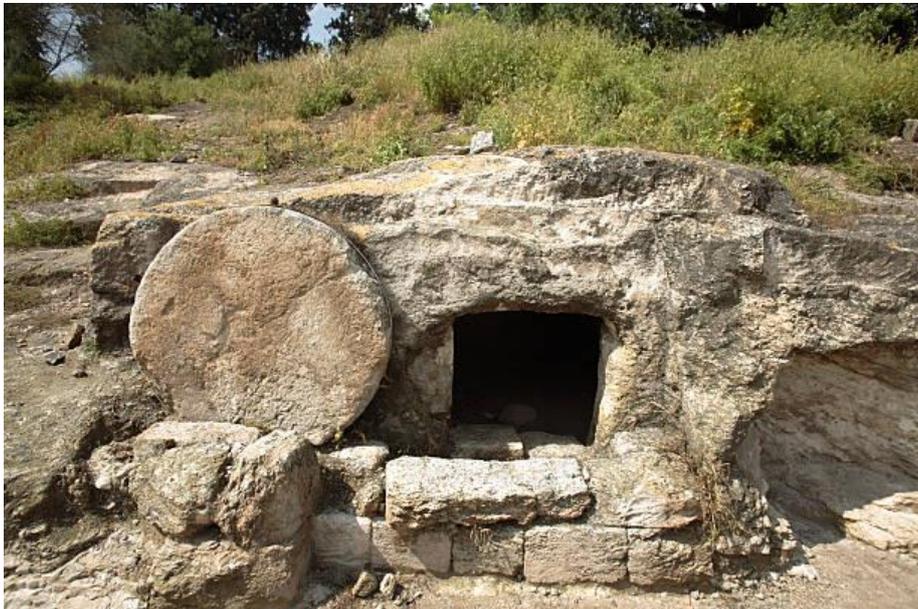


Bible Study Notes

Was Christ 36 or 72 Hours in the Tomb?

Collected Information and Commentary

**By Craig M. White
Version 1.2**





Was Christ 36 or 72 Hours in the Tomb?

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Our purpose and desire are to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God's message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

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Executive Summary

This document offers a careful and sustained argument for the view that Jesus Christ was crucified on a Wednesday and resurrected near the end of the weekly Sabbath on Saturday, spending a full three days and three nights (72 hours) in the tomb, exactly as He foretold in Matthew 12:40.

The heart of the case rests on a straightforward reading of the phrase “three days and three nights.” The author maintains that when Scripture specifies both days and nights together, it points to full 24-hour periods rather than partial ones. This understanding is reinforced by Hebrew linguistic evidence showing that the word *yom* (day) can refer to either the daylight portion or a complete day-night cycle, but the addition of “nights” consistently signals literal, full periods. Numerous lexical studies, rabbinic sources, and scholarly analyses support this conclusion.

Historical support for this view reaches back to early Christian writings, including the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (around AD 200), which links the betrayal and arrest to midweek, as well as fasting traditions and resurrection customs or Saturday evening commemorations - preserved in certain Eastern churches (Coptic, Nestorian, and Armenian) that point toward a Saturday resurrection. Within the Sabbatarian tradition, the Wednesday crucifixion and Saturday resurrection teaching is first recorded as early as the 1720s among Sabbatarian Baptists (though may have been believed long before that among the Sabbatharians) and became a standard doctrine in the Church of God (Seventh Day) by the 1890s. It later formed a central teaching of the Worldwide Church of God under Herbert W. Armstrong and continues to be upheld by most of its major offshoot groups to this day.

While the traditional Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection view remains the majority position in Christianity, the document argues that it struggles to account for three full nights, relying instead on the principle of inclusive counting, where partial days are treated as whole ones. Although this method appears in some Biblical examples, the author contends it does not adequately fit the specific wording of Matthew 12:40.

In the end, the Wednesday crucifixion and late-Saturday resurrection framework is presented as the most consistent with the language of Scripture, the harmony of the Gospel accounts, significant strands of early Christian tradition, and the calendrical evidence.

Associated Readings

- “Chronology of the Crucifixion and Resurrection According to Ancient Texts”, *Friends of the Sabbath* by Blaine Newmann.
- *A History of the Saturday Resurrection Doctrine* by George Dellinger.
- *Daniel Nine Proves Jesus is the Christ* by William F. Dankenbring.
- *Did Jesus Christ Die on a Cross or a Stake? The Traditional Church of God Position* by Craig M. White.
- *Notes on the Chronology of the Passion Week* by Rodney J. Decker
- *The Crucifixion was NOT on Friday* by Herman L. Hoeh.
- *The Resurrection was NOT on Sunday* by Herbert W. Armstrong.

“But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just 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.**”” (Matthew 12:39-40, ESV)

Introductory Remarks

I think it was in 1972 or 1973 that I either read an article in the *Plain Truth* or saw an advertisement therein advertising the booklet *The Resurrection was NOT on Sunday*

I ordered it and read through it carefully marking it up followed by utilising the same technique with the booklet *Was the Crucifixion on a Friday?* that I ordered a little later. I also saw an item in a book on how Christ was crucified on a Thursday in 1973 and also something I saw in a religious bookshop. As was my custom, I read many articles 1973-76 advocating for a Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection. As well as those advocating for a Thursday crucifixion and have read others since, but one cannot always continue to study and read the other point of view over and over again.

Yet, given that this issue is raising its head again, I feel compelled to write something short on the topic given the confusion around the place.

The debate is chiefly between the Friday and Wednesday crucifixion advocates and as such I have delegated the Thursday crucifixion theory to **Appendix. Arguments for a Thursday Crucifixion** due to its small number of adherents.

This article does not re-present the doctrine or re-write what others have written. Rather it gathers historical data to show that it has longevity – ancient roots - in addition to the Bible itself. There are many aspects to the doctrine that assembled together brings one to a conclusion. For example, one could explore the date of Christ’s crucifixion¹, symbolism, Hebrew Calendar and much more. These have been covered by others, so this article has been restricted to the main criticism for a Wednesday crucifixion (and thus a Sunday resurrection as the outcome): that argument is based mainly upon the belief that a “day” in the Bible is a 12-hour and not a 24-hour period. We shall see.

There are so many books and papers by both Christian and Jewish authors debating the various calendars, pre-history of the Jewish calendar², Jewish vs Roman time in the first century, different calendar supposedly used by John, sunrise/sunset issue, inclusive/exclusive day reckoning, date for Christ’s birth and crucifixion, Jubilee cycles and more. The papers are often very thorough, scientific and convincing – confusing to most people trying to find the truth about the calendrical issue. A separate 100 page paper on each would be warranted – but who would have the time or resources for all of this?

¹ See for example *The Darkness at the Crucifixion* by Anthony Alfieri and *Dating the Crucifixion (Part 1)*, BibArch website, 1 April 2022 by Michael Germano. There are a huge number of papers available on the subject, warranting a massive paper on this aspect alone.

² For example *Studies in the prehistory of the Jewish Calendar* by Ellen Robbins.

1. History of the Wednesday Crucifixion – Saturday Resurrection Doctrine

Blaine Newmann, a minister with the Church of God (Seventh Day) has authored an article *Chronology of the Crucifixion and Resurrection According to Ancient Texts* which draws from early Christian texts such as the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (circa A.D. 200), Victorinus of Petau, and other sources, arguing for a widespread ancient tradition that the Last Supper/Passover occurred on a Tuesday evening.

This places Jesus' betrayal and arrest in the night leading into Wednesday, with evidence from early church practices like a Wednesday fast commemorating the arrest. He even cites the pseudepigraphal *Acts of Pilate* to support a midweek crucifixion – arguing that such literature can and does capture historical knowledge.

Newmann points to historical beliefs among early Christians, including in the East (as noted by Socrates and Sozomen), France (Bishop Gregory of Tours), Armenia, and persisting traditions in Coptic and Nestorian churches celebrating communion on Holy Saturday evening, as evidence that some ancient communities held to a Sabbath resurrection rather than Sunday. You can read the entire article in the **Appendix. Chronology of the Crucifixion and Resurrection According to Ancient Texts.**

But that is not all to the history of the doctrine prior to the 20th century. Another Church of God member, George Dellinger has written a booklet *A History of the Saturday Resurrection Doctrine* (1982) (available on friendsofsabbath.org) which traces the historical development of the belief that Jesus Christ was crucified on Wednesday and resurrected late on Saturday.³

He and I have been in contact since the 1980s. Below is a summary of the booklet by Mr Dellinger himself:

“The first definite appearance of the Wednesday-Saturday belief in Sabbatarian sources occurred in 1724. In that year George Carlow, a British Seventh Day Baptist, published a book entitled *Truth Defended* in which he presented many arguments in favor of the seventh-day Sabbath. In Chapter XI Carlow teaches the Saturday resurrection. He mentions no one else who shared his opinion, but his presentation of the subject — while possibly his own personal opinion — is well done. It is a reasonably sure assumption that Carlow knew others who agreed with him although no one else is named, nor does he say it was a Seventh Day Baptist belief.

The Saturday resurrection continued to appear among early Seventh Day Baptist leaders, however. Francis Bampfield, an early leader in this group, is said to have believed it, but definite documentary evidence is lacking. Henry Clarke, Seventh Day Baptist leader and author in the very early Nineteenth Century, had this understanding.

³ As and aside, during a telephone conversation with Herman Hoeh in 1996, I told him about this publication which had not been aware of. He exhibited great interest and, I believe, ordered copies of the booklet.

Other late Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century Seventh Day Baptist leaders accepted the Saturday resurrection. These include Abram Herbert Lewis, N. Wardner, and Loyal F. Hurley.

In the Mid-Nineteenth Century, there were those more or less associated with the Adventist movement who began to reject a number of the teachings developing among the followers of James and Ellen G. White, including the Friday crucifixion-Sunday resurrection. One Nineteenth Century Adventist writer even published a pamphlet in which he argued for a Friday crucifixion and Monday resurrection! Uriah Smith, in an effort to establish the Friday crucifixion-Sunday resurrection, carried on a one-sided debate in some of the early Adventist papers in favor of the idea. The Adventist Church made the Friday-Sunday tradition an official teaching, and numerous Adventist writers have published literature in its support. But, as was stated above, the Saturday resurrection is currently receiving increasing favor and acceptance among Adventists.

The Wednesday crucifixion-Saturday resurrection understanding appeared very early in what would become the Church of God, Seventh Day, as that group moved away from its Adventist affiliation. There was, quite naturally, a great deal of study and debate on many doctrinal issues. One of these was the question of what day Christ was crucified and resurrected. The first appearance of the Saturday resurrection understanding in Church of God, Seventh Day, literature was their magazine, *The Hope of Israel* in the September 21, 1864, issue. A man named Luther L. Tiffany of Lansing, Iowa, had a short study entitled "Christ's Resurrection on the 7th Day." It is obvious from his language this was nothing new; Tiffany was simply explaining something many knew and understood.

Through the next thirty years a great many articles appeared in *The Hope of Israel* (later called *The Bible Advocate*) both for and against the Saturday resurrection. In 1893, the Saturday resurrection became the official position of the Church of God, Seventh Day, when *Bible Advocate* editor William C. Long published the Church's articles of belief and included the Saturday resurrection as one of their doctrines." ("A History of the Saturday Resurrection Doctrine Among Sabbath-Keepers", *Friends of the Sabbath*, c. 1990)

2. Catholic Alignment of Sunday Resurrection with Sunday Worship

The conventional perspective regarding Jesus' crucifixion occurring on a Friday has historically prevailed in Christian doctrine because it aligns with and gives strength to their Sunday observance tradition.

