

# THREE DAYS & THREE NIGHTS

## PART I

AS JONAH...SO ISRAEL  
AS JONAH...SO THE SON OF MAN

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“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” (Jonah 1:17).

“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly [*lit.*, ‘the huge fish’s belly’]; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40).

The Book of Jonah forms a dual type, foreshadowing, through Jonah’s experiences, different aspects of the experiences of both of God’s firstborn Sons — *Christ* and *Israel* (*cf.* Ex. 4:22; Heb. 1:6).

The book though is more specifically about one son, about *Israel*, with the time which both Sons would spend in the place of death seen in the time which Jonah spent in the place of death. Thus, the book, in a larger scope, is about both Sons — much like Hos. 11:1, a reference to Israel under Moses used as a reference to Christ in Matt. 2:15.

This time spent in the place of death is expressed in Jonah (1:17) and referenced in Matthew (12:40) as “three days and three nights.” And a mistake, having major negative ramifications in Biblical interpretation, is often made through

seeking to understand this expression in a Western mind-set rather than through comparing Scripture with Scripture, allowing Scripture to interpret the expression.

The expression “three days and three nights” is often understood as a period of time comprised of three twenty-four-hour periods — three full days and nights, *i.e.*, seventy-two hours.

Or, other individuals take a slightly different approach, not contending for three full twenty-four-hour periods but contending for at least parts of three literal days and three literal nights.

And to follow either of the preceding, or any other similar form of the preceding, is where mayhem in Biblical interpretation enters into the matter, not only in how Scripture deals with the expression itself but what this does to numerous passages of Scripture, including the overall scope of the manner in which the whole of Scripture is structured.

Thus, it is no small matter concerning whether this expression is interpreted and understood within man’s Western mind-set (within man’s finite understanding) or whether Scripture is allowed to interpret and explain the matter for us (through God’s infinite wisdom and knowledge, the Author of this expression).

### Facts That One Must Face

*Christ* was raised from the dead *after two days, on the third day* (Luke 24:7); and He was also raised *after three days* (Mark 8:31). Both are true and both must be understood in not only the light of one another but the remainder of Scripture as well.

(Relative to the timing of Christ’s resurrection, the expression, “after three days,” is only used two times in the N.T. [KJV, Matt. 27:63; Mark 8:31].

On the other hand, the expression, “the third day,” is used twelve times in the N.T. [KJV]. In five of the references there is some manuscript support

for the rendering, “after three days” [Matt. 16:21; 17:23; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22]. However, for the remaining seven [Matt. 20:19; 27:64; Luke 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; I Cor. 15:4], no such support exists. All existing manuscripts read the same way — “the third day,” leaving no room to question how the text should read.

And it should go without saying that Christ’s resurrection *on the third day*, alone, would preclude understanding the expression, “three days and three nights,” as referencing a full seventy-two-hour period. Christ was raised *on the third day*, not at the end of or following the third day [which a full seventy-two hours would require].

Also, note the expressions, “within three days” and “in three days,” in Mark 14:58 and John 2:19, 20.)

*Israel*, seen in the place of death today (note both the sign of Jonah in the O.T. and the sign of Lazarus in John 11), will be raised *after two days, on the third day* (Hosea 5:13-6:3), *i.e.*, after 2,000 years, in the third 1,000-year period. And, as was stated concerning Christ, it can also be said of Israel that the nation will be raised up *after three days* (after 3,000 years). And, as with Christ, these statements must be reconciled, one with the other.

Then there is the matter of *Jonah*. Exactly the same thing *must* be said of him (because of both the typology involved and the way Scripture uses the expression, “three days and three nights”).

That is to say, Jonah was raised from the dead *after two days, on the third day* (note that Jonah died in the belly of the fish; he is seen crying out from *Sheol* [Jonah 2:2], the place of the dead). As well, Jonah was raised *after three days*.

And, exactly as in the two antitypes (Christ and Israel), these statements must be understood not only in the light of one another but also in the light of the remainder of Scripture.

As well, the preceding is perfectly in line with the septenary structure of Scripture, which must be the case with any part of Scripture. This septenary structure is set forth in the opening two chapters

of Genesis, beginning the Old Testament; and it is also set forth in the opening two chapters of John, beginning the New Testament.

