

The Reckoning of The Time from Christ's Death to His Resurrection

Are Mt. 12.40 & 16.21 Impossible to Reconcile?

[Sun. Wed. May 14, 2014] The Reckoning of The Time from Christ's Death to His Resurrection – Craig A. Thurman

The time of the greatly celebrated *Christian holiday of Easter* is a time when some few who read the Scriptures begin to ask questions about the inconsistencies they see between the Scriptures and the Easter celebration. Among these few inquisitors, a similar experience will arise concerning the celebration of the Christmas holiday as well. Long ago, my wife and I, while we had children at the ripe age of enjoying these things, put away these holidays being convinced that there was no biblical basis at all for either observing these days as Christian Holy Days, or for the very days set chosen for observing them. Our upbringing was probably like many of you. We grew up with dressing especially nice on Easter Sundays, family pictures, Easter baskets filled with lots of candy bunnies, chicks and eggs. We dyed our Easter eggs and had the fun Easter egg hunts; and we usually had a big dinner if we didn't eat out at one of our favorite diners. (That was a special treat especially for this special day.) That was how we were raised. It was all a part of what we did being we were Christians. So, moving away from this was not something that we could turn off one day, and then go merrily on our way. Disconnecting from what we had always done actually took some time for adjusting to. As with learning all truth of Scripture there is the initial joy of knowing we were doing right and being obedient to God, BUT, we had to *bring* our feelings into subjection to the truth of God's Word. With that conviction came also the sting of rejection by those close to us, and the void left between how things use to be and how they were now. This took time to sort through. What should anyone do, who claims to want to walk with Christ, when they see that their practice is inconsistent with the Word of God? Obey. Most professors of Christ love in word and tongue. True saints of God love in deed and truth.

1Jo 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

For the love of the Lord what are we to do? What should we do? What is best for us to do? Here is what we did, and this is what every Christian does who takes a stand on any issue that comes along the way: Stand agreed with Christ's Word.

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Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

In light of the truth of the Word of God our conclusion was that we simply could no longer justify our participating in something that contradicted the Word of Him that we said we loved and obeyed with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. I am reminded of the words of Joshua as he prepared to leave the Israelites by death. He saw in them the same vacillations we so often experience. They'd serve a little while, begin to disobey, and apostatize. So he said to them before his departure,

Jo.24.14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

15 ¶ And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

My observation of some Christians who claimed a biblical conviction at first and then turn again to those same errors are unstable in their faith and undependable when it comes to all matters of doctrine or practice.

The traditional understanding of Easter is that Christ was apprehended probably on a Thursday evening, and then crucified on the next day, Friday; that our Lord rested in the tomb Friday, Saturday, and then Sunday morning at sunrise He rose from the dead. This is the traditional Friday crucifixion theory that the mass of Christendom thinks is correct. (I say *think* because most professors of Jesus Christ will neither take the time nor has the desire to investigate this matter for themselves.)

The problem with a Friday crucifixion: The claim that Jesus was in the tomb Friday, Saturday, and Sunday morning comes nowhere close to satisfying the prophecy of Jonah where it read that our Lord would be three days and three nights in the *heart of the earth*. At best, this theory gives us Friday

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night and Saturday night, Saturday morning. Scripture does not allow us to claim Sunday morning at all being our Lord was already risen from the dead when the women went to the tomb early that first day of the week. But even if we included Sunday morning we would have only 2 nights and 2 days. There is absolutely no way that we can arrive at the three days and three nights of Jonah's prophecy, unless we involve ourselves in a very tedious labyrinth of reasoning that no one else can conclude for themselves. (I've never appreciated having to memorize a certain order of events and/or Scriptures in order to make something work. Reminds me greatly of the rapture theory. If we don't say it just right we mess the whole thing up. Scriptures must be allowed to speak for themselves, and others should be able to conclude the same thing as well.)

Is it enough to answer of the events of Christ's death, burial and resurrection by saying Christ died and was buried on Friday, resting in the tomb all day and night Saturday and rose Sunday morning? Does Jonah's prophecy matter? Is it accurate? Is it dependable? It certainly is! If this prophecy is not accurate; if it is not dependable and correct we cannot believe any other prophecy. Just as the doctrine of Creationism is correct, the tower of Babel is real, the Noahic flood historic, the three Hebrews cast into the fire, the virgin birth, Pentecost, gifts of God, and Christ's second coming and millennial reign, and eternal glory, the prophecy of Jonah is absolutely correct, whether or not we understand it or can explain it!