After all, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explicitly ties Sunday observance to the Resurrection:

"The Sabbath, which represented the completion of the first creation, has been replaced by Sunday, which recalls the new creation inaugurated by the Resurrection of Christ". (CCC 2190)

It further states:

“By a tradition handed down from the apostles which took its origin from the very day of Christ’s Resurrection, the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery every seventh day, which day is appropriately called the Lord’s Day or Sunday. The day of Christ’s Resurrection is both the first day of the week, the memorial of the first day of creation, and the ‘eighth day,’ on which Christ after his ‘rest’ on the great Sabbath inaugurates the ‘day that the Lord has made,’ the ‘day that knows no evening’. The Lord’s Supper is its center, for there the whole community of the faithful encounters the risen Lord who invites them to his banquet:

The Lord’s day, the day of Resurrection, the day of Christians, is our day. It is called the Lord’s day because on it the Lord rose victorious to the Father. If pagans call it the “day of the sun,” we willingly agree, for today the light of the world is raised, today is revealed the sun of justice with healing in his rays.”
(CCC 1166)

Switching to a belief in a Sunday resurrection helps to justify Sunday church going.

Of course, there would have been other factors that contributed to moving away from seventh-day Sabbath observances. As Christianity spread among Gentiles and tensions with Judaism grew, especially after the Jewish revolts against Rome (e.g., AD 66-73 and AD 132-135), early Christians sought to avoid "Judaiing" practices.

Ignatius of Antioch, in his *Epistle to the Magnesians* (circa AD 110), wrote:

"Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and rejoice in days of idleness. [...] But let every one of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner [...] And after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection-day" (chapters 8-10).

Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology* (circa AD 155-157), argued that the Sabbath was temporary for Israel: "the new law requires you to keep the sabbath constantly" (chapter 67).

The Council of Laodicea (AD 363-364) formalised this by declaring:

“Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord’s Day, and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ” (Canon XXIX).

Emperor Constantine, a former sun worshiper, issued a decree in AD 321:

"On the venerable day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed" (*Codex Justinianus*, lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; translated in *Philip Schaff's History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3, p. 380, note 1).

At the Council of Nicaea (AD 325), he went further:

“It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast [Passover] we should follow the practice of the Jews Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd” (quoted in Eusebius's *Life of Constantine* (Book III, Chapter 18)).⁴

Further, as Christianity incorporated Gentile converts, paganism which included sun veneration (common in Mithraism and Roman culture) influenced the choice of Sunday, known as the "day of the sun."

Claiming a Sunday resurrection provided additional strength to the anti-nomianism of the leaders mentioned above and their rejection of the true Sabbath.

3. Belief in the Church of God since the 19th Century

Church of God (Seventh Day) Publications

The Church of God (Seventh Day) (CG7) has historically promoted the Wednesday crucifixion/Saturday resurrection doctrine as found in Matthew 12:40, which distinguishes itself from the overwhelming majority of mainstream Christianity and Seventh-day Adventists.⁵ This view seems to have become standard or even official in the denomination by the 1890s and has been featured in its magazine, *Bible Advocate* (originally titled *The Hope of Israel* from 1863), as well as tracts and statements.

Below is a list of publications I can identify from publications late 1800s to 1986 which explicitly address this topic. Like most Churches of God, the group's literature often embeds the doctrine in broader discussions of Passover timing, resurrection, or anti-Easter argument.

- “Christ’s Resurrection on the 7th Day”, *The Hope of Israel*, 21 September 1864 by Luther L. Tiffany.

⁴ Historian Paul Johnson notes Constantine's ongoing sun worship: “Constantine was almost certainly a Mithraic, and his triumphal arch, built after his ‘conversion’, testifies to the Sun-god, or ‘unconquered sun’. ... Constantine never abandoned sun-worship and kept the sun on his coins. He made Sunday into a day of rest, closing the lawcourts and forbidding all work except agricultural labour” (*A History of Christianity*, 1976, pp. 67-68).

Some traditions, like Catholicism, attribute the change to ecclesiastical authority. Thomas Aquinas wrote: “In the New Law the observance of the Lord’s day took the place of the observance of the Sabbath, not by virtue of the precept but by the institution of the Church and the custom of Christian people” (*Summa Theologica*, Part: Secunda Secundae Partis (Second Part of the Second Part, often abbreviated as II-II or 2a 2ae) Question: 122 (Quaestio 122: Of the Precepts of Justice) Article: 4 (Articulus 4)).

Augustine of Hippo (circa AD 400) stated: “the holy doctors of the Church have decreed, that all glory of the Jewish Sabbath is transferred to it [Sunday]. Let us therefore keep the Lord’s Day as the ancients were commanded to do the Sabbath” (quoted in Robert Cox's *Sabbath Laws and Sabbath Duties*, 1853, p. 284).

Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 314) noted: And all things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the sabbath [Jewish seventh day,] these we have transferred to the Lord’s day, as more appropriately belonging to it, because it has a precedence and is first in rank and more honourable than the Jewish sabbath.” (*Commentary on Psalm 92*, columns 1169–1172).

⁵ Due to the influences of Ellen G. White, the Seventh-day Adventists early on adopted the Sunday resurrection doctrine. White's writings describe the resurrection as occurring on Sunday morning. Here are two quotes:

- "The night of the first day of the week had worn slowly away. The darkest hour, just before daybreak, had come." (*The Desire of Ages*, (1898), p. 779).
- "Early in the morning of the first day of the week, before it was yet light, holy women came to the sepulcher..." (*The Early Writings of Ellen G. White* (1882), p. 186).

- *Articles of Belief* (including Saturday Resurrection), *Bible Advocate*, 1893 by William C. Long. NB: this is a formal statement making the Saturday resurrection (implying Wednesday crucifixion) the official Church of God position.
- *Crucifixion and Resurrection*, c. 1907. A tract by C. S. De Ford.
- *The Resurrection of Christ - Which Day Did it Occur?* 1920. Tract by Andrew N. Dugger.
- *The Resurrection of Christ, Which Day? Gems of Truth* series, 1925.
- “On What Day Was Christ Crucified?” *Bible Advocate*, December 1928 (Vol LXII, No. 48), pp. 577-81. by Eugene Charles Callaway.
- *The Time Element in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ*, Bible Advocate Press, c. 1940s.
- *Census of Religious Bodies Statement* (1936) by Andrew N. Dugger. Official report submitted to U.S. Census of Religious which includes Article 38: "Christ was in the tomb exactly three days and three nights, rising at the end of the Sabbath." Part of 38 doctrinal articles; no page numbers, as it's a census document.

Post-1930s Church of God (Seventh Day) literature up to the present continues to affirm the doctrine in statements of faith and *Bible Advocate* articles.

Worldwide Church of God Publications

The doctrine was central to the Church until several years after Herbert W Armstrong's death in 1986, after which it was de-emphasised and later changed to a Friday crucifixion-Sunday resurrection. Below are publications from the late 1920s on.

- *The Foundation for Sunday Sacredness Crumbles* by Herbert W. Armstrong was an unpublished manuscript (submitted to Church of God (Seventh Day) leadership) in the summer of 1927, shortly after his baptism. This was stated in his *Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*, Volume 1 (1967), pp. 325-326 (pp. 338-40 of the 1986 edition). Note that the article was never published in a periodical or in booklet form under its original title but was later reworked into his booklet *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*.
- *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* by Herbert W. Armstrong (1952, first edition; revised 1971, 1972). This was the first booklet edition with further editions over the years.
- *The Crucifixion Was Not on Friday* by Herman L. Hoeh (1959, first edition; revised 1961, 1968).
- “Daniel Nine Proves Jesus is the Christ”, *Good News*, December 1965, pp. 9-11, by William F. Dankenbring (with subsequent reprints).

Another article worth a mention is Lawson Briggs, “The Wavesheaf Ritual – Proof of Christ and the Bible”, *Good News*, June 1975, pp. 26-29:

“In the time of Jesus the wavesheaf was offered on the Sunday during Passover week. This is clear since the priests - who were mostly Sadducees - were in charge of the Temple and all the Temple ceremony (Acts 4: 1-6; 5: 17). The timing and symbolism of this ceremony would have been overwhelming to those who knew the events of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The wave sheaf had been chosen in advance, as Christ was. It was tied in a bundle, symbolizing his captivity. **It was cut loose from the ground just at sunset - just the time at which Christ rose from the dead after three days**

and three nights in the tomb. The cutting of the grain symbolized Christ's actual resurrection. Like the sheaf now loosed from the soil, the resurrected Christ became free from any physical dependence on air, water or sustenance that had tied Him, as it has tied all other humans, to this earth out of which we grow." (p. 28) [emphasis mine]⁶

After the death of Herbert W Armstrong, his successor decided to overturn all the doctrines of the church including the Wednesday crucifixion doctrine without due consideration or debate.⁷

Other Church of God Groups

Note that most Worldwide Church of God offshoots from these groups still adhere to the doctrine.

Below is a selection of articles and booklets by these groups:

- "Centuries-Old Documents Show Evidence for a Wednesday Crucifixion", *The Good News*, March-April 2006, p. 13 by Mario Seiglie (United Church of God).
- "Jesus Wasn't Crucified on Friday or Resurrected on Sunday: How Long Was Jesus in the Tomb?", *The Good News*, March-April 2006, pp. 13-15. (United Church of God)
- "The Crucifixion Darkness: What Happened at the Death of Christ?" *Living Church of God website* article, 24 August 2017 by Wyatt Ciesielka.
- *Easter or Passover – Which Day Should Christians Observe?* by Art Braidic (Eternal Church of God) (c. 2000).
- *Easter: The Rest of the Story*, United Church of God booklet (2014).
- *Easter: The Untold Story*, Living Church of God booklet (2018) by Gerald E. Weston.
- *How Long Was Jesus in the Tomb?* By Fred Coulter (Christian Biblical Church of God) (2016).
- *Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery!* by Norbert Link (Church of the Eternal God). (c. 2015).
- *The Appointed Times of Jesus the Messiah* (chapter 5) by Fred Coulter (Christian Biblical Church of God) (c. 2018).

With the historical aspect providing the deep roots for the Church of God's position, let us now explore the two main views among Christians.

⁶ The *Mishnah* (*Menachot* 10:3–4, compiled c. 200 AD but reflecting earlier traditions) describes debates where Sadducees/Boethusians reaped the barley at the end of the weekly Sabbath (sunset Saturday), for offering Sunday morning. Further, Alfred Edersheim in his *The Temple: Its Ministry and Service*, pp. 203–205), states that the Sadducean practice was for the cutting at sunset ending the weekly Sabbath. He was a noted 19th-century scholar of Jewish rituals and still recognised as such. Jan van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars* (p. 18) analyses calendrical disputes in Second Temple Judaism. He states the Boethusians (a Sadducean sect) reaped the omer "at the going out of the Sabbath" – that is at sunset ending the weekly Sabbath. The Sadducees then had it processed overnight so it could be waved the next morning (Sunday).

NB: In contrast, the Pharisees undertook this ritual on 16 Abib. Both Alfred Edersheim's *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* and the *Mishnah* (*Menachot* 10), describe the reaping just as the sun went down on the 15th of Nisan which ended the high day Sabbath at the start of the 16th, when the sheaf would be prepared overnight and waved the next day.

⁷ I am advised that Joseph Tkach published an article in the *Plain Truth*, May 1990, advocating for the changed doctrine. However, he was alluding to it since 1987 (apparently in the March *Plain Truth* of that year). On their website they state: "In May 1990, Mr. Tkach's emphasis on the centrality of Christ found expression in a new understanding about the chronology of the Old Testament Passover and how that compares with the chronology of Jesus' last supper and crucifixion. That same month, in the 5/15/90 PGR [*Pastor-General's Report*], he wrote: *God has led me and many other headquarters ministers to examine our focus and approach to our understanding of God's Word.*" ("A journey of change:" 2 September 2013 <https://update.gci.org/2013/10/a-journey-of-change/>)

4. Arguments for a Friday Crucifixion

The traditional view of the Friday crucifixion is by far the most widely accepted doctrinal stance within Christian scholarship, based on the view that a day is an idiom for 12 hours and the beliefs of the early Sunday-observing church. From this viewpoint, Jesus observed the Last Supper as a Passover meal on Thursday evening (14 Nisan), was arrested that night, underwent trial early Friday morning, and was crucified around 9 a.m. on Friday. He died around 3 p.m., and was buried before sunset because the Sabbath was arriving. Resurrected early Sunday morning.

