

# Three Days and Three Nights

## In the Heart of the Earth

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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. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. Matthew 12:40, 41.

This expression is found only once in the Scriptures. Lone texts are a fruitful field for speculation. We must guard against wrong conclusions and exaggerated claims such as "the heart of the earth" is a grave. A century or more ago the argument was advanced that Christ was crucified on Wednesday afternoon and rose again on the Sabbath. It was originated by the Seventh day Baptists to wipe out the only argument for Sunday keeping, namely that Christ rose on the first day of the week.

### CHRIST WAS NOT CRUCIFIED ON WEDNESDAY

1. Luke 24:21. "Today is the third day." This is the "first day of the week." Luke 24:1,13.
2. "Today is the third day." If Christ was crucified on Wednesday, Sunday could not possibly be the "third day."
3. Thirteen times the New Testament states Christ would rise on the third day. It is folly to base a teaching on a strained interpretation of a single text.

**Matthew 16:21** From that time forth began Jesus to show 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.

**Matthew 17:22, 23** And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

**Matthew 20:18,19** Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify [him]: and the third day he shall rise again.

**Matthew 27:62-64** Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre 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.

**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 10:33,34** Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles. 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 18:32, 33** For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge [him], and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.

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

**Luke 24:20,21** And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. 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.

**Luke 24:46** And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

**Acts 10:39,40** And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly.

**1 Corinthians 15:3,4** 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.

4. If Christ had to be in the grave for three complete days and nights or 72 complete hours, He would have to rise on the fourth day - for one minute after the full 72 hours, runs into the fourth day. "The third day" is the day of Christ's resurrection, not the fourth.

5. Many witnesses testify:

- (a) The disciples said it was "the third day." Luke 24:21.
- (b) The Angels said that Christ would on "the third day" rise again. Luke 24:7.
- (c) The Apostle Peter testified that "Him God raised up the third day." Acts 10:40.
- (d) The inspired Paul states "He was buried, and that He rose again the third day." 1 Corinthians 15:4.
- (e) The enemies of Christ requested the tomb of Christ be sealed "until the third day." Matthew 27:64.

6. Acts 2:27. Saint Peter proves conclusively that the resurrection of Christ was foretold in the words "neither wilt Thou suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." This prophecy could not refer to David for he had been dead for centuries and hence had seen corruption. This was the burden of Peter's argument. (See Acts 2:29). Therefore the prophecy must refer to the resurrection of Christ before corruption could set in. If Christ was three complete days and nights in the grave, His resurrection would be on the fourth day, and by the fourth day corruption would be well advanced, as in the case of Lazarus. John 11:39. If Christ was crucified on Wednesday, and Thursday was the Passover Sabbath, as some have claimed, why was it the holy women did not anoint the body of Jesus on the Friday? To leave the anointing until the fourth or fifth day is unthinkable.

### **CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED ON FRIDAY!**

John 19:14. "It was the preparation of the Passover." The Greek word translated "preparation" is paraskeue, and is never meant for any day but Friday. Paraskeue is still the name for Friday among modern Greeks. Paraskeue was the name among the Greek speaking Jews for the day which preceded the Jewish Sabbath. It was the sixth day of the week, and was the day of the Preparation" for the seventh day, (our Saturday).

Therefore it was Friday, and could be nothing else than Friday." Professor J. Laurence Rentoul, Professor of Greek and Hebrew in Ormond College, Melbourne.

The New English Bible, the translation of which was planned and directed by the Baptist, Church of England, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, in association with the British and Foreign Bible Society uses the word "Friday," instead of "preparation day," in translating Luke 24:54. Thus the Scriptures state: "This man now approached Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Taking it down from the cross, he wrapped it in a linen sheet, and laid it in a tomb cut out of the rock, in which no one had been laid before; it was Friday, and the Sabbath was about to begin."

Thus it is clear from the combined testimony of the "Scriptures of Truth" that Jesus was not crucified on Wednesday, but that act of tragedy took place on Friday, the sixth day of the week.

### **THE HEART OF THE EARTH**

"Three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." What does this unique expression mean?

1. There is no text anywhere in the Bible that states that the "heart of the earth" is the grave.

2. The Scriptures reveal its meaning.

Proverbs 23:24	"midst" (margin)	"heart"
Deuteronomy 4:11	"midst"	"heart"
2 Samuel 18:14	"midst"	"heart"
Jonah 2:3	"midst"	"heart"

Thus it is clear that "midst" or "heart" are used interchangeably in Scripture.

3. Ezekiel 5:5. "Thus said the Lord; this is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her." Dr. Strong gives "the centre," "middle," "midst." "Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible." Thus Jerusalem was "the midst" or "heart."

