

THREE DAYS & THREE NIGHTS

PART II

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

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“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).

Mayhem in Biblical Interpretation

Contending for a seventy-two-hour period between Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection, dealt with through a supposed Wednesday crucifixion, throws the complete latter part of the septenary structure of Scripture into disarray.

And exactly the same problem would confront those holding to a Thursday crucifixion. Contending for a Thursday crucifixion, exactly as contending for a Wednesday crucifixion, would run counter to Scripture’s septenary structure as well.

(There is seemingly a way that those contending for a Thursday crucifixion can show a Sunday resurrection occurring on the third day, but it is a way arrived at through humanistic reasoning, completely out of line with the way that Scripture handles different things about the matter. Accordingly, the day of Christ’s resurrection through this means is not a third day at all, but a fourth day following the crucifixion.

The Biblical day ends at sundown, with a new day beginning at that time [which the Jews have followed down through the years (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31)]. Individuals following a Thursday crucifixion

ideology, referencing Jonah 1:17 or Matt. 12:40, take part of the day preceding sundown Thursday and all of the day preceding sundown both Friday and Saturday, giving them three days. Then they take all of the night following sundown both Thursday and Friday [which would be the beginning part of the next two days from the previous two days], along with part of the night following sundown on Saturday [which would be the beginning part of the next day from the previous day]. And, with Christ raised sometime following “the end of the Sabbath” [Matt. 28:1; *lit.*, ‘the end of the Sabbaths’ (the Passover, the feast of Unleavened Bread, and the regular weekly Sabbath — three Sabbath days together)], during the night period of Sunday, before daybreak [which Scripture attests to], Christ is seemingly raised on the third day, and the supposed requirement seen for part or all of three actual days and three actual nights has been met.

The preceding, held by a number of Bible students, may sound good on the surface, but it is shot through and through with the same problems that confront those holding to a Wednesday crucifixion, with an extra problem added.

Suffice it to say, as will be shown later in this chapter, this is not the way Scripture handles the matter at all. The whole of the matter, as seen in holding to a Wednesday crucifixion, is little more than substituting humanistic reasoning for comparing Scripture with Scripture, and not allowing Scripture to interpret and handle the matter.

With a Thursday crucifixion, *the time before sundown* Thursday, Friday, and Saturday is, in each case, connected with *the time following sundown* on each of the subsequent three days. In each case, this has to do with taking part of one day, then part of the next day, and viewing these parts of two different days as one day, something alien to how Scripture views “days.” Scripture, as established in the opening chapter of Genesis, views *the time following sundown to the time following the next sundown as forming “a day”* [evening, morning, in that order, not morning, evening, as required by those holding to a Thursday crucifixion].

“Three days and three nights,” in Scripture, can only be understood as synonymous with “three days,” with each day including *its corresponding evening and*

morning. “A day” simply CANNOT be understood as a combination of parts of two separate days, which the Thursday crucifixion ideology necessitates [in this case, even mixing two parts of the weekly Sabbath with parts of two non-Sabbath days — Friday and Sunday].)

As Christ was raised after two days, on the third day, He, as well, will be raised up after 2,000 years, in the third 1,000-year period (the Messianic Era).

And Israel, in like manner, after two days, after 2,000 years, will be raised up to live in God’s sight on the third day, in the third 1,000-year period (the Messianic Era).

Note what attempting to see a full seventy-two-hour period in the expression “three days and three nights” does to the preceding, to the last three days in God’s septenary structure of Scripture. Or note what attempting to see at least parts of three literal days and nights in this expression, because of how it is done, does to the septenary structure of Scripture after exactly the same fashion.

The former has Christ’s resurrection, Israel’s as well (yet future), occurring *on the fifth day*; and the latter has these resurrections occurring *on the fourth day*. But Scripture has these, and any other resurrections at the end of Man’s Day, occurring *on the third day*.

And, as previously stated, properly understanding the timing of Christ’s crucifixion should not be thought of as something minor in Biblical interpretation, making no real difference what one believes. Rather the opposite is true. This is something MAJOR, VERY MAJOR. It makes A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFERENCE what one believes about the timing of the crucifixion.

The timing of the crucifixion, followed by Christ’s resurrection, is inseparably tied to how God has structured His Word — a septenary structure set forth at the beginning (Gen. 1:1-2:3), with resurrection seen on THE THIRD DAY within this septenary structure, set forth at the beginning (Gen. 1:9-13), something which CAN NEVER CHANGE throughout Scripture.