Advocates are of the view that the phrase "three days and three nights" in Matthew 12:40 invokes inclusive Jewish timekeeping, where any portion of a day is regarded as a complete day and as such fulfills the prophecy in this way. This perspective has many other arguments for its position, but there is no need to examine every one as they are covered in the list of works below.

The most important support for this view is the idiomatic expression for a day in Matthew 12 to mean 12 and not 24 hours.

In ancient Jewish time reckoning, phrases such as "today and tomorrow, and the third day" (e.g., Luke 13:32; Exodus 19:10-11) had an inclusive method of counting which treated any part of a day as a full "day and night" where a part of the day was considered equivalent to the whole. Rabbinic sources, such as Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah in the *Jerusalem Talmud*, affirm this principle: "A day and a night make an *onah* [= a time, period or season], and a part of an *onah* is as the whole."⁸ But such a quote cannot be found. However, the principle itself is authentic to rabbinic thought where Jewish law often treats a partial day as a whole, but not on every occasion which the proponents either miss or ignore.

The phrase "three days and three nights" (Matthew 12:40. See also Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:46) is idiomatic in their view rather than strictly literal, often interchangeable with "on the third day" or "after three days." Biblical examples they use to illustrate this include: Esther fasts "three days, night and day" (Esther 4:16) yet intervenes "on the third day" (5:1); an Egyptian servant, deprived of food and water for "three days and three nights," reports being abandoned "three days ago" (1 Samuel 30:12-13); and Rehoboam instructs people to return "after three days" but they arrive "on the third day" (2 Chronicles 10:5,12). So, what advocates claim is that these instances demonstrate that partial periods of three calendar days include only two nights similar to Friday afternoon to Sunday morning which then fulfills the idiom. In other words a complete 72 hours is not required

They refer to various Old Testament passages such as Leviticus 7:16-17, 19:6, Hosea 6:2, and 1 Samuel 20:5,12 to claim that this is a standard Hebrew expression. Overall, many Biblical scholars believe that this was often (but not always) a first-century Jewish convention, allowing the Friday-Sunday doctrine to be legitimised.

⁸ Dr Michael Germano's e-mail to me on the subject **Appendix. E-mail from Dr. Michael Germano, Ed.D (2014)** is most enlightening. Also Bryan Huie's paper *When Was Christ Resurrected?* Dismantles the traditional view of *onah* with an honest appraisal. It is worth a read. Details for the latter is provided in the Bibliography.

- *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883) by Alfred Edersheim, which argues that the crucifixion occurred on Friday, Nisan 15, aligning with historical Jewish Passover practices and Gospel chronologies.
- *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, Vol. 2 (1865) Ernst W. Hengstenberg.
- *The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ*, Vol. 3 (1864) by John Peter Lange.
- *The Gospel According to John* (1991) by Donald A. Carson.
- *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (1997) by Herman Ridderbos.
- *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Part IV: The Day of Christ's Crucifixion), Bibliotheca Sacra (1997) by Harold W. Hoehner.
- *The Mystery of the Last Supper* (2011) by Colin J. Humphreys.
- Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection* (1985).

5. Arguments for a Wednesday Crucifixion

Basic Arguments

The doctrinal position of a Wednesday crucifixion is mainly based on a literal interpretation of Matthew 12:40, maintaining that the verse demands a precise duration of 72 hours (comprising three complete days and three nights) in the tomb to correspond with Jonah's ordeal. According to this belief, the Passover meal takes place on Tuesday evening (the commencement of 14 Nisan), followed by Jesus' arrest overnight, his crucifixion on Wednesday morning at 9 a.m., his death at 3 p.m., and his burial just before sunset on Wednesday.

According to the commandments, dead bodies must be buried by sunset:

“And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, **but you shall bury him the same day**, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 21:22-23)

Consequently, the resurrection is said to happen around sunset at the conclusion of the weekly Sabbath, with the women finding the empty tomb early on Sunday. This accounts for three complete days (Thursday, Friday, Saturday) and three nights (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday). Supporters refer to Mark 16:1 and Luke 23:56, which indicate that the women purchased spices after a Sabbath but rested during another, implying the existence of a High Day Sabbath (i.e., an annual Holy Day).⁹

They contend that the "day of preparation" was Wednesday and that the Passover meal occurred on Tuesday, followed by the arrest on Wednesday. This perspective is in opposition to the Friday position for only accounting for two nights, arguing that inclusive counting undermines the prophecy. It corresponds with the AD 31 timeline by utilising lunar eclipses and the duration of Pilate's governance and other proofs. Biblically – and most importantly - this position supports Christ's prediction and His coming as the Messiah and even helps to support

⁹ See the excellent article *Three Days and Three Nights: A Spicy Solution*. November <https://creatorclues.com/three-days-and-three-nights-a-spicy-solution/> by Mitchguy. Other related article can be found here <https://creatorclues.com/category/the-life-of-jesus-christ/>

Saturday Sabbath observance (although many Sunday keepers also believe in a Wednesday crucifixion).

There are so many proofs for a Wednesday crucifixion, including Tim Hegg's argument:

“the problems with such an understanding [Friday crucifixion] are clear: a) the day of crucifixion has the priests concerned about Yeshua's arrest and execution, but this was a Sabbath, and while one might speculate that the priests and the rulers were willing to disregard the Sabbath of the first day of Unleavened Bread, it seems highly unlikely that the crowd would have so easily gone along with this as well; b) since breaking the Sabbath (whether the weekly or the festival Sabbath) was a capital offense, one has really to “push the envelope” to see all the activity of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion as happening on a recognized Sabbath; c) the priests would have been busy in the Temple with all of the festival sacrifices (the *Chagigah*, cf. Numbers 28:18); d) the ability of Joseph of Arimathea to buy a linen cloth for Yeshua's burial seems highly unlikely. Shops and merchants would not have been doing their normal business; e) This schema does not allow sufficient time for Yeshua to be in the tomb three days and three nights, even if one were to allow any part of a day or night to count.” (*Chronology of the Week of Yeshua's Crucifixion and Resurrection*)

The toing and froing between the rival positions is interesting to read and helps in sharpening one's own position. There are so many pros and cons for all three doctrinal positions, and one could write a massive book comparing these positions in minute detail – as one could any doctrine. Mostly, there is enough evidence to settle on a doctrine without such detail, let us not be like those who seemingly cannot see the forest for the trees. I see this in many papers.¹⁰

Further, it can be discerned that Greek thought is generally defined by its emphasis on form, whereas Hebrew thought tends to focus more on functionality. The Greek viewpoint aims for a linear development that leads to a definitive conclusion, in contrast to the Hebrew viewpoint, which adopts a circular methodology, revisiting its beginnings.

For instance, in John 11, the narrative of Lazarus is crucial for understanding the prophecy regarding resurrection taking place after three days. It was a common cultural belief that a person's spirit remained in close proximity for three days (of 24 hours each, not 12 hours), and there was a perception that revival could happen within that period. Thus, for the Son of Man to attain glory - not through the death of Lazarus, but through the demonstration of resurrection power - he needed to resurrect Lazarus outside the limits of the three-day belief system that was prevalent at that time. Verse 14 was designed to inspire faith, while verse 4 sought to confirm his identity. As a result, the repeated references to resurrection after three days would have struck a chord with the audience of that time, as they would have recognised that He was confronting the dominant doctrines (as He frequently did with various other matters).

¹⁰ One paper that summarises 19 of the many issues of this debate is Richard Traver, *The Crucifixion Conundrum. Things Theologians Have Overlooked*, 25 March 2019. Another is Pallant Ramsundar, *Dating Christ's Crucifixion*, 21 December 2015.

Of further interest is that although decomposition of the body commences several hours after death, it accelerates and is acute after 72 hours. Some scholarly information has come to light regarding Jewish traditions and thought in ancient times concerning three days after death:

“L. Michael White, a professor of classics and Christian origins at the University of Texas in Austin, said religious scholars had long known that the idea of resurrection existed in Judaism before the Gabriel Revelation.

“But what was interesting was the notion of three days,” White said.

He added that the three-day time period may have been rooted in the view held in ancient medicine that the body did not begin to decompose until the end of three days.” (Ari Rabinovitch, “Ancient text sheds light on Jewish-Christian links”, *Reuters*, 8 July 2008)

Refer also to the information in the footnote below.¹¹ One could delve into typology, symbolism, metaphor and such-like for a very long time on this topic. It is worthy of a PhD thesis.

For example, let us take a look at the generally accepted view that Noah’s ark is a type of Jesus. Did not the ark save Noah and his family from the Day of the Lord of that period?¹² Did not Noah obey God and have faith which moved God to preserve him during such a terrifying time? That ark rested on the 17th day of Nisan (Genesis 8:4) which is the same day – three days after the crucifixion – that Christ finished ‘resting’ in the tomb and was resurrected to save us from God’s wrath.

Rodney J. Decker (ThD) Views¹³

There are protestant ministers (such as Jerry Falwell – refer to **Appendix. Sunday, holy Sunday? Pastor resurrects Sabbath debate with \$1 million reward**) and academics who can see that there are many more problems with the Friday crucifixion view compared to the Wednesday view. One of them is Ronald Decker.

Decker highlights two main concerns:

The Timing of Women's Purchase and Spice Preparation: Mark 15:42–16:2 indicates that the women acquired spices after the Sabbath and then proceeded to the tomb. Luke 23:54–24:1 suggests they prepared spices prior to the Sabbath and then rested. These timelines seem contradictory if one assumes a single Sabbath and a literal timeline.

Decker assesses prevalent stances for a Friday crucifixion: One perspective suggests that the women bought/prepared spices on Saturday evening after the Sabbath (according to Mark), with Luke's narrative being non-chronological. Another theory proposes they prepared some spices on Friday afternoon before the Sabbath and then purchased additional ones afterward. Decker

¹¹ The *Babylonian Talmud* (*Sanhedrin* 90b-91a) describes the soul lingering near the body for three days, hoping to return to life, before returning to God to await resurrection. This is echoed in Tanhuma (Miqetz 4 and Pequdei 3), which notes the soul's protest against the body's death and its three-day proximity. *Genesis Rabbah* 100:7 and *Leviticus Rabbah* 18:1, midrashic texts, state that the soul hovers over the body for three (or sometimes seven) days, a period of confusion where it attempts to re-enter the body before departing. *The Jerusalem Talmud* (*Moed Katan* 3:5) teaches that for the first three days after death, the soul assumes it can reconnect to the body. *The Babylonian Talmud* (*Shabbat* 152b-153a) extends this, stating that the soul's ongoing contact with the disintegrating body for up to twelve months, but emphasises the critical three-day period for potential revival. For further information refer to Daniel Botkin, “The Third Day”, *Sabbath Sentinel*, May-June 2003, pp. 6-7.

¹² Have a read about this in various books and articles such as Iain Gordon, *Genesis Chapter 6-8 Bible Study: The Mystery of the 17th!* <https://jesusplusnothing.com/>

¹³ Dr Decker and I had several communications over time, but sadly he died in 2014.

finds these interpretations at odds and lacking cohesion, pointing out the inadequate time on Friday afternoon for burial arrangements (Joseph's request to Pilate, body preparation, etc.) before the Sabbath commenced at sunset. His proposed resolution is for a Wednesday Crucifixion which best reconciles the narratives.

He maintains that the crucifixion and burial fell on a Wednesday afternoon, while Thursday was a 'high Sabbath' (first day of Unleavened Bread, John 19:31). Women acquired and prepared spices on the Thursday afternoon/evening (after the high Sabbath, aligning with Mark). Friday was a regular day. Following this was the weekly Sabbath (the women rested, harmonising with Luke's preparation prior to this Sabbath). Then on Sunday morning the women visited the tomb, and the glorious resurrection was discovered. This delineates two 'Sabbaths' within the week: the Thursday festival Sabbath and the Saturday weekly Sabbath and thus resolves the 'Three Days and Three Nights' issue.

