

What has Messiah Got to do with Easter Bunnies and Coloured Eggs?

It's the Easter season again. As usual, the world church makes much of it. But is it Biblical? The Easter bunny and coloured Easter eggs easily give it away as a pagan festival going back thousands of years in history. But Jesus, the Lamb of God, truly did die and resurrect after three days. How and when did these events happen as recorded for us in the scriptures? Here, we present an excerpt from our book, *The Sabbath: God's Eternal Sign of Rest* giving a detailed explanation of how the Good Friday tradition is in conflict with the ONLY SIGN Christ Himself gave of His Messiahship! "Three days and three nights" utterly demolishes the Good Friday - Easter Sunday Resurrection tradition!

Have an eye-opening, enjoyable read!

Sunday, not the Resurrection Day of the Lord of the Sabbath

(How long did the Messiah say He would be in the tomb?)

By

Elder Enoch Ofori Jnr

The traditional teaching of Christ's crucifixion on Friday and resurrection on Sunday have been accepted as fact by churchgoers for hundreds of years.

But what did Jesus Christ Himself say about His death and resurrection? How long did He say He would be in the grave?

The Messiah's death as the atonement for our sin is all-important – the very linchpin of our salvation. He died that we might live; He sacrificed His life as a ransom for us (Matt. 20:28). In the prophetic words of Isaiah, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:5-6).

The good news is that having "washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5), the Messiah triumphantly rose from the dead in demonstration of the pardon granted us by the Father "for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12) – to the end that we should no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died and rose again (Rom. 4:25; Col. 2:12-13; 2 Cor. 5:14-15).

But are the details of time relating to His agonizing death and glorious resurrection of any significance to our faith in Him? Does it matter whether we know the actual day of the week on which He died and the day on which He resurrected?

We might not readily see their significance. But they do matter to Him!

“The Jews Require a Sign”

In one of His encounters with the scribes and Pharisees, they said to Him, “Master, we would see a sign from Thee” (Matt. 12:38). Apparently, they had long sought a definitive sign from Him.

In answer to their request, Christ referred to Jonah’s three days and three nights in the belly of the fish as a sign of His Messianship:

*“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” (vv. 39-40).*

As Christ put it, “the sign of the prophet Jonah” was a sign to “an evil and adulterous generation” who nevertheless wished to be assured of His Messianic credentials. (See Matt. 16:4).

The evil and adulterous generation was in no doubt in reference to the questioners, the scribes and Pharisees. That was how Yeshua viewed them along with the larger Jewish community of the time (Mark 8:38).

These people were not interested in the teachings of Christ, the truth He taught, but looked for a supernatural sign to confirm for them that Yeshua was indeed the Messiah.

It was a search that commenced with the ministry of John the Baptist when the Jewish leadership sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him if he was the Messiah, or the Elijah to come, or that Prophet (of whom Moses spoke) (John 1:19-27).

The search continued when Jesus Himself began His ministry. During this period, the Jews made many attempts to find out from Him His real identity and actually ambushed Him one day “and said to Him, How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly” (John 10:24).

The sign of confirmation was of overriding importance to the Jews; it was something visceral, something deeply ingrained in them, “For the Jews require a sign” (1 Cor. 1:22; see also Luke 11:16; John 2:18; 4:48; cp. Ex. 4:8-9, 17, 30-31).

“The Sign of the Prophet Jonah”

Finally, Christ gave them the sign they had long sought after – “the sign of the prophet Yonah”!

But it was not a sign they would witness in the here and now.

The sign of the prophet Jonah related to the duration of Christ’s stay in the grave upon His death – the length of time He would spend in “the heart of the earth” as He phrased it.

This time length would match exactly the amount of time Jonah remained in the belly of the fish.

And Jonah was in the whale’s belly for three days and three nights.

Jonah's phenomenal entombment in the belly of the fish is a story we are all familiar with: Yahveh sends Yonah to warn the city of Nineveh of His impending judgment against them for their wickedness. But Jonah decides to flee into Tarshish. On the way, Yahveh sends a great storm against the ship in which Jonah is travelling leaving the crew and passengers panic-stricken! Each man begins to call upon his god for help, but Jonah is found to be fast asleep in a corner of the ship. As a last resort, lots are cast, and Jonah is discovered to be the cause of the LORD's anger manifested in the unfolding calamity at sea. As the remedy for the raging storm, Jonah asks that he be thrown into the sea. The men do so, "and the sea ceased from her raging".

