

THE CRUCIFIXION DAY

Text: Matthew 12:40

INTRO: It has been commonly accepted that Jesus was crucified on Friday & raised on Sunday. There is only one passage of Scripture that presents a serious challenge to this commonly accepted teaching. In this study we will examine in more detail what the Bible says about the crucifixion day.

- I. THE PROBLEM STATED. Matt 12:40 taken in its strictest sense would require that Jesus be “in the heart of the earth” for 72 hours—or at least for a part of 3 days and a part of 3 nights. Neither of these could be literally fulfilled between Friday afternoon & Sunday morning.
- II. A LOOK AT THE LANGUAGE INVOLVED. It is inescapable that figurative language is involved, either in our text, or in several other passages.

- A. “On the 3rd day” passages.

Matt 16:21, From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, & suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

Matt 17:22-23, Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, & they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up." And they were exceedingly sorrowful.

Matt 20:18-19, Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests & to the scribes; & they will condemn Him to death, & deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."

Mark 9:31, For He taught His disciples and said to them, "The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."

Mark 10:34, And they will mock Him, & scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

Luke 9:22, The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."

Luke 18:33, They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

Luke 24:7, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'

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

Luke 24:46, Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

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

1 Cor 15:3-4, For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, & that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

B. "After 3 days" passages.

Mark 8:31, And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Matt 12:40, For as Jonah was 3 days & 3 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.

Matt 27:62-63, On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests & Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After 3 days I will rise.' "Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night & steal Him away, & say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."

- C. Take note that these different expressions cannot both be taken strictly. On the 3rd day and after 3 days do not literally mean the same. One of the terms positively is used more loosely than the other.

III. THESE 2 TERMS WERE USED INTERCHANGEABLY IN THE FIRST CENTURY BY BOTH JEWS & GENTILES. Cp fat chance/slim chance. "I could care less

- A. Matthew's account & Luke's account (MT 16:21; LK 9:22) say "the 3rd day." Mark's parallel says "after 3 days" MK 8:31.
- B. The enemies of Jesus recognized the 2 expressions as meaning the same thing.. Matt 27:62-63 (above)
- C. Compare the counting of the time in the case of Cornelius, Acts 10.3, 9, 23, 24, 30.

IV. SINCE BOTH JEWS & GENTILES RECKONED THE TIME MORE LOOSELY THAN WE DO, IT IS IN ORDER TO CONSIDER SOME OTHER FACTS AS WELL.

- A. The Jewish name for Friday was "Preparation." From their usage the Gr word for preparation, PARASKEUE

is today the name of the 6th day of the week in modern Greek and in Latin.

W.E. Vine: “The title arose from the need of parparing food, etc., for the Sabbath. Aspparently it was first applied only to the afternoon of the 6th day, later, to the whole day. In modern Greek &Y ecclesiastical Latin, PARRASKEUE = Friday.”

A.T. Robertson: “This phrase ‘Preparation’ was really the name of a day in the week, the day before the Sabbath, our Friday.” (Harmony of the Gospels, p. 283).

Robert H. Gundry: “But ‘preparation’ was the name of the day of the week which we call Friday, and ‘passover’ in John refers to the whole festival. ‘The parparation of the passover’ may simply mean ‘the Friday during the Passover week’ with no implication that the Passover lamb was yet to be killed, roasted & eaten.” (Survey of the N.T., page 191).

Wycliffe Bible Encl.: “The Greek PARASKEUE found in all 4 gospels in the narration of the last days of Christ, refers to the day before the Sabbath, the ‘preparation’ for the weekly Sabbath (MK 15:42) & not for the festival of the Passover” (pg. 1391).

Melvin E. Elliot: “The day before the Sabbath, when the Jews prepared for the day of rest, John 19:14, 31, 42; etc. The Gr. Word PARASKEUE is the modern Greek word for Friday; from this usage.” (Language of the King James Bible, pg. 147)

B. In the light of these quotes, note what the Scripture says:

READ MARK 15:39 through 16:6

READ LUKE 23:52 through 24:1, 21

- V. FOR THOSE WHO STILL FEEL THEY MUST FIND SOME WAY OF LITERALIZING MATT 12:40, I SUGGEST THEY DO SO IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS:
- A. Interpret “heart of the earth” in such a way as to include His arrest on Thursday night, or...
 - B. Consider the “night” to simply mean darkness, count the time by Roman time (as John obviously did in his account), and thus Jesus was in the tomb
 - 1. Friday before dark, Friday after dark
 - 2. Saturday before dark, Saturday after dark.
 - 3. Sunday before dawn (still dark), Sunday at dawn.
 - C. Or perhaps someone may suggest other solutions, but whatever the explanation of Matt 12:40, the evidence is overwhelming that Jesus was arrested on Thursday night, crucified on Friday, & arose about dawn on Sunday morning.

La Porte, TX, October 15, 1978

Exton, PA, March 30, 1986

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, August 25, 1996

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, November 11, 2001

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