Further, Decker argues that the crucifixion on Friday results in only partial days and nights (for instance, a maximum of two nights), which does not correspond to a literal interpretation of "three nights." Decker observes that phrases such as "on the third day" utilise flexible Greek structures that align with the expression "after three days" (as stated in Mark). He emphasises the clear phrase "three days and three nights" without depending on ancient methods of inclusive counting. Thus, in his paper, Decker argues that the Wednesday crucifixion stands as the most plausible and exegetically sound choice between the two options that addresses both the timing of the spices and the three-day prophecy, avoiding the non-literal interpretations.

As he states:

“The usual explanation (i.e., as given by those holding a Friday view) is that any part of a day/night counts as a whole day (or night). But even if that were so, there are still only two nights?! And there are only very small parts of the first and third days (probably less than an hour each?).

A Wednesday crucifixion also resolves this problem. There are three days: Thurs., Fri., and Sat.; and three nights: Wed. night, Thurs. night, and Fri. night. The resurrection occurred sometime *after* 6 PM Sat., specifically, early Sun. morning.

No solution is without its problem on this matter. The problem for a Wednesday view is that the following passages seem to place the resurrection *on the third day* rather than *after* the third day. This is the reverse of the problem noted above, but it is a problem for *either* view as to how best to harmonize Matt 12:40; Mark 8:31; 9:31; and 10:34 with the following texts. It is interesting that all of the following passages have only a dative case expression (i.e., no preposition to make it more explicit) and may well have adequate flexibility to mean *after* three days (i.e., “in three days,” counting the intervening days from burial to resurrection: Thurs., Fri., Sat.). Mark’s statements, which use the more specific μετὰ + dative, seems the more explicit and clear in terms of chronology. I thus assume that it is better to understand the other accounts in light of Mark rather than vice versa. **The proposed Wednesday view seems to make such a reconciliation easier.”** (pp. 3-4) [emphasis mine]

Dr Decker is fair and balanced, having reviewed both points of view and come to the correct conclusion.

Other Supporters

Although the Wednesday crucifixion doctrine remains a minority view, there are books, articles, and papers that argue for or defend a Wednesday crucifixion (or seriously engage with it as plausible). Below are some of those writings:

- *The Mystery of the Last Supper: Reconstructing the Final Days of Jesus* (2011), by Colin J. Humphreys,
- *The Day Jesus the Christ Died* (1995) by Fred R. Coulter.
- *The Chronological Gospels: The Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ in Chronological Order* (2009), by Michael J. Rood.
- *The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ: A Chronological Sequence* (2023), by Michael Rickman.
- *Difficulties and Alleged Errors and Contradictions in the Bible* (1907), by Reuben. A. Torrey.
- *The Days of Darkness: The Crucifixion Was on Wednesday* (1998), by Roy A. Reinhold.
- *Jesus Christ Our Passover* (1980), by Victor P. Wierwille.
- *A Guide to the Gospels* (1948), W. Graham Scroggie.
- *Companion Bible. Appendix 156. "Six Days Before The Passover" (John 12:1)* by Ethelbert Bullinger.
- *Notes on the Chronology of the Passion Week* (2007), by Rodney J. Decker.
- *Chronology of the Crucifixion Week* by Wayne Carver.
- *Three Important Questions* by Max D. Younce.¹⁴

6. Does Yom (day) in the Hebrew always mean a 12 hour period?

Over the years I have collected both hard and soft copies of academic or technical papers and layperson's articles that discuss the usage of "day" (Hebrew "yom") in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. The papers argue for these points of view that the term refers to only 12 hours as an idiom; or sometimes 12 and other times 24 hours. Of course, I was interested in the arguments or demonstrations through analysis that it can refer to a full 24-hour period (i.e., from evening to evening, encompassing both day and night), rather than being limited solely to a 12-hour daylight period. These papers focus on general linguistic, calendrical, or ritual contexts and avoid (thankfully) discussions regarding the creation week as described in Genesis.

Another, associated word is *onah*, which refers to a time, period or season. It can even refer to a 12 hour or 24 hour period.

For instance, the *Ancient Hebrew Research Center* states:

"The Hebrew word יום (*yom*, Strong's #3117) means a "day," but not specifically a twenty-four hour period, but instead more generically like in "a day that something occurs." An example would be "a day of the month" (Genesis 8:4), "in that day Yahweh made a covenant" (Genesis 15:18) and "until the day" (Genesis 19:37). This word can also refer to the light part of the day in contrast to night (see Genesis 1:5 and Exodus 13:21), but the related word יומם (*yomam*, Strong's #3119) specifically means "daytime" as in Job 5:14. This word can be

¹⁴ Dr Younce's (Heritage Baptist Bible Church) paper is very well developed.

used for a time, age or season, but that is only when this word is in the plural form, which is יָמִים (*yamim*), and in my opinion should simply be translated as "days" and not time, age or season, as this can lead to incorrect interpretations of the text. The word הַיּוֹם (*hayom*) is the word יוֹם (*yom*) with the prefix הַ (*ha*) added and it literally means "the day," but we would translate it as "today." ("Day", Jeff Benner, <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/definition/day.htm>)

Meanings of "Yom" in Biblical Hebrew

The Hebrew term "yom" (יוֹם), which is typically translated as "day" in English, encompasses various meanings in Biblical Hebrew, contingent upon the context. Major scholarly lexicons, including the Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (entry for יוֹם pp. 398–401), indicate that "yom" can signify (dependent upon context):

- A duration of daylight (as opposed to night), approximately equivalent to 12 hours.
- A complete 24-hour duration characterised by evening and morning or from sunset to sunset.
- • A broader or more indefinite time frame, such as a lifetime, a season, or an era (for example, "in the days of" a king).
- Occasionally, it may refer to a year or a specific point in time.

Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions:

[BDB3494](#)

“יוֹם

1. day, time, year

a. day (as opposed to night)

b. day (24 hour period)

1. as defined by evening and morning in Genesis 1

2. as a division of time 1b

c. a working day, a day's journey

d. days, lifetime (pl.)

e. time, period (general)

f. year

g. temporal references

1. today

2. yesterday

3. tomorrow

Origin: from an unused root meaning to be hot

TWOT: 852

Parts of Speech: Noun Masculine.” [emphasis mine]

This semantic versatility (as linguists put it) is documented in lexicons such as *Brown-Driver-Briggs'* (entry for יוֹם spans several pages under the root) per the above, and the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (entry #672, pp. 370–372), which observe that *yom* originates from a root meaning "to be hot" (referring to the warm hours of daylight) but extends to full days or longer durations based on grammatical qualifiers. For example, when *yom* is used without qualifiers such as numbers or phrases like "evening and morning," it can indicate daylight (12 hours) or an ambiguous time frame. However, when accompanied by numbers (e.g., "first yom") or temporal boundaries, it generally specifies a 24-hour day.

Strong's Concordance (H3117):

“יום

yôm

yome

From an unused root meaning to *be hot*; a *day* (as the *warm* hours), **whether literally (from sunrise to sunset, or from one sunset to the next), or figuratively (a space of time defined by an associated term)**, (often used adverbially)

KJV Usage: age, + always, + chronicles, continually (-ance), daily, ([birth-], each, to) day, (now a, two) days (agone), + elder, X end, + evening, + (for) ever (-lasting, -more), X full, life, as (so) long as (. . . live), (even) now, + old, + outlived, + perpetually, presently, + remaineth, X required, season, X since, space, then, (process of) time, + as at other times, + in trouble, weather, (as) when, (a, the, within a) while (that), X whole (+ age), (full) year (-ly), + younger.” [emphasis mine]

Tyndale Brief Extended Strongs for Hebrew:

“יום

yom

H:N-M

day

1) day, time, year

1a) day (as opposed to night)

1b) **day (24 hour period)**

1b1) as defined by evening and morning in Genesis 1

1b2) as a division of time

1b2a) a working day, a day's journey

1c) days, lifetime (pl.)

1d) time, period (general)

1e) year

1f) temporal references

1f1) today

1f2) yesterday

1f3) tomorrow” [emphasis mine]

Refer also to *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words* at <https://studybible.info/vines/ot/Day>

Also, “Contradictions in Scripture: Time Reckoning Methods – Hebrew Time Versus Gentile Time”, Precepts. *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (18 July 2016) (author unknown) argues:

“First of all, a new Hebrew day began at sunset. Of course, we would say, “That is when night begins,” but I am talking about a day in the 24-hour day sense. We start our days at midnight, count 12 hours to midday, and then 12 hours again to midnight. When you think about it, there is nothing logical or sensible about this. It is just the way we do it. The Hebrews, on the other hand, started

their days in the evening at sunset. Then, they counted 12 hours of night, and after that 12 hours of day, for a full 24-hour day."

<https://precepts.wordpress.com/2016/07/18/contradictions-in-scripture-time-reckoning-methods-hebrew-time-versus-gentile-time/?referrer=grok.com>

Academic Articles on the Meaning of "Yom" as 12 or 24 Hours

Scholarly research indicates that the term "yom" can signify either 12 hours (daylight) or 24 hours, depending on the context. However, many studies concentrate on its application in Genesis 1, interpreting it as 24-hour days. Below are significant articles, mainly sourced from theological and Biblical studies or journals:

- Robert McCabe, "A Defense of Literal Days in the Creation Week", *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, Vol. 5, 2000, pp. 91–132. This article argues that the term *yom* in Genesis 1 must be understood as 24-hour days, supported by the use of ordinal numbers and the phrases "evening/morning," which limit its interpretation to literal solar days across more than 410 Biblical instances. While acknowledging that "yom" can refer to daylight (12 hours) in other contexts, it is deemed inappropriate in the structured narrative of Genesis 1.
- Andrew E. Steinmann, "A Note on the Refrain in Genesis 1: Evening, Morning, and Day as Chronological Summary", *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2016–2017, pp. 125–40. This article analyses "evening and morning" as a summary of a complete 24-hour day commencing at sundown. It notes that while *yom* can indicate daylight (12 hours) in isolation, the formula in Genesis 1 suggests a 24-hour period, consistent with Jewish calendrical traditions.
- Rick Wadholm Jr., *The Theological Meaning and Significance of Yom in Genesis One* (Master's Thesis). This work examines five interpretations of *yom*, which include daylight (12 hours) and complete days (24 hours). It highlights theological themes such as order and rest rather than adhering strictly to chronology, while also affirming contextual adaptability, suggesting that the "yom" in Genesis 1 represents defined periods (favouring 24 hours through the evening/morning structure). The thesis references ancient Near Eastern parallels and scholars such as Henri Blocher and Gordon Wenham.
- Vern S. Poythress, "Three Modern Myths in Interpreting Genesis 1", *Westminster Theological Journal*, Vol. 76, No. 2, Fall 2014, pp. 321–50. This article addresses the interpretation of "yom" as contextually flexible to either 12 or 24 hours, while critiquing long-age perspectives. In the context of Genesis 1, it advocates for the understanding of 24-hour days based on ordinal qualifiers and the analogy of the Sabbath, utilising lexical data from BDB.
- Jeremy D. Lyon, "Genesis 1:1-3 and the Literary Boundary of Day One", *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 62, No. 2, June 2019, pp. 269–89. This paper supports the interpretation of "yom" as representing 24 hours in Genesis 1, beginning from verse 1, with supporting evidence drawn from Exodus 20:11. It recognises broader interpretations such as daylight but emphasises that context restricts it to full days.