Now, where does Jonah end up?

"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).

As already mentioned, the only detail of the story applicable to Yeshua as a sign of His Messianism was the length of time Jonah spent in the belly of the fish. Accordingly, Christ would be in "the heart of the earth" "three days and three nights", being the only sign He personally gave of His Messianism!

All other signs and prophetic proofs of His Messianism were foretold by the prophets of old before His human birth in the Hebrew Scriptures. But the sign of the prophet Jonah is unique, in that Christ personally gave it upon persistent request in, what we may call, self-authentication!

What do Three Days and Three Nights Mean?

The sign of the prophet Jonah is now an accepted part of the body of supernatural divine signs identifying Jesus as the true Messiah. But the question is, how was this sign actually fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection in terms of the length of time that spanned between the two events?

In other words, what did Christ mean by "three days and three nights"? And how might we arrive at it?

We begin by acknowledging first that a day is made up of 12 hours (and hence night is also a 12-hour period, see Gen. 1:5). We read in John 11:9: "Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? ..."

But some point to the Jewish practice of "inclusive reckoning" where part of a day might be counted as one full day as a basis that Christ could not be referring to three literal days and nights!

The truth is, inclusive reckoning does not apply in the case in question. *Dake's Annotated Bible Reference* observes in its footnote on Jonah 1:17: "The Hebrew idiom three days can be used for any part of 3 days, but when the word nights is used with it the term can only mean 3 literal days and nights (v. 17; Mt. 12:40)" (p. 900).

The Companion Bible published and sold by the Oxford University Press similarly comments:

“Now, while it is quite correct to speak according to Hebrew idiom of ‘three days’ or ‘three years’, while they are only parts of three days or three years, yet that idiom does not apply in a case like this, where ‘three nights’ are mentioned in addition to ‘three days’. It will be noted that the Lord not only definitely states this, but repeats the full phraseology, so that we may not mistake it” (Appendix 156).

Obviously then, Christ meant He would be in the tomb for three full days and three full nights, totaling 72 hours.

Friday Crucifixion to early Sunday morning Resurrection Falls Short

The traditional Friday crucifixion and early Sunday morning resurrection fall short of the given duration of 3 days and 3 nights by at least one full day and a full night – and that is by using “inclusive reckoning”!

Here is how this period is calculated: the few minutes of Friday before sunset are counted as the *first day*, all Friday night from sunset till daybreak as the *first night*, all daytime Saturday as the *second day*, Saturday night as the *second night*, covering approximately 36 hours or less. But the Biblical record is that Jesus wasn’t in the tomb any of the daylight portion of Sunday, so none of that can be counted as a day. According to John 20:1, “on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb” (NKJV). The Master had already resurrected well before the break of day.

Thus we have just two days and two nights. Without inclusive reckoning (which was what Jesus meant), we are left with *just one full day (Saturday) and two nights* – short of two full days and one night!

The Messianic sign of the prophet Jonah fails by the traditional Friday crucifixion to early Sunday morning resurrection, as it is impossible to get 3 days and 3 nights between Friday late afternoon and early Sunday morning before sunrise!

But who is right? Christ or tradition?

Of course, Yeshua, the Christ, is to be believed absolutely. He is the TRUTH!

What then is the correct time-frame within which the events of His burial and resurrection took place?

Wednesday before Sunset to Saturday before Sunset

We start with the internal evidence of Christ’s resurrection day as recorded in the scriptures. The day of the crucifixion can simply be arrived at by counting three days and three nights backward from the day of the resurrection.

All the Gospels are agreed on the fact that Christ resurrected from the dead “in the end of the Sabbath” before the first day of the week:

Matt. 28:1: “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 sepulchre.”

Mark 16:2-4: “And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they [the women] came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”

“And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”

“And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great”.

Luke 24:1-2: “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

“And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre”.

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

All four accounts concur that the women went to the tomb after the Sabbath, at its *ending*, as the first day of the week (Sunday) approached, “very early in the morning,” “while it was yet dark,” and found the stone slab which covered the mouth of the tomb rolled away! Christ had already resurrected!