4. Jerusalem is the heart, centre or midst of the earth. This fact is recognised. In Ezekiel we read of the "centre of the earth," (Moffatt) or "the uplands of Israel." Ezekiel 38:8.

5. "Geographically, Palestine is the centre of the earth, and in the centre of the land the salvation of God became a reality: the Skull Hill and the empty tomb are there still as reminders." Leonard T. Pearson, in "Through the Holy Land," page 3.

6. This statement is but an echo of the wonderful prophecy found in Psalms 74:12, "God is working salvation in the midst of the earth." "The midst," "centre," "heart." (See Dr. Strong) was there our Lord was crucified, rose again from the dead and ascended. There again His feet will touch the earth. There Abraham was called to offer his son. There Melchisedec ministered as priest - king of the Most High. There the glory of God lingered over the sacred Ark of the Covenant. There the blood of bulls and goats flowed as a shadow of the Supreme Sacrifice. There was the centre of salvation. There was the centre or heart of the earth.

7. Nelson Glueck, the famous authority on Archaeology writes: "Palestine became spiritually what the facts of geography had made it physically, the focal point of the world, with Jerusalem its central city." "Palestine's blessing and curse lie in its geographical position, which makes it a bridge between the Nations. It is a crossroads on the deathless trade routes between East and West." "In a monkish map, contemporary with the Crusades, which still hangs in Hereford Cathedral, Jerusalem is marked as the geometrical centre of the world, and on the floor of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, they will show you till this day the precise spot which is the centre." "The River Jordan," page 217.

8. The Scriptures recognise Jerusalem as the centre or heart of the nations. For instance "the king of the north" was the power to the north of Jerusalem, and "the king of the south," was the power to the south of Jerusalem, namely Egypt, and east was east of Jerusalem.

9. Jerusalem was the centre or heart of worship. (See Patriarchs and Prophets, page 537, 7 Testimonies, page 53, Councils on Health, pages 216, 217). It was situated on a "central and elevated position in Canaan." Patriarchs and Prophets, page 703.

10. It was the central place of sacrifice; at no other place could they offer animal sacrifices.

11. The Jews when in distant lands, prayed with faces turned toward Jerusalem. Psalms 28:2, Daniel 6:10, Prophets and Kings, page 541, Patriarchs and Prophets, page 354. Thus we have like a giant prayer circle-facing towards Jerusalem the centre.

12. When Jesus used the expression "the heart of the earth," He was using an expression that was well known to the Jews of His day. Josephus, the Hebrew historian and priest, wrote of Jerusalem, "The city lies at its very centre, for which reason the town has sometimes, not inaptly, been called the 'navel' of the country," Wars of the Jews, Book 3, Chapter 3, Section 5. The Book of Jubilees refers to "Mount Zion - the centre of the navel of the earth." By 'navel' is meant the Sanhedrin. And why were they named navel? Because they used to sit in the middle of the world, (according to the Talmud, Jerusalem was the middle of the world and the Temple was the centre of Jerusalem), and also protected the whole world. The Babylonian Talmud. Frost. Sanhedrin, chapter 4.

Thus it is clear Jerusalem was regarded as the "centre," "heart," "navel," or "middle" of the earth. "Navel" is used interchangeably with "middle" or "heart." For instance in Judges 9:37, "middle" has "navel" in the margin and in Ezekiel 38:12, "midst" of the land is "navel" in the margin. "The term 'earth' is often used when referring to the people on the earth. Jeremiah 6:19. Isaiah 1:2, "Christ was in the hands of the people: or heart of the earth." Stephen N. Haskell, Bible Handbook, page 184.

Thus when Jesus used the expression "the heart of the earth," He had in mind Jerusalem and His listeners would recognise the familiar term. Now notice how often Jerusalem is mentioned. Only the record of one Gospel writer will be more than sufficient:

Matthew 16:21."He must go to Jerusalem and suffer."

Matthew 20:17. "Jesus going up to Jerusalem." Our Lord was going to the Passover to offer Himself as the great Passover.

Matthew 20:18. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem; To be betrayed, condemned, delivered to the Gentiles to mock, to scourge and to crucify Him."

Matthew 23:37. "O Jerusalem, you that killed the prophets." Jesus placed Himself into the hands of the leaders of Jerusalem as a prisoner. "As Jonah," Jonah was a prisoner. At Jerusalem the place of sacrifice. The place where prophets were killed. "Three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth."

Matthew 26:17-20. "My time is at hand."

Thursday morning Christ and the disciples enter Jerusalem in preparation for the Passover. As Stephen N. Haskell writes: "In Mark 8:31, Christ said He would be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes and be killed and after three days rise again! Some time before the angry mob came to arrest Him, He had been 'rejected' otherwise they would never have gathered to take Him. 'After three days' had passed from the time of His rejection, He rose." Bible Handbook, page 185.

