

# THE SIGN OF JONAH

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By Joseph F. Dumond

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Our original interest in the timing of God's Holy Days arose from an attempt to find out if Jesus actually spent three days and three nights in the grave as He said He would: Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you."

But He, answering, said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the great whale *for* three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth *for* three days and three nights."

Matthew 12:38 to 40

As the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition only allows a maximum of two nights and one day in the grave, it actually denies that Jesus kept the "Sign of Jonah", and thus casts doubt on His truthfulness. Did He keep this "Sign", or is Jesus Christ a fraud as the opponents of Biblical Christianity subtly suggest? And if He did keep this Sign, is this yet another of the times that the 'Little Horn' spoken of in Daniel 7:8 has tried to change?

## Two Sabbaths?

After unsuccessfully trying to reconcile the Crucifixion/Resurrection accounts in the Bible with the three days and three nights, we finally came across a booklet, now out of print, which claimed that Christ's crucifixion was really on a Wednesday, with two Sabbaths occurring during the time He was dead. Their argument was built on Matthew 28:1, which literally reads: *Now after the Sabbaths, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.*; and also on their knowledge of God's Holy Days and how they apply to the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. (Details about God's Holy Days are set out in a separate article titled Christian Holy Days.) They claimed that in the year of the crucifixion, the Preparation Day on which Jesus died occurred on Wednesday. The next day was the first day of the Week of Unleavened Bread, which was (and still is) a special annual Great Sabbath Day. The Bible clearly shows that the Preparation Day was indeed the day before the First day of Unleavened bread in John 19:14. (Also referred to in John 19:31 and Leviticus 23:4 to 8. God's annual Holy Days are Great Sabbaths, regardless of which day of the week they occur on, as shown in Leviticus 23:24, 32 & 39 and John 7:37. The first day of Unleavened Bread is also confirmed as a Great Sabbath by combining John 19:14, Mark 15:42 and Matthew 28:1.) It was the coming of this Great Day or solemn Annual Sabbath that drove the Jewish leaders to request the breaking of the 'convicts' legs so they would die before the Week of Unleavened Bread formally began.

The Biblical account clearly shows that Jesus died mid-afternoon on the Preparation Day. Jesus' body was finally placed in a tomb carved into the rock (the heart of the earth) just as the Great Day began at dusk. The urgency involved was such that His body was interred without

being properly embalmed. So it was that the three days and nights in the heart of the earth began at dusk at the end of the day of Preparation. That night and the next day (ie Thursday – the first Great Day of the Week of Unleavened Bread) were the first night and day of Christ’s interment.

The next night and day were the second day of the Week of Unleavened Bread. Normal work was permitted on that day. The booklet suggested, quite reasonably, that this was the day on which Christ’s followers went out and bought the herbs, spices and linen required to embalm Jesus properly. They then had to prepare and blend the herbs and spices before they could embalm Him. It is likely that by the time they had finished, the day was nearly over, so the actual embalming had to be postponed again. It is also likely that they knew of the guards protecting the tomb who would prevent them from unsealing the tomb and embalming Jesus until they left. As Matthew 27:62 to 66 reveals, the guards were commanded to stay at the tomb until the three days had passed. The second night and second day (Friday) had now passed.

But the new ‘day’ beginning at dusk was the normal weekly Sabbath. Christ’s followers once again had to delay while this Sabbath passed. This was now the third night and the third day (Saturday). Interestingly, the Sabbath is the day of rest, and Jesus rested on this Sabbath in the sleep of death.

This sequence is confirmed by Mark 16:1, which tells us that the women bought their spices after the Sabbath was over, and by Luke 23:56 which tells us that they kept the Sabbath after they had prepared the spices. Obviously two Sabbaths must have passed while Jesus was in the grave.

The three days and three nights were fulfilled at dusk at the end of this Sabbath. Did Jesus rise then, or did He wait and rise at dawn the next morning as is commonly taught? Indeed, John tells us that:

Early on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came, while the tomb was still in darkness, and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They took the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they put Him.”  
John 20:1 and 2

Jesus was already out of the tomb when the women arrived **before dawn** to embalm Him the next day. They were hoping that with the three days now fulfilled the guards would allow them into the tomb. But Jesus had risen from the dead at dusk on the previous evening and left the tomb, exactly fulfilling the Sign of Jonah. This is confirmed by Matthew 16:21 and Mark 10:34 which say Jesus will rise on the third day and Mark 8:31 which says Jesus will rise after three days. Jesus fulfilled all of these scriptures by rising exactly at the moment of transition between the end of the Sabbath and the start of the first day of the week. He probably spent the night in prayer somewhere like the garden of Gethsemane. The next morning Jesus spoke to Mary and then went to present Himself before God the Father in Heaven in fulfilment of the Feast of the

Firstfruit (also known as the Wave Offering). It was only after this had been done that His disciples were allowed to touch Him. (See Lev 23:9-12, John 20:17, Matt 28:9)

However, when we first heard this proposal, we were not sure if the Day of Preparation really did fall on a Wednesday that year, or even if the author was using the right year.