Put together, the ‘aggregate’ truth we arrive at is that the resurrection occurred somewhere between the ending of the Sabbath and the beginning of the first day of the week. The women did not witness the resurrection take place early Sunday morning, even “while it was still dark.” They found instead an empty tomb!

And Matthew is emphatic that all this took place, not on Sunday, but “in the end of the Sabbath”, a phrase the *American Standard Version (ASV)* renders as “late on the Sabbath day” (and so the *Darby Bible* and the *Bible in Basic English*) “as it began to dawn TOWARD the first day of the week”. “Toward” but not yet the first day!

What was this time?

Since in the Bible a new day begins at sunset (of the previous/out-going day, Gen. 1:5; Lev. 23:32), the time described is clearly ‘twilight’ or ‘dusk’ on Saturday, with perhaps a few hours or minutes for the following day, Sunday, to begin at sunset. This is exactly how the *Darby Bible* translates Matt. 28:1:

“Now late on Sabbath, as it was the dusk of the next day after Sabbath, came Mary of Magdala and the other Mary to look at the sepulchre.”

The text doesn’t mean “dusk” on Sunday (toward evening) but the dusk (what we will now call Saturday evening) preceding the first day, the dusk which would soon usher in the first day of the week at the setting of the sun. That was when the women went to the tomb, and Christ was already risen!

“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.
 “His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:
 “And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.
 “And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.
 “He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.
 “And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead; and, behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you” (Matt. 28:2-7 KJV).

According to Matthew’s account, all the things – the visit of the woman and the encounter with the angel – took place “late on the Sabbath”, at dusk. This was the first visit the women made to the tomb prior to the one they made Sunday morning as reported in Mark, Luke and John.

But what about the word “dawn” as in “dawn toward the first day?” Does it not denote the shining forth of light, implying daybreak or sunrise?

The very irrefutable fact that the Bible day begins at sunset negates the idea of the *dawning toward* representing the early rays of Sunday morning sunlight!

What the Greek word “*epihosko*” translated “dawn” means is “to begin”, “to shine”, “to grow light”, “dawn”, “appear”.

Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon* of the New Testament defines the word *epihosko* as this:

“it denotes entrance into a period which is penetrated, as it were, i.e. duration through a time... *te epiphoskouse eis mian sabbaton*, dawning into (ASV toward) the first day of the week, Matthew 28:1. Hence of the time in which a thing is done.”

In Robinson’s *Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, it is “to grow light upon, to dawn upon, intrans. of the day, Matthew 28:1 *te epiphoskouse sc. Emera Trop.* Of the Jewish day, beginning at sunset, to begin, Luke, 23:54.’!

Parkhurst’s *Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines the Greek work *epihosko* as follows:

“To draw on, as the Jewish Sabbath, which began in the evening, (see Leviticus 23:32, Nehemiah 13:19). Thus the verb is plainly used, Luke 23:54 (comp. John 19:31 with Deut. 21:22, 23) and in the same view it may be understood wherein it occurs, namely Matthew 28:1... In the evening of the Sabbath, when the (Jewish) day was dawning on towards the first day of the week” (Quoted in *The Resurrection of Christ... on Saturday NOT on Sunday* pp. 6 by E.E. Franke. Emphasis mine).

So “*epihosko*” as used in the context of the Hebrew Greek of the New Testament (not classic Greek) simply means to begin, to enter into, to dawn into. And it was dusk on the Sabbath while

it was approaching or dawning into the first day of the week that the women, on visiting the tomb, were told by the angel that Jesus had resurrected!

Counting back 3 days and 3 nights from this time (“late on the Sabbath”), we arrive at the day of His burial on the 14th of Nisan (31 AD), which would be the 4th day of the week (our Wednesday), before sunset. Just hours before, Christ had died on the cross just in time to coincide with the slaying of the paschal lambs, slain year after year on 14th Nisan to prefigure His perfect sacrifice for sin!