Thus, not understanding how God has structured His Word in this respect — revealed at the

outset in Genesis and revealed at the outset in John's gospel as well (John 2:1ff), beginning the N.T. — is no small matter in Biblical interpretation.

No Problems Are Encountered, If...

If a person interprets Scripture in the light of Scripture when dealing with the expression, "three days and three nights," the previously existing problems, or any other similar problems, will not exist; and everything, in turn, will fit into its proper place.

And no one is then left attempting to explain the inexplicable, for Scripture will have been allowed to explain the whole of the matter itself, through its own built-in interpretation.

1) The O.T. Handling of Days

There are two other places in the Old Testament where the same or a similar expression to that seen in Jonah 1:17 is used (I Sam. 30:1, 11-13; Esther 4:16-5:1). And in both of these places, along with several other companion places (Gen. 40:12-20; 42:17-20; II Chron. 10:5, 12; Matt. 27:62-64), Scripture relates exactly how Jonah 1:17 and Matt. 12:40 are to be understood, leaving no room for questions in anyone's mind about how this expression is to be understood when Scripture is allowed to interpret itself.

"And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire...

And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water;

And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins; and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, *three days and three nights*.

And David said unto him, to whom belondest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because *three days ago* I fell sick" (I Sam. 30:1, 11-13).

"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.

So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

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..." (Esther 4:16-5:1a).

The Old Testament views any part of a day as covering the whole of that day, with the day's corresponding night period as well (Gen. 40:12-20; 42:17-20; II Chron. 10:5, 12; Matt. 27:62-64; cf. Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13). A twenty-four-hour period is not involved at all.

Nor can non-corresponding parts of different literal days and nights (parts of two different days of the week seen forming a day) be involved in the expression, "three days and three nights." That's evident six different places in the opening chapter of Genesis, where a day and night ("*evening*" and "*morning*", in that order) are dealt with together as a unit, referred to as "a day" (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).

And this initial order establishes how any twenty-four hour period is to be viewed throughout all subsequent Scripture, even if "day," used with "night," as in Jonah 1:17, is mentioned first (cf. Esther 4:16, where "night" is mentioned first).

Exactly the same thing can be seen in both of the previously quoted verses — I Sam. 30:1, 11-13 and Esther 4:16-5:1 — where either the same or a similar expression can be found to the expression in Jonah 1:17 and Matt. 12:38-40. In both places, as in the opening chapter of Genesis, a day and night are dealt with together as a unit, referred to as "a day."

And this *MUST* be true of any Scriptures beyond the opening chapter of Genesis which deal with the subject, *for this is the manner in which the matter has been unchangeably established at the outset*.

Thus, *viewed solely from a Scriptural standpoint,*

any part of Friday, all of Saturday, and any part of Sunday would be "three days and three nights."

As well, the expression, "after three days" in Matt. 27:63 and Mark 8:31 is not referring to events occurring on a fourth day (a day following three days, allowing for a Thursday crucifixion), or even a fifth day (allowing for a Wednesday crucifixion), but is referring to events occurring on the third of the three days in view. Note how this expression in Matt. 27:63 is understood in Matt. 27:64. Or, note the sequence of days in Acts 10:3, 7-9, 17, 23, 24, 30.

2) The High (Great) Sabbath, the Third Day

Then there is the matter of a *high (great) Sabbath* occurring the day following the crucifixion, which can be fulfilled *only by a Friday crucifixion* (allowing a feast day from Lev. 23 to fall on the regular weekly Sabbath [ref. previous comments, p. 67]).

And, as previously seen, a Friday crucifixion is *THE ONLY DAY* which would allow the resurrection on Sunday to have occurred on *the third day* (on the feast of First Fruits [cf. Mark 16:9; I Cor. 15:20, 23]).

In reality, all one has to do to ascertain the day of the crucifixion is to count back three days from Sunday, which takes one to Friday. The matter is really that simple if one remains within Scriptural guidelines and lets Scripture interpret itself.

As well, remaining completely within the way Scripture handles the matter, this likewise allows one to *remain completely in line with the septenary structure of Scripture*.

And the preceding could only be the case, for Scripture does not run counter to itself. That's left solely for man to do, which he too often does, something which he seems to do best when it comes to Biblical interpretation.

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