The Biblical calendar system we outlined above was used to determine the date of Passover (also called the Day of Preparation) for a series of years during which the Crucifixion of Christ might have taken place. The dates according to the 'modern' Rabbinical calculation system are also included for comparison. Table 3 contains this summary. Note that the Rabbinical calculation is only correct for the 31 and 32 CE Passovers.

Year (Common Era)	Biblical Calculation	Rabbinical Calculation
28	Wednesday, 28 April	Monday, 26 April
29	Monday, 18 April (Poss. Sunday)	Sabbath (Sat), 16 April
30	Friday, 7 April (Poss. Thursday)	Wednesday, 5 April
31	Wednesday, 25 April	Wednesday, 25 April
32	Monday, 14 April (Poss. Sunday)	Monday, 14 April
33	Sabbath (Sat), 1 May	Friday, 3 April
34	Thursday, 22 April	Wednesday, 21 April

**Table 3 Dates of the Passover near the time of Jesus Christ's Crucifixion**

### **Tiberius Caesar's Fifteenth Year**

All that remained was to determine the actual year of the Crucifixion. Once again the Bible contains the information required to determine the year. It can be dated by a reference to John the Baptist in Luke 3:1 to 3, which tells us that in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, God called John out of the wilderness and instructed him to 'preach a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins'.

The fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar is the key to establishing this date. Tiberius became Emperor on 17 August, 14 CE, on the death of Augustus Caesar. The Jews at that time used a system of counting regnal years that began and ended on Feast of Trumpets. This was their 'civil' calendar; its origins are probably linked to the fact that the Year of Jubilee began during the seventh month (Lev. 25:8-17). However, 1 Abib was still recognized as the beginning of

their religious calendar. Using this reckoning, the first “year” of Tiberius’ reign ran from 17 August, 14 CE until 13 October, 14 CE, the date of the Feast of Trumpets that year. The second year of his reign ran from 13 October, 14 CE until 3 October, 15 CE, which was the Feast of Trumpets that year.

This series continued until we reach the fifteenth year of his reign which by Jewish reckoning ran from 19 September, 27 CE until 7 October, 28 CE. Note that John began preaching during Tiberius’ fifteenth year, not after his fifteenth year.

John probably began preaching on or just after the Feast of Trumpets, an ideal time for his message as the days between the Feast of Trumpets and Day of Atonement are a traditional time of reflection and repentance among the Jews. If Jesus was baptized by John within 52 days after the Feast of Trumpets, Jesus still had enough time to fulfill His three and a half year ministry before He was crucified, as the three and a half years are sometimes represented as 1260 days in prophecy. This time period fulfills the time that Daniel says must pass (the middle of the week) before the Messiah was cut off. (Daniel 9:26 & 27)

This places the time of Christ’s anointing in the late autumn of 27 CE and His crucifixion at the Passover of 31 CE. As this Passover occurred on a Wednesday, it confirms that Jesus **did** keep the Sign of Jonah exactly as He said He would.

Those who have been taught that Jesus was crucified on a Friday should note from the above calculation of the fifteenth year of Tiberius that 31 CE is the earliest possible year for the crucifixion. This means that the information given in the Bible actually denies the possibility of a Friday crucifixion in the year 30 CE. Nor is the 33 CE Friday date given by the Rabbinical calculation a realistic possibility as the Rabbinical calendar system was still being developed six hundred years later. The Friday crucifixion doctrine is a fraud instituted and maintained by a corrupt, paganized church, and actually denies that Jesus fulfilled the Sign of Jonah. As this document demonstrates, Jesus Christ did in fact fulfill this proof of His identity as the Son of God and our Saviour. The key to this knowledge has been the Biblical Calendar.

#### “Difficult Scriptures”

#### **The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13 to 35)**

(Luke 24:13 to 35)

Some people suggest that the disciples’ comment on the road to Emmaus that “today is the third day since all these things happened” (Luke 24:21) does not fit with a Wednesday crucifixion as late Sunday afternoon would be the fourth day since the crucifixion. This is true. However, the disciples did not say that “today is the third day since the crucifixion”, but rather “since all these things”. The last things to happen concerning the crucifixion actually occurred on the following day when the chief priests went to Pilate and asked for the tomb to be sealed and guards to be placed outside the tomb. Pilate complied with their requests. These things occurred on the Thursday: – three days later was Sunday, fitting in nicely with the disciples’ statement.