Greek "Hemera" as a 24-Hour Period Including Night

There are several scholarly discussions and quotes in academic papers, theological analyses, and Biblical studies that echo Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah's principle by stating that the Hebrew *yom* (day) and Greek *hemera* (day) can denote a full 24-hour period encompassing both daylight and night, rather than merely the 12-hour daylight portion.¹⁵ These often draw from Biblical,

¹⁵ In an e-mail response to John Lemley, Church of God (Seventh Day) elder and researcher, Rabbi Ari Enkin noted: "In the particular cases that you mention - I subscribe to the opinion that they literally fasted for 40 complete days and

linguistic, and rabbinic contexts, particularly in interpretations of Genesis 1, where "evening and morning" form a complete day starting from evening (as in Biblical and Jewish reckoning).

The Septuagint (LXX) translation of "yom" as "hemera" is consistent in Genesis, where it conveys a 24-hour day.

Note what Ethelbert Bullinger writes in his *Companion Bible*:

"The fact that 'three days' is used by Hebrew idiom for any part of three days and three nights is not disputed; because that was the common way of reckoning, just as it was when used of years. Three or any number of years was used inclusively of any part of those years was used inclusively of any part of those years, as may be seen in the reckoning of the reigns of any of the kings of Israel or Judah.

"But, when the number of 'nights' is stated as well as the number of 'days,' then the expression ceases to be an idiom, and becomes a literal statement of fact. "Moreover, as the Hebrew day began at sunset the day was reckoned from one sunset to another, the 'twelve hours in the day' (John 11:9) being reckoned from sunrise, and the twelve hours of the night from sunset. An evening-morning was thus used for a whole day of twenty-four hours, as in the first chapter of Genesis. Hence the expression 'a night and a day' in 2 Corinth 11:25 denotes a complete day (Gr. *nuchthemeron*)." (Appendix 144).

And in the margin of the *Companion Bible*, Bullinger states the following:

"Three days and three nights. The Hebrew idiom 'three days' can be used for parts of three days (and even of years): *but not when the word 'nights' is added.*"

This is verified with the plain reading of Genesis 1:5, 8, 13; John 11:9-10. Then there is I Peter 3:8 (ESV):

"But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Then there is the French archaeologist and historian, Roland de Vaux who similarly explains:

"When they wanted to indicate the whole length of a day of twenty-four hours, they said 'day and night' or some such Phrase" (*Ancient Israel-Its Life and institution*, p.181).

One final long quote to back up this position is from the eminent Anthony Alfieri:

"Commentators vigorously assert their opinion that 'three days and three nights' must only be understood as a figure of speech in both Hebrew and Greek with surprisingly few facts. The NIV Study Bible, in a note on Matt. 12:40, succinctly summarizes the entire argument: 'Including at least part of the first

nights, but that indeed, this was only possible by Divine intervention. Heck, if He can split the sea, then He can also ensure that these two righteous people didn't starve to death. Yours, Rabbi Ari Enkin. Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel" (11 March 2007).

day and part of the third day, a common Jewish reckoning of the time' (emphasis mine). That is all the proof that is given to the general reader, rarely will you see an alternative point of view discussed saying Matt. 12 could also be viewed as three full days. Neither will you learn details of the Jewish mourning process nor how three full days figure in that custom...The Hebrew explanation for Matt. 12 by Christian commentators seems to start in the 1600's with John Lightfoot. Since that time, a body of various and sundry secondary arguments has been developed to bolster this main interpretation...

"...John Lightfoot was a Cambridge scholar who wrote a commentary on the New Testament strictly from ancient Jewish texts. A Good Friday defender, he cited a rabbinical rule for gauging time in the Hebrew language to prove his case. It involved parts of a day, twelve hours or less, that the Jews call an 'onah.' According to the Rabbis both the full 24-hour day and any small fraction of a few hours or less, are sometimes called 'onah.' Under certain circumstances in Hebrew speech, the day or the fraction are spoken of in identical terms, as if they both were the same amount of time, when in fact they are not. The question becomes, when is it appropriate to use such plastic phrasing and was it the original Hebrew or Greek of 'three days and three nights'? If you read Lightfoot you will see just as with the moderns, he starts with the assumption Good Friday and 36 hours are true. - He then infers that 'three days and three nights' must be explained by making the first and third days only parts of a day. He never pursues the other side of the argument, discovering the intent or the original words in Jonah, based upon Jewish usage and culture.

"Lightfoot quotes four Rabbis to explain the word 'onah,' he quotes none to explain the words in Jonah. Each Rabbi has a slightly different opinion on how to apply the idea of 'onah' to real life. Some Rabbis taught a complete 'onah' was 12 hours long, being either day or night. The opinion that prevailed was 'an onah is a day and a night,' (a full 24 hours). The 'portion' idea was always present. Now notice something. The very definition of 'onah' states that the expression, 'a day and a night' means '24 hours;' when you see the words, think 24 hours. So by the same definition, when we see 'three days and three nights' shouldn't we think 72 hours? It would appear that part of the very definition of 'onah' PROVES Jesus meant 72 hours in Matt. 12:40. This is not something the commentators admit. Perhaps I am simply misguided? ...Confused?

"As we saw, the English-speaking scholars claim is that this is a routine, indiscriminate use of the Jewish language. The only problem is the literal words 'three days and three nights' cannot be treated in this fashion at all because they are the untouchable definition of 72 hours. You cannot take the full day definition of 'onah' and then modify it with the 'fractional day' definition of 'onah' to wind up with 'day and night' meaning part of a day. This is exactly what the English speaking commentators have done since John Lightfoot, in order to reconcile Good Friday with Matt. 12:40. They appeal to this argument even though Jonah literally says 'three days and three nights' and Jonah's language is very unusual Hebrew. **You will find some of the more recent commentaries admitting that Jonah 1:17 truly is a full three days (See Jack Season's book, Jonah for the Anchor Bible Series)..**

"In truth, Lightfoot and his heirs have concocted a broad brush misapplication of the 'onah' concept, forcing this rule onto a perfectly clear phrase that does not and cannot use it. As they strive to prove that Jonah and Matthew say 'three

days,' but actually mean 36 hours, they never seem to explain how an exact 72 hours is expressed in Hebrew or Greek; they do not reflect upon the full definition, as we just did. Everything in their discussions becomes implied 'fractions of three days,' nothing in the Hebrew of Jonah or Greek of Matthew describes a full day when we listen to their explanations. The Good Friday apologists say this ambiguity is there in Jonah and other Old Testament verses-, but it is not" (*Darkness at the Crucifixion*, pp. 156-158). [emphasis mine]

Various other proofs

Harold W. Hoehner explores various perspectives on the day of crucifixion and elaborates on how the Wednesday perspective interprets "three days and three nights" literally as 72 hours "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ" (Part IV: The Day of Christ's Crucifixion), *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 131, No. 523 (July–October). Although he ultimately supports the Friday view, the literal interpretation is presented as a plausible option based on the exact wording in Matthew 12:40.¹⁶

When considering the inclusive counting of days and treating a part of a day as a full day, the phrase 'x days and x nights' becomes mathematically unfeasible. For instance, if we commence at 3 p.m. on Friday, the duration of 3 days and 3 nights will last until 3 pm on Monday. Assuming that 'night' is defined as the period from 6 pm to 6 am, we can calculate as follows: Friday day accounts for 3 hours, Friday night for 12 hours, Saturday day for 12 hours, Saturday night for 12 hours, Sunday day for 12 hours, Sunday night for 12 hours, and Monday day for 9 hours. In total, 6 times 12 hours results in 3 days and 3 nights. On the other hand, if we use *inclusive* counting, the outcome is different. We begin at 3 p.m. and assume the night spans from 6 pm to 6 am: Friday from 3-6 pm accounts for 3 hours, equating to one day; Friday night for 12 hours counts as one night; Saturday day for 12 hours counts as one day; Saturday night for 12 hours counts as one night; and Sunday until 3 pm for 9 hours counts as one day. This leads to a total of 3 days: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, along with 2 nights in between: Friday and Saturday. It is thus impossible to have 3 days and 3 nights under inclusive counting. From my readings concerning the Hebrew way of thinking, the use of repetition is significant and literal.

Another important aspect is the symbolic significance of numbers. The number 40 represents a period of testing or trial, as seen in the 40 years in the wilderness and the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert. The number 7 signifies completeness, while the number 3 symbolises Divine power and intervention. In the Old Testament, divine intervention frequently occurs on the third day, as indicated in Exodus 19:11: "... and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people." (ESV) This is also supported by 2 Kings 20:5; Esther 5:1; Hosea 6:2; Matthew 16:21 and Luke 24:46.

It may be more than passing interest that there were:

- 3 resurrections performed in the Old Testament (I Kings 17:17-25; II Kings 4:32-37; 13:20-21);
- 3 by Christ (Luke 7:11-18; Mark 5:35; John 11); and
- 3 after Christ's death (Matthew 27:51-53; Acts 9; 20).

¹⁶ In a similar vein, Layton Talbert argues that the precision of "three days and three nights" is intentional and serves no purpose unless taken literally, advocating for a Thursday crucifixion to achieve precisely three days and nights in the tomb ("Three Days or Three Nights or Not?" BJU Seminary, 15 March 2018). David Cumming demonstrates that a literal interpretation of the phrase (i.e., 72 hours) feasibly supports a Wednesday crucifixion, giving consideration to the variations in ancient day measurement and Sabbath traditions ("Three Days and Three Nights: Reassessing Jesus's Entombment," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, No. 1 (2007)).

Bullinger in his *Number in Scripture* goes so far as to state that : “three is the number of resurrection” (p. 111) because Christ rose the 3rd day; he was perfected on the 3rd day, he was crucified at the 3rd hour; for 3 hours darkness shrouded the region at the time of His crucifixion; he raised 3 persons from the dead; and it was on the 3rd day that the earth was caused to rise up out of the waters in Genesis. All of these were complete periods, not part thereof.

Conclusions & Final Comments

A thorough analysis of the Scriptures, linguistic, technical and historical evidence advocates for a Wednesday crucifixion. This interpretation is consistent with Jesus' own prophecy found in Matthew 12:40.

A burial on Friday followed by a resurrection on Sunday results in merely two nights and one complete day, which does not meet the literal 72 hours suggested and contended for in this paper. Conversely, a death and burial on Wednesday afternoon just prior to sunset, followed by a resurrection just before sunset on Saturday, accurately accounts for three days and three nights: from Wednesday night to Thursday (night 1, day 1), from Thursday night to Friday (night 2, day 2), and from Friday night to Saturday (night 3, day 3). Evidence from Hebrew linguistics further supports this timeline: the expression "three days and three nights" corresponds to Jonah 1:17 in the Hebrew Bible, employing *shalosh yamim v'shalosh leilot* (שְׁלוֹשָׁה יָמִים וּשְׁלוֹשָׁה לַיְלוֹת) - apparently a specific, literal phrase that highlights complete periods of daylight (*yom*) and darkness (*laylah*), rather than merely inclusive counting as most believe.

Additionally, Daniel 9:27 prophesies that the Messiah would be "cut off... in the midst of the week" (chatzi hashavua), symbolically indicating mid-week (Wednesday) after 3½ years of ministry, which aligns with a literal Wednesday execution. This dual-fulfillment of "midst of the week" (both in terms of ministry duration and execution day) emphasises a Wednesday in the prophetic calendar.

Greek terminology in the New Testament offers further evidence. In John 19:31, the Sabbath that follows the crucifixion is referred to as a "high day" (*megalē hēmera*), which distinguishes it as the annual high Sabbath of the First Day of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15), rather than the weekly Sabbath. This indicates the presence of two Sabbaths that week: the high Sabbath on Thursday and the weekly Sabbath on Saturday. Matthew 28:1¹⁷ employs the plural *sabbatōn* ("Sabbaths"), implying multiple days of rest¹⁸, which permitted women to purchase spices on Friday (Mark 16:1) after the high Sabbath but prior to the weekly Sabbath (Luke 23:56). The term *deuteroprōtō*

¹⁷ Works which provide additional proofs are John Lemley's paper "Was Opse Matthew's Oops?" *Ministerial Forum*, April-May 2008, pp. 2-8 and Steve Kyner's "Three Days and Three Nights", *Ministerial Forum*, July-September 2022, pp. 6-9. Lemley's paper contends that the Greek term "opse" found in Matthew 28:1, which has been traditionally translated in older Bible versions as "in the end" or "late" on the Sabbath, accurately signifies that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary approached Jesus' sepulcher late on the Sabbath day itself, rather than "after" the Sabbath as interpreted in numerous modern translations since the early 20th century. Lemley substantiates this Biblical instances of "opse" and related expressions consistently denote the concluding hours of a day or evening occurrences, never morning. Other related and well developed articles by Lemley include: "High Day Sabbaths", *Ministerial Forum*, Winter, pp. 8-13; "Talking along the Road to Emmaus", *Ministerial Forum*, Spring-Summer, pp. 16-18; "Response to Matthew 28:1", *Ministerial Forum*, June-December, p. 23; *The Preparation of the Passover* (unpublished paper).