The three days and three nights in which Jesus said He would be in the grave are thus as follows:

- Our Wednesday sunset to Thursday sunset = FIRST NIGHT AND FIRST DAY IN THE TOMB
- Our Thursday sunset to Friday sunset = SECOND NIGHT AND SECOND DAY IN THE TOMB
- Our Friday sunset to Saturday sunset = THE THIRD NIGHT AND DAY THIRD DAY IN THE TOMB

Alternatively, we may reckon the three days and three nights this way: the *nights* as: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights; and the *days* as Thursday, Friday and Saturday (daytime).

The day following the crucifixion was an annual Sabbath, not the weekly Sabbath, and therefore the Gospel of John makes it plain that, the day of the crucifixion was a preparation day towards that annual Sabbath (or feast day).

What was the sequence of events?

Having eaten the ‘last supper’ on the night (or evening) of 13th Nisan which would be the beginning of the 14th (at sunset) (John 13:1-2, 27-30; cp. Matt. 26:20-21; Mark 14:17-18; Luke 22:14), Jesus was arrested later that night by “a band of men and officers from the chief priest and Pharisees” holding “lanterns and torches and weapons” (John 18:1-3; Luke 22:52).

From the Garden of Gethsemene where He had gone with the disciples (Matt. 26:36-47; Mark 14:30-36; Luke 22:40-44), the Lord was bound by the soldiers and escorted first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year (John 18:12-13), then from there to the palace of the high priest (Caiaphas) himself (vv. 15-27), then from Caiaphas to Governor Pilate’s “hall of judgment,” but the Jewish throng would not enter the hall, “lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover” [on the 14th at sunset. See Ex. 12:6-8] (John 18:28-29).

It is worth noting that it was still night-time, at the beginning (or “early” stages) of 14th Nisan, when Yeshua was ushered before Pilate who unsuccessfully tried to convince the Jews to let Him go because he found no fault in Him (vv. 30-40).

But when the Jews would have none of it and vehemently insisted that Jesus be put to death (John 19:1-12), Pilate “brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!” (John 19:13-14).

“The sixth hour” was about 12:00 midnight, being part of the dark portion of 14th Nisan before daybreak ushers in its daylight portion. It was later this same day, when it was daytime, that Jesus was led away to be crucified (John 19:16-17; Matt. 27:31-34; Mark 15:20-23; Luke 23:26-31) along with two criminals (Luke 23:32-33; John 19:18).

Next, Pilate affixed an accusation inscription to the cross “JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS” despite protests from the chief priests (John 19:19-22; Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26). The soldiers then divided His garments among themselves (John 19:23-24; Matt. 27:35-37; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34).

The time of these events was “the third hour” (9am in our time on 14th Nisan), “and they crucified Him” (Mark 15:25).

While He hanged on the tree in utter humiliation, the rulers, the spectators and one of the robbers reviled Him (Matt. 27:39-44; Mark 15:29-32; Luke 23:35-38; cp. 1 Pet. 2:22-24). But only for a space of three hours!

For at the sixth hour, 12 noon, a supernatural phenomenon engulfed the land. There was darkness all over the land from the sixth hour unto the ninth hour (12 noon – 3pm), at which point in time Christ cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost (Matt. 27:45-50; Mark 15:33-37; Luke 23:44-46).

Now John tells us that “The Jews... 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 [those of Jesus and the two male-factors crucified along with Him] be broken, and that they might be taken away” (John 19:31).

By now, it was apparently past 3pm (at which time the darkness had lifted) and sunset was approaching. Hence the Jewish leaders wanted the bodies removed for burial before sunset. (See Deut. 21:22-23; cp. Gal. 3:13).

Joseph of Arimathaea, a secret disciple of Jesus, eventually secured permission from Pilate to take away the body of his Master. With Nicodemus, another secret disciple, assisting with the burial, the Lord was laid in a “new sepulchre, wherein was never a man yet laid” in a garden adjacent to where He was crucified “because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand” (John 19:38-42; see also Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:50-54).

Two Sabbaths that week

That pivotal “*preparation day*” on which Christ was crucified and later buried before sunset was not Friday (the 6th day of the week), being the preparation day of the weekly Sabbath, as many assume. John pointed out back in verse 14 that it was “the preparation of the Passover” later to be eaten (observed) in the evening at sunset (Deut. 16:6).