And how does their comment fit with a Friday crucifixion? Sunday is only two days since the crucifixion – there is no fit possible. This ‘difficult passage’ actually supports a Wednesday crucifixion and denies a Friday crucifixion.

**Three Days and Three Nights – can this mean parts of three days?**

Again, we have heard people claim that scripture shows that part of a day can be counted as a full day. Thus parts of three days could be counted as if they were three full days. They reason that as Jesus died on Friday afternoon, Friday is the first day, Saturday is the second day and Saturday night is the third day. (Using Biblical days which go from dusk to dusk.)

If Jesus had only said that He would rise the third day and there was clear Bible evidence that such a part-day = full-day counting method was valid then perhaps this scheme might work. However, Jesus also said that He would be “in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.” If we apply the part-day = full-day counting method to this statement and also start counting from the time of death rather than the time of internment to help this system work, we find:

Day1	Night 1	Day 2	Night 2	Day 3	Night 3
Friday afternoon	Friday night	Saturday daytime	Most of Saturday night	No third day: Already risen John 20:1-2	No third night

**Table 4: Sign of Jonah versus Friday Crucifixion**

As can be seen in Table 4, this system cannot be made to work.

Nonetheless, for completeness we will also look at scriptures which Friday crucifixionists claim prove their part-day/full-day counting method:

**Jonah**

The claim is made that the account of Jonah does not require three full days and three full nights. Is this so? The scriptures say:

Now Jehovah had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Jonah 1:17

This is just what Jesus said. Although the account does not say that Jonah spent precisely 72 hours in the belly of the fish, there is nothing anywhere in the book of Jonah to suggest that the period of time Jonah spent in the belly of the fish was not about 72 hours, just as Jesus was the same time in the heart of the earth. As shown in the table above, even using part-days/part-nights (which is not even suggested by the above quote) would require two full days and two full nights as well a part day and a part night. The Friday crucifixion only has one full day (Saturday) and one full night (Friday night). Saturday night is not complete as Jesus rose before dawn. Jonah does not support a Friday crucifixion.

**Esther’s Fast (Esther 4:15 to 5:1)**

It is claimed that Esther's Fast proves that part days are counted as full days. Indeed, three days of fasting, night and day, were called for. And Esther did go before the king on the third day. But does this prove part days are counted as full days? Let us look closely at the account.

Esther calls the fast and then says that "My maids and I will fast likewise, and so I will go to the king,". She does not say that I will go to the king **after** the fast, but rather "so I will go to the king". She is saying she will go to the king while she is fasting. Verse 5:1 tells us that she went to the king on the last day of their fast. Though this verse does not specify the exact time she went to the king, I suspect that it would have been just before the fast was to end. In this way she would be approaching the king at the time her people's prayers were reaching a crescendo before God. Certainly if it was me in her place, that is the time I would choose.

This idea is supported by the fact that the fast was specified as lasting for three days, night and day. This suggests that the fast began at dusk that day, allowing time for Mordecai to inform all the Jews in Sushan of the fast and setting definite beginning and end points. The fast then went for the next three nights and their following days. Her approach to the king near the end of the third day would then occur as the fast approached 72 hours.

So we see that the time of Esther's approach to the king does not prove that their fast was not a full three days and three nights long.

### **Heart of the Earth**

Another attempt to justify the Friday crucifixion is to claim that the heart of the earth actually refers to Jesus being under Satan's power. (Luke 4:5 to 6 show that Satan is presently ruler of this earth.) This time period is seen as beginning when Satan has Jesus arrested in Gethsemane. Even if we were to accept that Jesus was still under Satan's power while He was dead (which we do not accept – see Ecclesiastes 9:5 & 12:7) this idea only converts Friday into a full day from a part day and adds Thursday as a new part night. It still only amounts to three nights and two daylight periods. It does not fulfill Jesus' three days and three nights.

Only the Wednesday Crucifixion is consistent with all of these Scriptures.

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Another booklet, '**Christian Holy Days**', unlocks the Christian meaning of the Biblical Holy Days, which reveal God's plan of Salvation. Table 5 summarizes their meaning.

Table 6 lists the dates of God's Annual Holy Days from 2000 to 2008.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Central Highlands Christian Publications or New King James translations.

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CENTRAL HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS

289 Stag Rd, Kingston, Vic. 3364 Australia

Phone (03) 5345 7367 or (03) 5345 3109

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