

## Why I Believe in Good Thursday

or

Why I believe the Bible does not teach Good Wednesday or Good Friday, maybe.  
by Phil Myers

### Pertinent Scripture Bearing on the Times & Days for the Burial & Resurrection

“on the third day. . .this is the third day”  
Sunday is the third day [*after the crucifixion*] ?  
So what is the second day [*after the crucifixion*] ?  
Then what is the first day [*after the crucifixion*] ?

Saturday night = 3rd night.  
Friday night = 2nd night.  
What was the 1st night?

Not such an important discussion, but I present some thoughts.

Matt 12:39,40 But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Notice, please: those who hold to a wooden interpretation of this passage spoken by Jesus must admit that Jonah's time began with night and not daylight, and so Jesus was obviously using a figure of speech to indicate the length of time in the tomb. He would be out sometime on the third day.

Every grammarian understands that figures of speech are not always taken rigidly, and that is certainly the case here or Jesus would have been forced to say, “three nights and three days” since the period of time “in the heart of the earth” for both Jesus and Jonah began at night. We cannot arbitrarily choose which parts of a single statement we take literally and which we see as a figure of speech.

Matt 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.

Matt 17:23 And they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Matt 20:19 And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify *Him*: and the third day He shall rise again.

Matt 27:63,64 Saying, “Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.”

Notice, please: in verse 63 the Greek phrase “treis hemeras” [*after three days*] is used interchangeably (*in the same breath*) as another Greek phrase “te . . . trite” [*the third day*] used by Matthew 27 in verse 64.

Josephus also used these terms interchangeably.

Notice also that the only time we see soldiers present is on Sunday morning which would be two shifts past Saturday at sundown. Soldiers were specifically assigned to make sure the tomb was secured until the third day [*not the fourth*].

See also: Mark 8.31 & Lk 24.21

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Matt 28:1, 2 In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

Mark 8:31 And He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of

the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.  
 Mark 9:31 For He taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day.  
 Mark 10:34 And they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him, and shall kill Him: and the third day He shall rise again.

Luke 9:22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.  
 Luke 18:33 And they shall scourge *Him*, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again.  
 Luke 23:44-46 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.  
 Luke 24:1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.  
 Luke 24:21 But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done.

Some describe Sunday as the fourth day and support their conclusion by using Luke 24.21 and laying [in my opinion] an unusually heavy emphasis on the word “since” [*αψ ου*] and attributing to it an indisputable sense that “after these things were done” means that Sunday was the fourth day “after these things were done,” i.e. the crucifixion, et al.

If the same interpretive precept were applied to Mark 8.31 (“after [*μετα*] 3 days [I will] rise again”) you would have to admit that Jesus was clearly stating that He was not going to arise until the 4th day.  
 See my note at Matt 27.63 ” [after three days] is used interchangeably (in the same breath) as another Greek phrase “*te. . . trite*” [the third day] verse 64.

I would ask the question, “What kind of rules of interpretation are you using to draw your conclusion since a billion Bible lovers and scholars over 2,000 years have concluded that the common sense reading of the passage simply seems to indicate that ‘today is the third day’ means ‘today is the third day?’” [not the fourth day].

John 19.31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away.  
*cf Deut 21.23*

John 19:38-42 And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation *day*; for the sepulcher was nigh at hand.

Notice, please that, though the death occurred at 3 in the afternoon, the ritual of preparing the body for burial is simple and the tomb is nearby.

Notice, please also that the Bible makes no mention of the exact time of the “burial.” Some who insist that His body lay in the tomb for precisely 72 hours [one writer says, “Not a minute longer, not a minute less”] are generally unwilling to be so exacting as to say at which of the following moments their 3-day timeclock started ticking.

DID THE CLOCK START:

- \* the moment when they started burial preceding's by taking the body off the Cross  
*in fulfillment of Deut 21.23*
- \* when they entered Joseph's vault
- \* when they laid His body on the slab
- \* at the end of the preliminary embalming with spices & wrapping

*And I can't imagine that this process of caring for my Lord's body could take His loving friends any less time than an hour. I have helped in the wrapping the body of a Muslim friend and neighbor in Indonesia, who was buried the same day he died. So it is easy for me to understand that the completion of the task before sundown doesn't require furious haste, just diligence.*

- \* when they walked out of the tomb after praying and crying
- \* when they finished rolling the stone in place
- \* or when the sun actually set

*Of course, the operative terminology of “72 hours” is the sticky spot. Any 72 hour period is exactly “three nights and three days” whether it starts and ends shortly after 3 pm or just minutes prior to sundown. The 72-hour time period could be fulfilled either way. The important thing is that Jesus’ “body shall not remain all night upon the tree.” Deut 21.23 see John 19.31 “the bodies not remain on the Cross on the Sabbath.”*

*The burial minute does not seem to be the crucial event, but to the 72-hours-in-the-grave adherents, proving this theory seems so crucial to some that they misconstrue the events of the entire weekend in order to make their uncommon view of Scripture comply with the figure of speech, “three nights and three days.”*

It is not reasonable to assume that Joseph & Nicodemus would be aware of the precise time of sundown. Someone standing on the very top of Golgotha might be aware of the disappearance of the sun [*my conjecture*], but the “Garden Tomb” is some distance lower than the presumed site of the crucifixion.