The following day Nisan 15 (beginning, of course, at sunset Nisan 14) was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, a holy day in which no servile work was to be done:

“These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

“In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover.

“And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

“In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein” (Lev. 23:4-7).

The fifteenth day of Nisan was the “high day” of John 19:31, an annual “Sabbath” (see Lev. 23:24, 39; cp. Col. 2:16). In the year of Yeshua’s crucifixion, 31 AD, that “high day” yearly “sabbath” was a Thursday, meaning there were two sabbaths that week (one yearly, one weekly). (Note: the United States Naval Observatory, Washington D.C. has since confirmed as far back as 1919 that “the Astronomical Full Moon occurred Tuesday, March 27, AD 31, 1h P.M., Jerusalem time, Julian Calendar” making the next day, a Wednesday, the day of the Passover that year. *The Resurrection of Christ... on Saturday NOT Sunday*, p. 15, reproduces a letter from the Navy Dept. of the U.S. Naval Observatory Washington D.C. dated January 16th 1919 and signed by W.S. Eichelberger, Commander (Math.) U.S.N. Director, Nautical Almanac testifying to this).

The following scriptural facts make it abundantly clear that there were two sabbaths during the Passion week:

Because of the haste in which the Lord’s body was prepared and wrapped up in view of the coming Sabbath, there was the need for the two women disciples, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to get back to the tomb sometime after the Sabbath to complete the work.

This Mark and Luke show the women did by buying spices and ointments after the Sabbath and finished preparing the spices before the Sabbath began that they might rest on the Sabbath “according to the commandment.”

But take notice! They bought the spices when the Sabbath WAS PAST and yet prepared them BEFORE the Sabbath!

We read in Mark 16:1:

“And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him.”

In Luke 23:55-56, we read about the same business of spices meant for Jesus’ body:

“And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how His body was laid.

“And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment.”

Put together, Mark and Luke are in essence saying that the spices were *prepared before* the Sabbath after they were *bought after* the Sabbath!

Unless two different Sabbaths are involved, with a working day between them, we have a great contradiction between two gospel accounts staring us in the face!

And sure, there were two different Sabbaths during the week of Christ's death and resurrection.

The "Sabbath" Mark meant, at the end of which the women bought the spices, was the Thursday annual Sabbath (or "high day", John 19:31; Luke 23:54). The "Sabbath" referred to in Luke 23:56, the Sabbath on which the women rested according to God's commandment, was the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. This leaves one working day between the two Sabbaths, which is Friday, the 6th day of the week. This was the day on which the women prepared the spices after which they rested on the seventh day (beginning Friday evening at sunset).

That the "Sabbath" following the day of the crucifixion was not a 7th day Sabbath but a feast day is made plain in Matt. 27:62, where the term "Sabbath" is not used but "the next day that followed the day of the preparation" is used instead:

⁶² "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

⁶³ "Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

⁶⁴ "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.

⁶⁵ "Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

⁶⁶ "So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch" (Matt. 27:62-66).

As E.E. Franke notes in his book *The Resurrection of Christ... on Saturday NOT on Sunday*, "What the Jewish High Priests did on the day following the crucifixion of Christ is proof positive that it was not the seventh day Sabbath. They were great sticklers for the strictest kind of Sabbath keeping. Their law forbade travelling more than three quarters of a mile, and no secular work of any kind was permitted on the Sabbath day, yet it is recorded that on the day following the crucifixion these priests went to Pilate and begged for a guard to be sent to watch the sepulchre. This was permissible on their Passover Sabbath, but not on the Lord's (seventh day) Sabbath.

"This fact alone proves that the day following the crucifixion was the Passover Sabbath and not the regular weekly rest day.

"Besides all this, Matthew calls that day the "NEXT DAY that followed the day of the preparation" (Matthew 27:62), a term that would in no wise have applied to the Sabbath of the Lord. All of these things should be understood and they bear mightily on the facts before stated.

"We have proven beyond doubt, and without fear of successful contradiction, that the Sabbath following the crucifixion, on which Christ was in the tomb, was not the Seventh Day Sabbath, but an entirely different day, viz. Thursday, which that year was the Jewish high day Sabbath or Day of Unleavened Bread, following the Passover feast day and the slaying of the Paschal lamb.