¹⁸ Refer to Graeme McChesney's papers *Matthew 28.1 How should this be translated; The 'third day' of Luke 24.21 and Does Epiphosko mean dawn?*

sabbatō in Luke 6:1 ("second-first Sabbath") refers to the second high day during the Passover season.

My understanding is that lunar calculations, verified against contemporary Hebrew calendar software and historical adjustments (for instance, tracing back from the 1931 Passover dates over 1,900 years, given 100 19-year Metonic cycles), establish that the full moon of Passover aligns Nisan 14 with Wednesday in AD 31, in contrast to Friday dates in AD 30 or 33.¹⁹ Early church writings such as the Didascalia Apostolorum (circa AD 200) clearly indicate that the Last Supper took place on Tuesday evening ("third day of the week at even") and the crucifixion occurred on Wednesday ("fourth of the week"), with days calculated from sunset to sunset. Epiphanius (AD 367-403) and other sources further affirm the significance of Wednesday, including fasting customs observed on Wednesday and Friday.

The expression "three days and three nights" found in Biblical texts, such as Matthew 12:40 which refers to Jesus' duration in the tomb, is frequently understood as an idiomatic phrase that permits the inclusive counting of partial days. Nevertheless, this interpretation is not universally applicable; scholarly investigations reveal that the phrase can also lend itself to a literal understanding of 72 hours, influenced by contextual elements such as day counting and Sabbath observance.

In the end, from my research, this Wednesday framework not only addresses alleged discrepancies in the Gospels but respects the literal language of Scripture in this prophecy, providing a coherent alternative to the traditional Friday view.

NB: I have further information on the subject, but they are in storage. I hope to find and use them some day.

¹⁹ From a technical standpoint, astronomical and calendrical evidence seems to corroborates that 14 Nisan occurred on Wednesday, 25 April, AD 31, during the governorship of Pontius Pilate (AD 26-36).

Appendix. Arguments for a Thursday Crucifixion

The Thursday crucifixion view seeks to address perceived inconsistencies in the traditional timeline by proposing a literal fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 12:40 about being in the "heart of the earth" for three days and three nights. In this model, the Last Supper occurs Wednesday evening (start of Nisan 14), Jesus is arrested that night, crucified Thursday morning around 9 a.m., dies at 3 p.m., and is buried before sunset Thursday. The tomb remains sealed through three full nights (Thursday, Friday, Saturday) and three days (Friday, Saturday, partial Sunday), with resurrection before dawn Sunday. Advocates point to John 19:31's "high day" Sabbath as the Passover Sabbath starting Thursday evening (Nisan 15, a special Sabbath not necessarily Saturday), followed by the weekly Sabbath on Saturday, explaining the plural "Sabbaths" in Matthew 28:1 (Greek *sabbatōn*) and why the women delayed visiting the tomb until Sunday. This allows for two consecutive rest days prohibiting activity. The view often ties to Nisan 10 as Sunday (triumphal entry and lamb selection), making Thursday Nisan 14 for sacrifices, symbolically aligning Jesus' death with the lambs. It resolves the "Silent Wednesday" gap in Gospels by shifting events earlier.

Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), for example, use astronomical data for AD 30 or 33, *Book of Mormon* references to signs on the "fourth day of the first month" (3 Nephi 8:5), and argue it avoids inclusive counting "tricks" for a more straightforward literalism. Critics argue it unnecessarily complicates the Synoptics' (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke) alignment of the Last Supper with Passover.

Scholarly books and articles that advocate for a Thursday crucifixion, typically positing the Last Supper on Wednesday evening, crucifixion on Thursday (Nisan 14), burial Thursday afternoon, and resurrection early Sunday. This view aims to provide a literal three days and three nights in the tomb to fulfill Matthew 12:40.

- "A New Look at Jesus' Last Week" by William F. Dankenbring, *Prophetic Ministries website*, (c. 2000).
- *The Mystery of the Last Supper* (2011) by Colin Humphreys – using astronomical and calendar data to argue for a Thursday crucifixion.
- "Three Days and Three Nights: Reassessing Jesus's Entombment," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 16, No. 1 (2007) by David B. Cumming – supporting Thursday to achieve exact three nights in the tomb while integrating Nephite records.
- "Good Thursday?" *Sword*, Sept/Oct, Vol. 13, No. 5 (2021), pp. 16-19 by David Serle.
- "The Case for a Thursday Crucifixion", askelm.com, by Ernest Martin (2001).
- "Dating the Death of Jesus Christ," *BYU Studies* 54, No. 4 (2015) by Jeffrey R. Chadwick – advocating Thursday based on *Book of Mormon* chronology, lunar data, and Gospel harmonization for AD 30.
- "The Case for a Thursday Crucifixion" (online article) by Jeremy Myers – emphasizing two consecutive Sabbaths (Passover and weekly) and a timeline starting burial Thursday to fit three full nights.
- *When Was Jesus Crucified? Evidence Pointing to 31 AD*, *Renewal Journal* (article) by Kevin L. Woodridge (2020).
- *Three Days and Three Nights: – that changed the world* by Peter Sammons & David Serle (2018),

- "Jesus Was Crucified on a Thursday", Wisdom International website (2024) by Stephen Davey – argues for Thursday using Passover symbolism, plural "Sabbaths" in Matthew 28:1, and literal fulfillment of Matthew 12:40.²⁰

²⁰ If I recall correctly, *The Armstrong Error* by Charles F. DeLoach (1971) has a section attempting to prove a Thursday crucifixion. I read the book around 1973.

Appendix. Chronology of the Crucifixion and Resurrection According to Ancient Texts

By Blaine Newmann

[This article can be found online at
www.friendsofsabbath.org/G&S/www.giveshare.org/HolyDay/wednesdaycrucifixion.html]

In the Christian world today, the predominant view concerning the chronology of Christ's last days, is that He celebrated the Last Supper on Thursday evening, was arrested that same night, crucified on Friday, and rose on Sunday morning. In the early Church, however, one finds evidence of a widespread view that Christ held His Last Supper on Tuesday evening. There is also evidence, to a certain extent, that there were early Christians who believed in a midweek crucifixion and a Saturday (Sabbath) resurrection.

To support the theory of a Tuesday night Last Supper tradition, the earliest source where I have found evidence is the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, a church order which is supposed to have been composed circa A.D. 200. [this was in northern Syria, near Asia Minor -ed] It states, "For while He was yet with us before He suffered as we were eating the Passover with Him, He said to us, 'Today, in this night, one of you will betray Me' . . . And Judas came with the scribes and with the priests of the people and betrayed our Lord Jesus. And so in the night when the fourth day of the week drew on, betrayed our Lord to them. But they made payment to Judas. . . on the second day of the week . . . For when we had eaten the Passover on the third day of the week at even, we went forth to the Mount of Olives, and in the night they seized our Lord Jesus."1

By the end of the third century a fast was celebrated on Wednesday (until 3:00 p.m.) to commemorate Christ's arrest. Victorinus, Bishop of Petau (martyred in A.D. 304) explains, "Now is manifested the reason of the truth why the fourth day is called the Tetras, why we fast even to the ninth hour . . . The man Christ . . . was taken prisoner by wicked hands, by a quarternion, on account of the majesty of His works . . . therefore, we make a station or a supernumerary fast."2

Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis (367-403 A.D.) [he was based in Cyprus and influential in the eastern Church - ed], says, "Wednesday and Friday are days of fasting up to the ninth hour because, as Wednesday began the Lord was arrested and on Friday he was crucified."3

Even though at this time Friday was believed to be the day of the crucifixion, Wednesday was still known as the day of Christ's arrest. The early Pseudepigraphal Book of Adam and Eve (composed approximately A.D. 400) states the same. It says, "Then the Word of God said to Adam: 'Adam, you have determined in advance the days when sufferings will come upon me when I shall have become flesh; for those days are Wednesday and Friday'."4 (The literal reading is actually the "fourth" instead of "Wednesday" and "the preparation" in place of "Friday.")

Another pseudepigraphal work called *The Narrative of Joseph* (originally believed to have been composed in the fourth century, but which copy we have only from the twelfth century) states, "Jesus also was taken on the third day before the Passover, in the evening. And on the following day, the fourth day of the week, they brought Him at the ninth hour into the hall of Caiaphas."5

In most modern liturgical churches today, the reason for the Wednesday fast is largely forgotten, however, the Wednesday fast is very much alive **in Eastern Orthodox Churches**. [emphasis

mine – ed] Even today in the Coptic Church [ie Egyptian Christian Church - ed] the reason for fasting on Wednesday echoes the exact reason why the primitive Christian church fasted on Wednesday. The *Coptic Encyclopedia* states, "The Coptic Church ordains that Wednesday and Friday be observed as fast days, the former being the day on which Jesus Christ was condemned to be crucified, and the latter being the day on which his crucifixion took place."⁶

Though the above quoted references show that a Friday crucifixion was endorsed alongside a Tuesday last supper belief, in the Acts of Pilate (a pseudepigraphal work originally composed in the fourth century) a midweek crucifixion seems to be indicated. According to the Acts of Pilate, Karinus and Leucius, two saints who were supposedly resurrected at the time of Christ's resurrection, were reported to have been told by Christ to stay at Jerusalem for three more days to complete the observation of Passover.⁷

One Greek version says, "Thereafter we went unto Jerusalem also and accomplished the Passover." One Latin version states, "For three days only were allowed unto us who rose from the dead, to keep the Passover of the Lord in Jerusalem with our kindred (parents) that are living for a testimony of the resurrection of Christ the Lord. And after three days, when we had kept the Passover of the Lord, all they were caught up in the clouds which had risen with us and were taken over Jordan and were no more seen of any man."⁸

Since Christ was killed on the preparation day of the Passover, seven days of unleavened bread followed and then the Passover festival was completed. The statement that only three days were left to accomplish the Passover after Christ's resurrection would indicate that Christ spent a full three days and three nights in the grave, and not only parts of three days. Thus the Acts of Pilate seem to promote a midweek crucifixion.

If one assumes the Last Supper took place on a Tuesday evening and Christ was crucified on a Wednesday, then Thursday would have to be a Sabbath day, since the scriptures state that Christ was crucified on the preparation day before the Sabbath.

Luke 23:54 says, "And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on." John 19:31 says, "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."

Rabbi Samuel Lacks states, "The day of preparation (Greek paraskeue) equals Friday or the day before a holiday."⁹ Since the day of preparation can mean a day before any holy day, the preparation day Christ was crucified on could well have been on a Wednesday and the Passover Sabbath on a weekday (i.e., Thursday). With this scenario, the Passover meal would have been on a Tuesday. According to Leviticus 23:5-8 the fourteenth of the first month is the day of the Passover meal and the day following, the fifteenth, is a Passover Sabbath. It reads, "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord. Seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein." Therefore the Passover Sabbath could be on a weekday.

Christ died on the preparation day at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) and was buried before sunset. If that day were a Wednesday, then three full days and three full nights later would be Saturday at 3:00 p.m., or just before sunset.

