

# Did Jesus Die on Friday of Passover Week?

April 8, 2011

**Did Jesus Die on Friday of Passover Week? Yes.**

In Mt. 12:40 Jesus says: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” This leads some scholars to conclude that Jesus could not have died on Friday but on Wednesday, in order to account for three days and three nights. However, this suggestion creates more problems than it solves and overlooks the Jewish manner of time reckoning:

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1) The straightforward statements in all four Gospels place the crucifixion of Jesus on a Friday afternoon (Mt. 27:62; Mk. 15:42; Lk. 23:54; Jn. 19:14, 31, 42), the day before the Sabbath which began at sundown on Friday evening.

2) The Scriptures repeatedly claim Jesus’ resurrection as having occurred “on the third day” (not “after the third day”; cf., Mt. 16:21; 17:23; Lk. 9:22; 18:33; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4).

3) The Jews reckoned a part of a time unit (day, month, year) to count as a whole. In the Old Testament and rabbinical thought a day and a night make a single unit, and a part of the unit counts as the whole (cf. 1 Sam. 30:12-13; 1 Kgs. 20:29; 2 Chron. 10:5, 12; Esth. 4:16; 5:1). Although Jesus was in the tomb about thirty-six hours, it included parts of three days. The phrase “three days and three nights” need mean no more than a combination of any part of three separate days.

4) A single verse should settle the argument. Two disciples of Jesus expected that Sunday, the third day, was the expected time of fulfillment.

Knowing the events of Easter morning but not knowing the stranger who walked with them to Emmaus, they said to Jesus: “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened” (Lk. 24:21 ESV).

— *Bruce Corley, president of the B.H. Carroll Theological Institute*