let's count the days. Thursday to Friday – day one; Friday to Saturday – second day; Saturday to Sunday – third day.

Jesus was crucified and buried on the preparation day (also called Passover, Abib 14) as previously shown. This would have been on the day we now know as Wednesday. The next day, which was a high day Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Abib 15), the day now known as Thursday, the chief priests and the Pharisees came to Pilate and requested that the tomb be sealed and a guard put in place. As noted earlier, this would have been after sunset on Wednesday. This was part of “the things that happened there in these days” (**Luke 24:18**). Counting back three days from Sunday brings us to Thursday, “the third day since these things happened” (**Luke 24:21**). It is truly marvelous to behold the harmony and consistency of the scriptures.

Let us now consider another point.

Mark 16:9 (KJV) 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.

Notice that the translators *added* a comma after the word *week*. This makes this verse say that Jesus rose on the first day of the week, which contradicts what we have already seen. Let's see if we can resolve this *apparent* contradiction.

The Greek for this verse has no punctuation as does English. Please notice the following Greek text of this verse, followed by the English translation.

Mark 16:9 (Greek) αναστας δε πρωι πρωτη σαββατου
εφανη πρωτον μαρια τη μαγδαληνη αφ ης εκβεβληκει
επτα δαιμονια

Mark 16:9 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 (No punctuation)

Let us now add a comma after the word *risen* and notice the result.

Mark 16:9 (KJV) 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.

Now the verse says simply that Jesus had risen, and that He appeared *early* to Mary Magdalene. This is now consistent with what we have previously learned. But, you may ask, what gives you the right to move a comma? I'm glad you asked.

We have already learned that the translators inserted punctuation wherever they felt it should be. It so happened that the comma was *added* where it would support the traditional interpretation. Just because tradition has a long standing does not make it truth. I will now present several versions of the Bible which has a comma in a different position than does the KJV. I will

begin with the 1611 KJV. Notice carefully the position of the commas.

Mark 16:9 (1611 KJV) Now when Jesus was risen early, the first day of the weeke, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seuen deuils.

Mark 16:9 (Webster's Bible) 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 demons.

Mark 16:9 (CEV, Contemporary English Version) Very early on the first day of the week, after Jesus had risen to life, he appeared to Mary Magdalene. Earlier he had forced seven demons out of her.

It is obvious to me that Bible translators inserted punctuation wherever they felt it was warranted. No doubt their theological views influenced their decision as evidenced by Mark 16:9. To be consistent with scripture quoted previously in this writing, I feel the following rendering of Mark 16:9 is the most accurate. I also possess two versions that punctuate it this way.

Mark 16:9 (KJV) 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.

This writing is not intended to cover all the appearances of people at the tomb, or all the appearances of Jesus after

His resurrection. My desire was simply to show that Messiah fulfilled exactly the sign He promised to the scribes and Pharisees. You cannot do this with a Friday crucifixion and a Sunday resurrection. Just as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, Jesus was to be *the* sign to that “evil generation.”

Luke 11:29 And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, **This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.**

Luke 11:30 **For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.**

Jesus said He would be it the grave three days and three nights. I believe the Scriptures, when rightly divided (2 Tim. 2:15), prove this conclusively. Will you side with the commentator quoted earlier, or will you forget your traditions and agree with the Word of God? **Mark 7:9** And he said unto them, **Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.**

The fact that He fulfilled that sign exactly is proof to us even today that He was who He claimed to be. He said He would be in the grave three days and three nights, and that is exactly how long it was. **Rom. 3:4 (NKJV) ...let God be true but every man a liar.**

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

L. Lawhorn

PO Box 721

Mansfield, OH 44901-0721