According to this chronology, Christ would have to be resurrected on Saturday after 3:00 p.m., yet before sunset. He would have been resurrected on the Sabbath day. This is evidently what some early Christians believed. In the early Christian church there were many who believed that the resurrection of Christ took place on the Sabbath, which is Saturday, the seventh day of the week. By the fifth century A.D., Easter Sunday celebrations of Christ's resurrection were widespread in Christianity. However, the Church historian Socrates (ca. 440 A.D.) in a section of his history entitled, "Differences of usage in regard to Easter," reveals that in the East there were Christians who celebrated Easter on Sabbath instead of Sunday. He stated, "Others in the East kept that feast on the Sabbath indeed."¹⁰

Bishop Gregory of Tours (A.D. 538-594) tells us that many in France believed Christ arose on the seventh day of the week, even though he himself defended a Sunday resurrection belief. He stated, "Now in our belief the resurrection of the Lord was on the first day, and not on the seventh as many deem."¹¹

Alexander Ross (A.D. 1590-1654) tells us the Armenians [near to Asia Minor – ed] believed in a Saturday resurrection, though he disagrees with them. He stated, "The Armenii taught . . . that Christ rose from the dead on the Sabbath day, whereas the Scripture tells us plainly that He arose on the third day."¹²

Though the belief that Christ rose on the Sabbath has appeared to be long forgotten and abandoned by most Christians today, vestiges of this belief appear to have survived in an indirect way through certain ceremonies in the **eastern church**. For example, in the Coptic Church, on Holy Saturday "following the ninth hour (i.e., 3:00 p.m.), the Divine Liturgy is celebrated."¹³ As early as 400 A.D., both Socrates and Sozomen state that in Egypt there was a Sabbath evening celebration of the communion.¹⁴ In the Nestorian Church in India the communion (Qurbana) is still celebrated to this day at sunset on Holy Saturday in honor of Christ's resurrection. Mar Aprem says, "On Holy Saturday it is stated that Qurbana should be at sunset. Because it is believed that Jesus rose from the tomb at that time."¹⁵

Since Christ died at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.) on the day of preparation, and if this day was a Wednesday, then a full three days and three nights later would bring one to 3:00 p.m., Saturday. Since Christ was buried before sunset, then Christ would have been raised before sunset. The time of Christ's Saturday resurrection would have been between 3:00 p.m. and sunset — no later.

Footnotes

1. *Didascalia Apostolarum*, (translated by R. High Connolly), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929, p. 181.
2. *The Writing of Quintus Sept. Flor. Tertullianus with the extant works of Victorinus and Commodianus*, vol. 3, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895, pp. 388, 389.
3. Annie Jaubert, *The Date of the Last Supper*, N.Y., Alba House, 1965, p. 77.
4. *Supra*. n. 3. p. 79.
5. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 8, Michigan. Wm. B. Eerdmans. 1956, p. 468.
6. *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, N.Y.: MacMillian Publishing Company, 1991, p. 1096.
7. Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1960, pp. 142, 143.
8. *Ibid*.

Was Christ 36 or 72 Hours in the Tomb?

9. Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary of the New Testament*, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, Inc. 1987, p. 437.
10. *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1952, p. 131.
11. Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, Vol. 2, (trans. by D.M. Dalton), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927, p. 24.
12. Alexander Ross, *Pansebeia: or A View of All the Religions of the World*, London, John Saywell, 1658, p. 219.
13. *Supra*, n. 6, p. 1252.
14. *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, (ed. Kenneth A. Strand), Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982, p. 171.
15. Mar Aprem, *Sacraments of the Church of the East*, India: Mar Narsai Press, 1978, p. 112.

[written by Blaine Newmann, Box 5294, Devon, Alberta, T9G 1Y1, CANADA. Published in *Giving & Sharing* newsletter, June 1998, No. 47, pages 14-16]

Appendix. E-mail from Dr. Michael Germano, Ed.D (2014)

Hello Craig.

This document is a classic example of isogesis [alternative spelling for eisegesis]. It is an argument for a particular interpretation of the Bible and not an objective approach. It is not good research. He repeats the worn out favorite, deceptive arguments of Protestant Sunday/Easter advocates and leaves out significant biblical and historical material that is inconvenient to his rationale. He cherry-picks various authors as authorities to make his points. This paper is so poorly researched and written it would not receive a passing grade in any of my courses. There are dozens of false or unproven assumptions in his material.

Using the opinions of various writers is not evidence it is only their opinion not necessarily clear and convincing fact. For example, he uses the concept of an *onah* to justify so-called Jewish inclusive reckoning. One cannot squeeze, even using Jewish inclusive reckoning, three days into a Friday and Saturday. Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, tenth in the descent from Ezra, said that "A day and a night are an *Onah* ['a portion of time'] and the portion of an *Onah* is as the whole of it" [Jerusalem Talmud, *Shabbath* 9.3 and Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 4a]. The rabbi's straightforward statement conveys to his readers that part of a day can count as a full day. So, in Hebrew when the word day appears by itself it can be a full day or a partial day reckoned as a full day. The expression "seven days" in this context is indefinite in the sense that it can mean either seven full days or part of two days and five full days. This necessitates, however, biblical writers to use additional language to refer specifically to a full 24-hour day and thereby remove any indefiniteness. Unfortunately, today's Christian writers frequently overlook, ignore or twist this important detail.

The rule is unmistakable, whenever the expression "day and night" or "night and day" appear together in the Hebrew Scriptures the period is never less than a full twenty-four hour day. As rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah said "A day and a night are an *Onah*" meaning a full twenty-four hour day. This Hebrew idiom, appearing throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, never meant anything less than a full day.

When Matthew, who wrote to a first-century Judea-Christian readership, stated that Jesus "fasted forty days and forty nights" (Matthew 4:2) he followed this practice thereby making it apparent to his early first-century Hebrew readers that he did not mean simply forty days (which could have included two partial days) but forty full or complete days. There exists no plausible evidence that Jesus fasted less than forty full "days and nights," nor that he remained in the Tomb less than three full "days and nights," nor that Thursday or Friday could have been the day of Jesus' execution.?

Some Scriptures tell of Jesus' resurrection "after three days" which implies the totality of the "three days and three nights" or a full 72 hours (Mark 8:31; 9:31 KJ; 10:34 KJ; Matthew 27:63). Other verses say "three days" which summarizes the "three days and three nights" or a full 72 hours (Matthew 26:60, 61; 27:39, 40; Mark 14:58; 15:29, 30; John 2: 19, 20). Still others speak of him rising on "the third day" in reference Thursday, Friday, Saturday (Sabbath). Saturday was the third day and the resurrection occurred late Saturday, Sabbath, just before sunset (Matthew 16:21; 7:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:6, 7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; 1 Corinthians 16:4). So in context he

arose on the third day, in three days, after three days, and after "three days and three nights." Unless we believe the Bible contains errors, we know that all such passages must harmonize. Therefore, in context, "after three days" must be read consistent with "the third day" (Matthew 16:21).

I appreciate your sending me this material. I am working on the chapter of *The First Christians* book tentatively entitled The Death and Resurrection of the Messiah. The "material" gives me more arguments to write about. I do not know of a single source that dispels these old arguments. I can't take the time away from the needs at Living University right now to unravel pages of convoluted thinking. I just spent three full days sorting someone's misguided ideas about the dates of sabbatical years and jubilees. I plan to use that material in my book as well.

Warm regards,
MPG²¹
[23 June 2014]

²¹ Dr. Michael Germano (1937–2025) earned a Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies from Ambassador College in 1961, a Master of Science from the University of Southern California in 1966, a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership and Administration from the University of Southern California in 1968, and a Juris Doctor (J.D., Doctor of Law) from the University of La Verne in 1980. Ordained as a minister in 1983, he served as Academic Dean of Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Texas, from 1987 to 1996, later becoming President of Living University, the Living Church of God's online educational institution and also held the position of Vice President of Academic Services at Haywood Community College.

Appendix. Sunday, holy Sunday? Pastor resurrects Sabbath debate with \$1 million reward

Posted: October 13, 2001

By Joe Kovacs, WorldNetDaily.com

One of the longest running disputes in the history of Christianity Saturday vs. Sunday is having new life breathed into it with a cash reward of up to \$1 million toward a resolution.

A. Jan Marcussen, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in Illinois, is starting with \$50,000 of his own money if someone can produce "a verse from the Holy Bible showing that God commands us to keep holy the first day of the week" Sunday "instead of the seventh day" Saturday is commanded in the Bible."

He says the reward will increase in \$25,000 increments each week for 40 consecutive weeks if no one sends him such a verse, with a final cap at \$1 million.

"The \$50,000 offer is to wake people up out of a stupor," Marcussen tells WorldNetDaily. "People wake up when there's money involved."

A. Jan Marcussen (right), and wife Vennita

Marcussen, who says he has the money ready to pay if someone is successful, is making the offer to encourage people to read the Bible for themselves, instead of accepting without question what religious leaders have been instructing.

"Millions of people believe and have confidence in their clergy that what they're being taught is true," says Marcussen. "They'll find out that the clergy is not teaching from the Bible."

Marcussen, 52, is not only a preacher in his local church, he's also a physical therapist, nutritionist, marriage counselor and author of six books. One of those works, "National Sunday Law," focuses on the Saturday-vs.-Sunday debate. Marcussen is asking people to read that book before applying for the reward. (It can be read for free online.)

As a college student in the 1970s, Marcussen made a similar, albeit smaller, challenge. He posted an ad in a local newspaper starting with a \$500 reward and ending up at \$1,000. "Certain preachers really got excited," he says. "But the only thing they couldn't do was produce a Bible verse [as proof]."

Experts on biblical scripture tell WorldNetDaily that Marcussen has little need to worry about paying out the money.

"I am afraid that you are not going to find an exact Bible verse to counter the good pastor's challenge and collect," says James Efird, professor of biblical interpretation at Duke University Divinity School in Durham, N.C. "As far as I know, there is no verse which specifies that Sunday is the day for Christians to observe the Sabbath."

Indeed, neither the words Saturday nor Sunday appear anywhere in most translations of the Bible. Days of the week are referred to by number, starting in the first chapter of Genesis in the account of creation. It was after the work of creating that God made special note of one day of the week: "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Genesis 2:3).

In the Ten Commandments, the seventh day was made the focus of the fourth mandate: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy ... thou shalt not do any work ... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11).

The word sabbath comes from the Hebrew root word "shabbat," meaning to rest, cease or desist. Scholars say the word in Bible scripture not only refers to the weekly day of rest, but also the annual festivals of God such as Passover and Day of Atonement. It additionally refers to a sabbatical year, and it's the term denoting one week. The phrase "first day of the week" occurs eight times in the King James translation of the New Testament, mostly dealing with the circumstances of Jesus' resurrection.

In the lexicon of modern society, the debate over which day is holy that is, set apart to God goes unresolved by the editors of Webster's New World College Dictionary. While the first definition of sabbath calls it "the seventh day of the week (Saturday), set aside for rest and worship and observed as such by Jews (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) and some Christian denominations," its second meaning defines it as "Sunday as the usual Christian day of rest and worship."

"There's a fear factor among preachers," says Marcussen, on why churches don't have their members look into this issue. "They're afraid their sheep will start reading the Bible, and they know they'll lose their sheep."

One expert who has spent his career researching and explaining the Sabbath debate is Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, a retired theology professor at Andrews University in Michigan. He tells WorldNetDaily two factors are responsible for the shift from one day to another: "Anti-Judaism caused the abandonment of the Sabbath, and pagan sun worship influenced the adoption of Sunday."

Bacchiocchi says the Church of Rome, which grew into the Roman Catholic Church, had great influence in promoting Sunday observance.

"The Church of the capital of the empire, whose authority was already felt far and wide in the second century, appears to be the most likely birth-place of Sunday observance," he writes in his book, "From Sabbath to Sunday: A historical investigation of the rise of Sunday observance in early Christianity."

In May 1998, Pope John Paul II issued an apostolic letter on the subject, entitled *Dies Domini* (The Lord's Day). In it, the pontiff refers to the origins of Sunday-keeping.