Christ was in the tomb on the High Day Sabbath (Thursday), also the next day (Friday), and on Saturday, the Seventh Day Sabbath, on which day He arose (Matthew 28:1-8)” (pp. 17-18).

Christ fulfilled “the sign of the prophet Jonah” without fail – a sign that has been “spoken against” by the Friday crucifixion to Sunday morning resurrection tradition.

At baby Yeshua’s presentation in the temple, an old prophet named Simeon said of Him:

“And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary His mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against” (Luke 2:34).

Don’t be one to argue against the one Messianic sign Christ Himself gave about Himself – the sign of the prophet Jonah: 3 (twelve hour) nights and 3 (twelve hour) days in the heart of the earth!

“Third Day” means the Third Day after the Third Night

The argument that the phrase “on the third day” (Matt. 16:21; Luke 9:22; Luke 18:32; 1 Cor. 15:4, etc.) used in reference to the time of Jesus’ resurrection is conclusive evidence that “inclusive reckoning” is to be used in calculating the duration of Jesus’ stay in the tomb is untenable. This is because the Messiah made it clear that this period would cover 3 days and 3 nights. Accordingly, we are not at liberty to surmise or assume that His rising on the third day suggests His being in the tomb for less than 3 days and 3 nights, made up of 12 hours each, night and day (Gen. 1:5). We are to interpret His resurrection “on the third day” in accordance with His own definition of what He means by that! And He means having spent three days and three nights in the grave! So then, the phrase is merely an identical term referring to the same time period just as “after three days” (Mark 8:31), which is also used in reference to the time of His resurrection, would also mean. The Greek word translated “after” is ‘*meta*’ meaning “after”, “upon”. Hence “after three days” simply means *when three days are accomplished, upon that occasion, at that very moment, I will rise again!*

The three days and three nights is the key determinant specifying how long the period is.

We find an example in the Book of Esther where the phrase “on the third day” is used to designate the ‘terminus’ or ending of a period covering three days and three nights:

*“Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,
“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” (Esth. 4:15-16).*

“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” (5:1).

Now, did Esther's appearance before the King "on the third day" mean they did not complete the fast spanning 3 days and 3 nights? That they only fasted some few hours of the first day, somewhere before sunset, and then ended the fast early on the third day and that would be 3 days and 3 nights – by inclusive reckoning? Whoever fasts this way?

If you were facing certain annihilation as Esther, Mordecai and the rest of the Jewish community in Persia faced, you wouldn't fast this partially, this sloppily, and call it a fast of three days and three nights!

The simple truth is that the phrase "on the third day" refers back to Esther 4:16 as comprising 3 nights and 3 days with Esther making her appearance before the King on day 3 of the period (after the third night) and not day 1 or day 2.

And the time of her entry into the "inner court" must have been late in the afternoon or close to dusk on the third day (after the third night), as the story indicates that after King Ahasuerus had held out his golden sceptre to Queen Esther and accepted her, she went on to invite both the king and Haman to the banquet which she had prepared (v. 2 ff.). Because it was apparently close to nightfall, we learn in chapter 6 that "On that night could not the King sleep" (v. 1) – obviously the effect of the answered prayer offered during the fast.

So although the fasting period set was 3 nights and 3 days, it was proper to say Esther appeared before the king "on the third day" or day no. 3 of the period. This in no way truncates the 3-day fast, night and day.

In 1 Samuel 30:12-13, we read of an Egyptian slave who had not eaten or drunk for "three days and three nights" because his Amalekite master abandoned him when he fell sick "three days ago". Clearly the "three days" are seen here as embodying their night portions or they would not be three days in the true sense of the word biblically. (See also Job 2:13 and Rev. 9:7, 11).

Perhaps we should also count the Sabbath period "inclusively" and consider any portion of daytime Saturday (say 9 am) as making up the whole Sabbath period? But we all know God never meant the Sabbath to be kept this way but from sunset (Friday) to (sunset) Saturday, a 24-hour period made up of one full night and one full day. It's common knowledge that the Jews never observed the Sabbath by using 'inclusive reckoning' but from sunset to sunset (Neh. 13:19; Mark 1:21, 32; see Lev. 23:32). Inclusive reckoning did not apply in any sense (when *night* was understood to be included!).

