“If Jesus Was Crucified on Friday, How Was He Dead for Three Nights?”

I am looking for an answer to the “three days, three nights in the tomb” prophecy. Jesus was only in the tomb three days and TWO NIGHTS. I have seen the day portion of this prophecy explained. However, I have never heard a convincing explanation of how Friday and Saturday night can be three nights. Help!

There are several views that address this question. One view is that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday. 72 hours later later, Saturday evening, He rose and the empty tomb was discovered on Sunday.

Another view is that Jesus died on Thursday. I take the view Jesus was crucified on Friday and rose on Sunday. All prophecies state He will rise on the third day. (Matthew 16: 21, 17:23, 20:19, 27:64, Luke 9:22, 18:33, etc…) The events of the gospels seem to correlate best with a Friday crucifixion. Only one passage talks about him being in the grave three days and three nights, Matthew 12:40. If not for this one passage, all scholars would agree on a Friday crucifixion. So we are really dealing with the question of one passage and how is that related in light of all the other passages?

In Jewish thinking, a part of a day is equivalent to a whole day. Genesis 42:17 states that Joseph held his brothers in prison for three days and in verse 18 states he spoke to them on the third day and released them. 1 Kings 20:29 says Israel and Syria camped for 7 days and then on the seventh day the began battle. Other passages—Esther 5;1, 1 Samuel 30:12—show similar thought. So Old Testament language shows the expression “three days,” “third day,” and “three days and

three nights" are used to express the same period of time. Rabbinic literature shows the same thing. Rabbi Eleazr ben Azariah wrote in 100 A.D., "A day and night are an Onah (period of time) and the portion of an Onah is as the whole of it."

So we conclude the expression "after three days," "on the third day," and the "three days and three nights" are all one and indicate the same time span.

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"I Find the Argument for a Wednesday Crucifixion Most Compelling"

I receive the Probe-Alert and read an interesting response to another email: "If Jesus Was Crucified on Friday, How Was He Dead for Three Nights?" I use a Dake's Bible and although I try to keep an open mind when studying his (Finis Dake) interpretations, I thought his explanation of the Wednesday crucifixion was quite compelling. Dake refers to many verses in support of his interpretation. I will endeavor to include as many of the pertinent ones (admittedly my opinion) as possible. If you have access to a Dake's Bible, the references are included beside each verse.

Matt. 27:63 – "…after three days I will rise again."
This shows how the Jews understood the three days and three

nights of Matt. 12:40

Lev. 23:7
This verse refers to the special Sabbath two days before the weekly Sabbath.

Mat. 12:40 “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.”

John 19:31 “…for that Sabbath day was an high day.”
This is another reference to the special Sabbath.

Luke 9:22
Although this verse merely says that He will be raised on the third day, Dake gives another perspective on the three full days and three full nights interpretation:

• When days and nights are both mentioned, then it cannot be parts of three days, but full days and nights (Ester 4:16 with 5:1; 1 Sam. 30:12 with 13; Jonah 1:17 with Mat. 12:40). See also Rev. 11:9-11.

• The Jews understood Christ to mean “after three days” or three full days and three full nights (Matt. 27:63), hence the soldiers had orders to guard the tomb at least that long.

• It was the custom to mourn for the dead three full days and nights, called “days of weeping,” which were followed by four “days of lamentation,” thus making seven days (Gen. 27:41; 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13; Job 2:13). According to rabbinical notion the spirit wandered about the sepulchre for three days hoping to re-enter the body, but when corruption set in the spirit left. This was believed to be on the fourth day when the loud lamentations began. Hence, on the fourth day Lazarus was supposed to stink (John 11:39).

• Herodotus testifies that embalmment did not take place until after three days when the spirit was supposed to be gone

(Herod. ii. 86-89). This is why the women were taking sweet spices to anoint Jesus (Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1)

• 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.

Thank you for your e-mail.

As you may know there is some controversy/discussion about Passover meal and whether it was celebrated Wednesday night, or Thursday night, and some evidence which argues for both days.

I am inclined to agree with the full three days, and the Wednesday night theory.

I appreciate your sending this information (some of which I already have) and your nice summary.

If you go with Thursday, you just have to accept the fact that the Lord was in the tomb some PORTION of three days (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday).

As far as theology and/or interpretation is concerned, either (in my judgment) is acceptable since the rudimentary facts of the death, burial, and resurrection are not affected.

Warm Regards,

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