"In the weekly reckoning of time, Sunday recalls the day of Christ's Resurrection," writes the pope. "It is Easter which returns week by week, celebrating Christ's victory over sin and death, the fulfillment in him of the first creation and the dawn of 'the new creation.'"

The pontiff goes on to state that though Sunday has become a time for cultural, political and sporting events, it has a significance that shouldn't be ignored.

"Unfortunately, when Sunday loses its fundamental meaning and becomes merely part of a 'weekend,' it can happen that people stay locked within a horizon so limited that they can no longer see 'the heavens.'"

Though Protestant churches have some significant differences with Catholicism, one thing often agreed on today is Sunday observance.

"The church always met on Sunday throughout the New Testament," says Rev. Jerry Falwell, chancellor of Liberty University in Virginia. "Saturday is clearly the Sabbath as is recorded many times in the Old Testament. In Christian Church tradition, Sunday became 'the Lord's Day' when Jesus rose from the grave."

The actual times of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are not universally agreed on either.

"I personally believe he was crucified on Wednesday evening ... and rose after 6 p.m. Saturday evening," Falwell tells WorldNetDaily. "Others believe he died on Friday ... But the point is, he did rise on Sunday, which, in Jewish tradition, started the evening before at 6 p.m."

Falwell is among those who believe which day is chosen is not of great significance.

"I don't think Saturday or Sunday are more sacred than other days," he says.

He also points out there have been so many calendar changes over the years, chronologists are not even certain that a day of the week in the 21st century matches the same day from centuries ago.

Most scholars agree that biblical references to "the sabbath day" denote the seventh day of the week. But in the years to come after Jesus rose, the first day of the week came into competition with Saturday, and at times both days were being observed side by side. The ostensible church was divided on the issue, choosing different days to regard as holy.

"It may be that Sunday was originally one of the [pagan] Roman festival days," explains Professor Ebird at Duke, "but so were several others that the church adopted in its evolution, [for example:] Christmas."

Marcussen condemns the change in day of observance.

"It's the greatest hoax of all time, foisted upon the world for hundreds and hundreds of years," he says. His zeal on the matter reflects his belief that citizens of the United States and other countries will be forced to choose sides on the issue in the so-called "end time" mentioned in Scripture.

"Sunday worship is the mark of the Papacy's authority," Marcussen writes in his book. "Sunday worship is the 'mark of the beast!'" Yet he insists he is not attacking anyone's faith, but rather

trying to lead people to the Bible, Jesus, and eventually heaven.

"I love all these ministers who teach falsehoods," Marcussen says. "Many are honest they're not all crooks they believe Sunday is God's day ... this offer will help them find the truth."

Marcussen expects his challenge to be eye-opening for many who never thought about the issue, and he thinks it will spark serious global attention. "The impact of this is going to be like an atomic bomb, it will mushroom all over the world."

[emphasis mine]

Appendix. The Third Day: Resurrection Patterns In the Hebrew Bible

“If a man dies, will he live again?” (Job 14:14)

“The righteous has a refuge when he dies.” (Proverbs 14:32b)

by Paul Sumner

hebrew-streams.org

IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15, Paul makes a perplexing statement about Yeshua: "He was buried and raised on the third day [te hemera te trite] according to the Scriptures" (v. 4).

It's perplexing because there is no explicit prediction in the Hebrew Bible about the Messiah dying and rising on the third day. Where did Paul get the idea? Did he have a different version of the Tanakh than we have? Did he make it up from his own imagination in order to deceive people ignorant of the Bible?

Paul is actually alluding to comments made by Yeshua.

Then [Yeshua] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day [te trite hemera]" (Luke 24:46).

Yeshua repeatedly predicted he would die and lie in the earth for three days and three nights before being raised up by God (Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 17:23). [See the NT list of passages describing [Who Raised Yeshua](#).]

This passage then is the source of Paul's statement. But it doesn't solve the puzzle. Where is it *written* in Scripture about the Messiah rising on the third day?

To Open What is Written

Since no passage *literally* contains this idea, we must look for other ways in which the prophecy may be "written."

Note that Yeshua "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." He didn't merely quote chapter and verse proof-texts. He expanded their understanding of biblical truths in ways previously closed. He was interpreting the Bible to them.

That's what we must do as well. But since we don't have records of what he specifically taught his disciples on this subject, we have to proceed carefully. Our interpretations must remain proposals, nothing more. We can't be dogmatic about our puzzle solutions.

I propose a partial solution based on three observations.

The first is the pattern of events that occur on "the third day" in the Hebrew Bible. The second is the biblical declaration that Israel as a people is God's son (Exod 4:22; Deut 14:1). And the third is that Yeshua identified himself with Israel. What is said about the nation can be applied to him.

Third Day Events

In the following passages, notice what occurs on Yom Shlishi, the Third Day.

1) **On the third day** — "the earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit." (Genesis 1:12)

2) **On the third day** — "Abraham looked up and saw the place [Mount Moriah] from afar." There he intends to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering to God. Yet he assures his companions, "We will worship *and return*." (Genesis 22:4-5)

3) **On the third day** — Pharaoh releases his chief cupbearer from death-row. (Genesis 40:20-21)

- 4) **On the third day** — Joseph releases his brothers from prison in Egypt. (Genesis 42:17-18)
- 5) **On the third day** — The Israelites request Pharaoh's permission to make a three-day journey to offer sacrifice in the desert to God. (Exodus 3:18)
- 6) **On the third day** — Plague Nine, the Plague of Darkness, in Egypt ends, "though the Israelites enjoyed light in their dwellings." (Exodus 10:22)
- 7) **On the third day** — God descends to Mount Sinai in fire with the sound of a shofar. He then reveals The Ten Words, Israel's constitution of new life as a nation after their resurrection from the death of slavery in Egypt. (Exodus 19:16-19)
- 8) **On the third day** — Israelites are to purify themselves with water after being in contact with the dead. (Numbers 19:12)
- 9) **On the third day** — After coming to the river and preparing themselves, the Israelites cross the Jordan "to enter and possess the land that the LORD [their] God is giving to [them] as a possession." (Joshua 1:11; 3:2)
- 10) **On the third day** — Joshua's spies emerge from hiding from the Jerichoites, then return to their commander. (Joshua 2:16, 22)
- 11) **On the third day** — a famine during David's reign ends. (2 Samuel 21:1). [Often years parallel days; 40 years=40 days in wilderness.]
- 12) **On the third day** — a famine called for by Elijah the prophet ends. (1 Kings 18:1)
- 13) **On the third day** — after asking God for release, King Hezekiah is healed of his fatal disease and offers thanks in the temple. (2 Kings 20:5)
- 14) **On the third day** — Jonah is expelled from the fish belly. (Jonah 1:17/2:1 Heb) (Matt 12:40; cf. Matt 16:21; 17:23)
- 15) **On the third day** — After fasting, Esther puts on royal apparel and enters the palace of the Persian king in order to thwart a death-plot against her people, the Jews. (Esther 4:16; 5:1)

Summary of Third Day Patterns

In this patterns we see the following:

The two days leading up to the third day are a time of

- concealment, seclusion, "burial" (#3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 14)
- preparation to serve or meet God (1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 15)
- testing, discerning, approaching a verdict: death or acquittal (3, 4, 6, 11, 12, 14, 15)

The third day is one of

- emergence from circumstances of lifelessness (prison, captivity, famine, illness, or ocean fish)
- testing situations when a life is put on the line but obedience wins unexpected reversal and deliverance
- appearance of new life after concealment or death
- sprouting life from the new earth
- revival, healing, or entry into life

Thus the third day is a transition moment of release from realms of death or emergence of new life.

God Kills His Son, Then Raises Him

There is a third day passage that can be more directly connected to Yeshua. In the Hebrew Scriptures, Israel is God's son.

Exodus 4:22 — "Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is my son, my first-born.'"

Deuteronomy 14:1 — "You are the sons of the LORD your God."

But over time, family presumption takes over. "Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have revolted against me" (Isaiah 1:2).

The prophet Hosea likewise reminds the nation of their familial identity. Speaking with God's voice, he says: "When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" (11:1). This reminder amplifies the pathos of the divine decision: Israel was born a son by emerging from Egypt. Now Israel, the son of God, must die.

This will occur because of his unrelenting rebellion against his Father. In blood-freezing detail, God promises ultimate chastisement of his children:

I will be like a lion to Ephraim,
And like a young lion to the house of Judah.
I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away . . .
I will go away and return to my place
Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face.

(Hosea 13:7-8; 5:14-15)

Such a prophecy shocks us. What could be more horrifying than death at the hands of one's parent? Fatal prophecies however often contain hope. For not even death at the terrible hands of his Father can utterly separate Israel from God.

Hosea consoles:

Come, let us return to the LORD.
For he has torn us, but he will heal us;
He has wounded us, but he will bandage us.
He will revive us after two days;

He will raise us up on the third day

That we may live before him. . . .
He will come to us like the rain,
Like the spring rain watering the [dead] earth.
(Hosea 6:1-3)

Jewish translators of the Hebrew Bible into the Aramaic *targums*, saw in Hosea 6:2 an allusion to future resurrection: "He will give us life in the days of consolations that will come. **On the day of resurrection of the dead he will raise us up and we shall live before him**" (Targum of the Minor Prophets). [[Note 1](#)]

In another passage, God explicitly promises deliverance for Son-Israel.

I will ransom them from the power of Sheol;
I will redeem them **from death** [*mimavet*].
O Death, where are your thorns?
O Sheol, where is your sting? (Hosea 13:14)

After his son's death, the Father will raise him from the grave (the place of separation) on the third day. God's new life will be like spring rain.

Messiah is Israel Too

In the ideology of the Tanakh, the Mashiach dwells within the defining circle of the name "Israel" [compare Isaiah 44:1-2 with 49:5-7]. There is a larger Israel and an inner Israel. Mashiach is inner Israel; he too is God's son.

As a family member, he experiences their sorrow, though not for his own sins. He suffers the chastisement due everyone else. "He was wounded because of our sins, crushed because of our iniquities . . . the LORD visited upon him the guilt of all of us" (Isaiah 53:5-6). This doesn't happen by accident: "the LORD was *pleased* to crush him" (v. 10).

So severe is the crushing that he dies: "He was cut off from the land of the living" (v. 8).

But even if he perishes (like his people) — being torn and crushed and murdered by the lion-God — he also basks in the life-warmth of the other, ultimate promises of God: "He will raise [me] up on the third day . . . He will ransom [me] from death" — like his people.

Repeatedly, Yeshua foretold he was destined for suffering and death. Like the prophets of old, he would be rejected by the religious and political heads of Israel. Donning the mantle of the Servant of the LORD, he would become "the Despised One [*bazoh nefesh*], the One Abhorred [*meta'ev*] by the nation" (Isaiah 49:7).

But he knew there was more beyond the rejection and killing. He knew the entire Scripture. He knew the third day was coming.

Where is it Written?

The scriptures about revival events on the Third Day and those about Son-Israel's revival on the third day all form a pattern.

God orchestrates dramatic things after two days. When the powers of *tohu vavohu*, chaos and void, darkness and death, seem indomitable, he disrupts them and establishes order. When all seems hopeless, he is the hope giver. The first two days don't tell the whole story. On the third, he writes the conclusion.

Is this **third day pattern** part of what Yeshua meant when he said "Thus it is written"? Is this what he opened the minds of his disciples to see? Perhaps.

We learn from careful study elsewhere that the spirit of prophecy breathes in ways we don't immediately comprehend. Prophecy is not mere pre-telling of events with indisputable dates and names. It's often an act of weaving patterns deep into the fabric of Scripture, only to one day see them appear in bold relief under new light.

Note

Quoted by Craig A. Evans, in his "Introduction" to Matthew Black's, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (3rd ed., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998), p. xv.

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By Craig M. White

**History Research Projects
GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001
www.friendsofsabbath.org**

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