Neither did it apply in Jesus' resurrection on the third day, that is, ordinal day three of the period defined in Matt. 12:40 as consisting of three days and *three nights*. The 'third day' was the day immediately preceded by the third night, which in the Lord's case was a Saturday Sabbath late in the day!

The Significance of Jesus being actually Dead for Three Days and Three Nights

Arguments may be made back and forth, but what does it really mean for Jesus to be actually dead for three days and three nights?

The problem which arises from truncating Jesus' time in the tomb to a mere 36 hours or less, as Friday crucifixionists insist happened, is that it leaves room for doubts to be made about the authenticity of Jesus' death.

Dake's Annotated Reference Bible in its commentary on Luke 9:22 states inter alia:

“The Jews did not accept evidence as to the identification of a dead body after three days, for corruption took place quickly in the East. Hence, this period of three full days and three full nights was wanted by God, so as to preclude all doubt that death had actually taken place, and shut out all suggestion that Christ might have been in a trance. Jews would legally have to conclude His death, should He remain dead the full three days and three nights” (p. 69).

This the chief priests tacitly acknowledged when “the next day that followed the day of the preparation” they went to Pilate and requested that the tomb be placed under guard until at least “the third day” since in their words, “that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, ‘After three days I will arise again’” (Matt. 27:62-66).

Thus to limit Christ's stay in the tomb to 36 hours, which is less than two days (and two nights) or 48 hours, is to strike at the authenticity of Jesus' death and resurrection. It may well give credence to some theories that Jesus was merely in a coma while He lay in the tomb and not actually dead!

But the Lord Jesus truly died on the cross – and His side was speared – and He was entombed for three nights and three days, AND HIS BODY DIDN'T SEE CORRUPTION (Acts 2:27, 31-32; 13:34-37; cp. John 11:39), and He rose again on the third day late on the Sabbath as the Lord of all! (See Daniel 9:26-27, which has a two-fold meaning, for a prophetic hint of the Messiah being “cut off” for “the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” in the “midst of the week” [which is Wednesday]. The tearing of the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom signalled that animal sacrifices were no longer acceptable in heaven, Matt. 27:50:51; Heb. 9:11-12; 10:11-12).

Easter Sunday Predates the Resurrection

Since our Lord arose late on the Sabbath, as has been conclusively proven, it stands to reason that Easter Sunday sun-rise worship has nothing to do with Him. On the contrary, it has everything to do with Tammuz, the false Messiah (see Ezekiel 8:13-18). Indeed, it has been documented that “the idolatrous nations... in honour of their god, the sun, began their day at his rising” (G.L. Butler, *The Change of the Sabbath*, Nashville, Tennessee, 1904. Scanned and Edited by Paul Nethercott p. 40).

So then, the use of Christ's supposed resurrection on Sunday as the basis of Sunday worship in Christianity is clearly an afterthought.

The early disciples assembled in the evening of the first day of the week following Christ's resurrection, not for worship, but for an entirely different reason stated in the text – “for fear of the Jews” (John 20:19). With the arrest and cruel execution of their Master still fresh in their

minds, they feared for their own lives and therefore huddled behind barred doors to keep away prying eyes. And it was in the evening, probably just before sunset.

Moreover, the disciples had not yet come to the conviction that the Lord had indeed risen – until the moment of His unexpected appearance in their midst – much less institute the first day of the week (Sunday) as a day of worship in honour of His resurrection!

And while He met them again “after eight days” (John 20:26) after the previous meeting, which would be a Monday (not another Sunday) counting from the twilight hours of the previous Sunday meeting (cp. 1 Chron. 9:25 with 2 Kings 11:5), He met them for a total of “forty days” after His resurrection (Acts 1:3), and all of those forty days could not have been Sundays, the first day the week.

What we know for certain is that the observance of the weekly seventh-day Sabbath was not only a routine for the Master but also for His disciples. Indeed, Luke, writing some thirty years after the resurrection, acknowledges the validity of the seventh-day Sabbath when he reports that the women who prepared the spices for the Lord’s body “rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56).

In *The Acts of the Apostles*, this same writer refers to the Sabbath not less than nine times and most of them in connection with apostolic Sabbath-keeping!