### **JESUS REBUKE TO THE EVIL GENERATION**

Matthew 12:38-41.

- (a) This was a rebuke to the Jewish leaders.
- (b) Jonah - Missionary to the Gentiles, was not popular with the exclusive Jews.
- (c) Jesus warned Jerusalem would be destroyed.
- (d) Jesus warned "Kingdom taken from you."
- (e) "As Jonah" prisoner for three days and three nights, so Jesus was prisoner of Jerusalem, the heart of the earth.

Let us not leave this unique prophecy in the field of debate and controversy. Remember He was a voluntary prisoner.

Luke 9:51-53. "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." He was three days and three nights in "the heart of the Earth" - in the midst of this cruel world. In the midst of His enemies. He did it for you.

### **CHRIST OUR PASSOVER**

Amazing Types in the Law of Moses Foretold Christ Would Die on Friday and Rise again on Sunday. The old Law of Moses clearly predicted in its ceremonial law that Christ would be crucified on Friday and rise again on Sunday. Luke 24:44-46, "Written in the Law of Moses " that Christ was to rise from the dead the third day. Where is this found? The only place in the ceremonial law where this is written is in the instruction regarding the Passover. Note carefully this wonderful foreshadowing of our Lord.

The Passover was both commemorative and typical. It was commemorative of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and typical of Christ our Passover who delivers from a greater bondage. 1 Corinthians 5:7. It must always be remembered that Jesus not only died and rose again for our redemption, but He did it "according to the Scriptures," 1 Corinthians 15:3,4. That is, He fulfilled the types of the typical law of Moses which pointed to the coming of the Messiah. It was not by chance that Christ was crucified on Friday. Centuries before God had ordained that the day following the Passover should be a ceremonial Sabbath, thus foreshadowing that Christ would be offered the day before the Sabbath. This is also clear evidence that Jesus is the Messiah or Christ. He died on the very day and the very time of the day that God had said the Passover lamb should be slain and He rose from the dead on the very day that the first fruits were offered or waved. Remember, God Himself, had fixed the date of these annual offerings. Thus the day of the year for the offering was a definite prediction of the time for the Great Offering. The Jewish year was really a compact prophecy of the Gospel and every service was a shadow of the service of our Lord.

### **JEWISH SACRIFICIAL TYPE**

Exodus 12:3. The Passover Lamb was to be taken on the 10th day of the first month, or five days before it was slain

Exodus 12:6. Passover lamb slain "between the evenings" on the 14th. Josephus, the well known Jewish historian was also a priest. He makes this interesting statement, "So these high priests, upon the coming of their feast which is called Passover, when they slay their sacrifices, from the ninth hour to the eleventh." Wars of the Jews, page 588. Therefore the Passover lamb was slain between 3 PM and 5 PM on the 14th day of the first month.

Leviticus 23:6,7. The day following the Passover was an annual ceremonial Sabbath. Leviticus 23:5-11. The first fruits were offered on the third day after the Pass over.

### **CHRIST AS THE FULFILLMENT**

John 12:1. "Six day before the Passover." John 12:12. "The next day or five day before the Passover, Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem.

John 19:14. Christ was crucified at the time of "the preparation of the Passover." Matthew 27:45-50. He died about 3 o'clock, or the 9th hour.

Romans 5:6. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Margin - He died "according to time." "At the right moment."

Luke 23:54-56. The day following Christ's death was the Sabbath of the Lord. This year it was also an annual Sabbath, or a "high day." Thus it was a double Sabbath, it was both a "holy day" and a "high day." While Christ rested in the tomb after finishing His sacrifice as our Passover, His followers rested on the Sabbath. From this time on the Sabbath was doubly blessed.

1 Corinthians 15:23. "Christ the first fruits."

1 Corinthians 15:20. "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." Christ is called "the first fruits" solely in reference to His being the anti type of the wave sheaf and in contrast to the grand harvest at His Second Coming.

Thus Moses in the ancient ceremonial law foretold the death and resurrection of the Messiah. This remarkable prediction gives clear proof that Christ, in fulfilling the Passover type died on Friday and was raised on Sunday.

Christ died for our sins and He rose again according to the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15:34. He fulfilled the Scripture predictions. Our Lord made it crystal clear to His followers, that "all things in the law of Moses" concerning Himself "must be fulfilled." Also that He should "rise from the dead the third day," Luke 24:44-46. He fulfilled the type. He died on time. He rose on time. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly."

What a Savior! What certainty! "By which you are saved if you keep in memory (margin "hold fast") unless you have believed in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:2.

Was His death in vain for you? Why not trust Him? Remember He is a greater Savior than you are a sinner. He saved "to the uttermost." Hebrews 7:25. From the uttermost to the uttermost. What a Savior! What a salvation!

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