(Note that John's gospel should be the beginning book in the N.T., not Matthew's gospel. See Chapter I in the author's book, *Moses and John*, where this is dealt with and explained.)

The whole of Scripture is built upon this septenary structure, which is seen through the manner in which each Testament opens.

And this structure is dealt with after different fashions numerous places throughout Scripture (e.g., the Sabbath given to Israel, pointing to that coming seventh day of rest, the millennial day; or, it can be seen in the subject at hand — the raising of Jonah in the type, then Christ and Israel [yet future] in the antitype).

(Refer to the author's book, *End of the Days*, for additional information on the preceding.)

### **Problems That Are Encountered, If...**

If a person follows the approach numerous individuals have taken when dealing with the expression, "three days and three nights," in relation to the timing of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, attempting to understand this period of time as either a full seventy-two hours or a time encompassing at least parts of three literal days and three literal nights, that person will encounter *insurmountable problems with either position, along with committing mayhem in numerous facets of Biblical interpretation.*

(Those individuals contending for three full twenty-four-hour periods believe in a Wednesday crucifixion in order to allow for what they see as a full three days and three nights — seventy-two hours — between Christ's crucifixion and His resurrection on Sunday [the day Scripture states that

He was raised, the first day of the week, the day following the Sabbath, on the feast of First Fruits]. Any day other than Wednesday for the crucifixion would not allow the full seventy-two hours that they believe are needed.

Those individuals contending for parts of three literal days and three literal nights believe in a Thursday crucifixion. This allows for part and/or all of three literal days and three literal nights, though not the full seventy-two hours.

And, as will be shown and dealt with later, the preceding way of viewing matters [seeing a Thursday crucifixion] is usually followed in an effort to allow for a resurrection on the third day.)

Note several *insurmountable problems* one encounters with either of the preceding views. Then it will be shown, as well, how holding to either view causes a person *to commit mayhem in numerous facets of Biblical interpretation.*

Holding to a Wednesday crucifixion, *nothing* fits, not even the "three days and three nights," the supposed seventy-two-hour period.

Note that Christ died in the middle of the afternoon. This is when His soul descended into *Sheol/Hades*. His body was then taken down from the cross, prepared for burial, and placed in the tomb shortly before the beginning of the next day (sometime before sunset).

Then He was raised sometime after the beginning of the day following the Sabbath (sometime after sunset ending the Sabbath, on the first day of the week).

If He was crucified on Wednesday, nothing short of time extending to at least about seventy-five hours could possibly exist (time beginning when He died, 3 P.M.).

Then, if one attempts to begin the supposed seventy-two hours of Jonah 1:17 and Matt. 12:40 at the time His body was placed in the tomb (shortly before sundown), that won't work either. Raising Christ exactly seventy-two hours from that point

would put the resurrection occurring shortly before sundown on the Sabbath.

Then there is the matter of Christ being raised on the third day. Sunday is the fifth day from Wednesday, not the third day. "After three days," as used in Matt. 27:63 and Mark 8:31 would seemingly fit, but not so. This expression must be harmonized with, "on the third day," and has reference to this day.

Then there is the matter of the day following the crucifixion being "a high['great'] day," i.e., contextually, *a high (great) Sabbath* (John 19:31). Though the day following the Passover was the beginning day of the feast of Unleavened Bread (a Sabbath day), this day, standing alone, could not be referred to as *a high (great) Sabbath*.

The only way one could have *a high (great) Sabbath* in the camp of Israel was for one of the feast days in Leviticus chapter twenty-three to fall on the regular weekly Sabbath (Alfred Edersheim would be one well-known authority calling attention to this fact). Thus, a Wednesday crucifixion fails at this point as well.

And different things from the preceding could be said about those contending for a Thursday crucifixion in order to fit at least parts of three literal days and nights into the matter. Suffice it to say though, contending for a handling of the expression "three days and three nights" in this manner (necessitating at least parts of three literal days and nights) is, as will be shown (see Part II), as fallacious as the prior position (contending for a Wednesday crucifixion), for it, as well, is not the way Scripture handles the matter at all, introducing even additional error into the matter.