Although sundials were COMMON, no one could use them to tell time at dusk. Sundials were virtually always in the shadows at the moment the crest of the sun disappeared over the horizon.

I don’t recall whether Jewish history records that the shophar was sounded to signal the official beginning of Passover [*or the Sabbath*].

Nothing in the Bible account indicates any angst to bury the body in the 3 or 4 hour period before sundown after Jesus’ expiration.

John 20:1 The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher.

nota bene #1: the two most common phrases in 11 of the verses above are -

“He shall rise” & “the third day”

The emphasis is clearly on the prediction of the resurrection, not on the burial minutes.

n.b. #2: the Bible doesn’t say, “the end of the third day.”

n.b. #3: it is correct to say that nowhere does the Bible specify that Jesus “rose on the third day,” but it is also correct to conclude that the Bible does imply the first day of the week immediately became of special importance to the Church after the Res, a fact which was embraced during the first century and universally by the second century.

Nor do the Scriptures clearly state He arose on the Sabbath, a statement which those who insist on a

72-hour, Wednesday burial, firmly grip.

#### Observations about the reckoning of time in OT

2Ki 20:8-11 And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What *shall be* the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD **the third day**?

And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?

And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

Isa 38:8 Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

Notice, please: the word *hour* is never used in the OT *except 5x in the book of Daniel*.

Est 4:16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

5:1 Now it came to pass **on the third day**, that Esther put on *her* royal *apparel*, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

How explicit must we be in determining what time of day the fast began or when Esther entered the court? What difference does it make whether Esther's fast lasted exactly 72 hours?

Jonah 1:5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that *were* in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

1:15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

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

Notice, please that Jonah was asleep [*at night, I presume*] and was chucked in the sea at night, yet Jesus states he was in the heart of the earth "three days and three nights," not vice versa.

Notice, please that Jesus used a figure of speech in Matt 12, and that it is not an accurate descriptive term. He said "three days and three nights" NOT "three nights and three days" as described in the book of Jonah. Jesus also spent his first hours in the tomb at night. If Matt wanted to avoid quoting Jesus figure of speech, perhaps he should have paraphrased it as "three nights and three days" in order to be technically accurate.

To insist that this passage woodenly demands 72 hours goes beyond:

- 1 the hermeneutical principle of Common Sense
- 2 the hermeneutical principle of literal meaning
- 3 as well the hermeneutical precept of comparing one's unusual interpretation to the Historical Orthodox position of most true believers for 2,000 years.

If Jesus' words are not a figure of speech, then His words are to be taken literally and Jonah would have been thrown in the drink at exactly daybreak. It would further violate common sense rules of literature to conclude that Jonah was thrown in the sea at precisely sunup and vomited at exactly dawn 72 hours later. Nobody believes that probability [*nor "in at sundown and out at dusk" as some suppose Jesus experienced*].

#### Observations about the reckoning of time in the NT

Matt 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Notice, please that Matthew was imprecise about checking his Timex. See also Luke 23.44.

Mark 15:34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Perhaps others feel this occurred at the stroke of the ninth hour, but I do not. Jewish as well as Roman time was always imprecise, never to the minute.

Luke 23.46 Interestingly, I choose to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ "gave up the ghost" at the precise moment the high priest slit the neck of the Passover Lamb just outside the Temple [*and I hope he heard the veil ripping from top to bottom*]. Just an opinion.

Luke 23:44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

John 19:14 And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, "Behold your King!"

II Cor 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

Notice, please that Paul specifically describes his shipwreck experience as occurring at night and spending his time afloat that way, first nighttime then daytime.

It would seem a most strange conclusion to draw that Paul was in the sea exactly 24 hours; that he

fell in the water precisely at sundown, and dragged himself ashore at precisely dusk the next afternoon. Narrative is not as accurate as documentary. The Gospels are a loose but accurate narrative—but not a documentary.

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

Acts 20:7 And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

Notice, please that Sunday had already been designated as the time to gather for communion by 50 AD, *although the preaching service doesn't seem to start at 11 am.*

Orthodox Christianity from the first century has recognized the first day of the week as “The Lord’s Day.”

Since this designation is more clearly affirmed in the 2nd century, by Justin Martyr, we understand he agreed with John’s designation.

Literature clearly indicates that the first day celebration was in honor of the Resurrection.

My untrammelled and simple conclusion is that this Wednesday theory is based solely on unusual application of hermeneutical principles and would not exist without the insistence upon three examples:

- (1) the figure of speech “three nights and three days” must absolutely refer precisely and rigidly to a
- (2) 72-hour period beginning at
- (3) the moment of burial *[to the minute]*

In this approach to understand the figure of speech, notice that the chronological order of “three days and three nights” is not believed literally, but the unusual insistence of 72 hours is tenaciously embraced. Without the 72 hour element, which, in my observation, is not used in any form elsewhere in the Bible, the Wednesday postulate has no foundation.

Note: burial time was not the crucial event in Jesus’ prediction, it was the resurrection. However, the 72-hours-in-the-grave-concept *[4,320 minutes burial time]* seems so crucial to some Bible students that they misconstrue the entire weekend in order to make Scripture comply with the figure of speech “three nights and three days.”

“He is risen, indeed!”

Philip J Myers, c 2017