By the Scriptures I dismiss the Friday crucifixion as totally untenable. But the Wednesday crucifixion, as long as I insisted on them saying the same thing, also would not work. Before we begin looking into this topic it would be best to make one prefatory remark that might be at first shocking, but I think in the end most helpful:

There is no statement in all of Scripture which says that our Lord Jesus Christ raised from the dead on the morning of the first day of the week. What do they state? They tell us that He was already gone! (Mt.28.1-7; Mk.16.1-6; Lk.24.1-7; Jn.20.1-1, 2)

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Now let's begin with the statement of the one holding to the Friday crucifixion. He is objection to a Wednesday crucifixion goes like this:

'There is no possible way these two terms (*three days and three nights* and *the third day*, Cf. Mt 12:40 with many references to the third day) can be reconciled if one insists that *three days and three nights* equals *seventy two hours* and this is the position the WC (Wednesday crucifixion) is forced to take.

'Now why is this impossible?

'Simply because from a given point in time, when 72 hours expire you have reached the ultimate end of the *third day*. There is no time left! Therefore it is impossible for an event, which occurs after the designated 72 hours have elapsed, to take place **on the third day!**'

I disagree with these statements. But I will admit that, as an adherent to the teaching of a Wednesday crucifixion was my problem. No matter what I did, with the understanding that I had of the Scriptures, it was impossible to reconcile the two: 72 hours and rising on the third day. I would either lengthen the one and shorten the other, or else lengthen the other and shorten the one. That is, until the Scriptures were interpreted correctly.

Three days and three nights equals *three days and three nights*, and the Lord raised in, on, and within the third day. These are absolutely harmonious.

There must be no denying that the Scriptures clearly state that our Lord must be **in the heart of the earth** for three days and three nights. Do not miss the obvious distinction that is to be made here. *In the heart of the earth ...*

Three days and three nights:

Jon 1:17 *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**.*

Jon. 2.1, LXX τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας

Jon. 2.1, Heb. וְשָׁלֹשׁ יָמִים וְשָׁלֹשׁ לַיְלֹת

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Mt 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**. ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ τῆς γῆς τρεῖς ἡμέρας καὶ τρεῖς νύκτας.*

Also, there can be no denying that our Lord stated as clearly that he would be raised the third day.

The third day:

- Collated Group 1

Mt 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, **and be raised again the third day**.

καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθῆναι

Lu 9:22 Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, **and be raised the third day**.

καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθῆναι

- Group 2

Mt 17:23 And they shall kill him, **and the third day he shall be raised again**. And they were exceeding sorry.

καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἐγερθήσεται

Mt 20:19 And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: **and the third day he shall rise again**.

καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστήσεται

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Mr 10:34 And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: **and the third day he shall rise again.**

καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστήσεται

- Group 3 Citing other prepositions used referring to Christ's resurrection
*Mr 14:58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and **within** three days I will build another made without hands.*

*Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and **in** three days I will raise it up.*

*Mt 27:63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, **After** three days I will rise again.*

*Mr 8:31 And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and **after** three days rise again.*

The religious leaders went to Pilate very next day (probably as early as possible that next morning), after our Lord was buried to request that guards be stationed at the tomb **until** the third day. This should be sufficient enough to discount the claims of Christ's resurrection. The guards would be posted up to Sunday evening at the least.

Mt 27:62 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.

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The guards were at the tomb when Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the tomb.

*Mt 28:4 And for fear of him the **keepers** did shake, and became as dead men.*

This informs us that whatever day it is, it must be that period of time that goes beyond the foretold resurrection, but within the timeframe of the guards watch.

And yet we read that it has been three days since these things were done.

*Lu 24:21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day **since** αὐτῶν these things were done. (Probably meaning that today is the day, three days from the accomplishment of these things. Meaning Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and since = Sunday.)*

Let's begin to look at the opening chapters to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew and Mark.

Mt. 28.1; Mk.16.1 The time of these texts is the beginning of the first day of the week, not the evening of sabbath. The evening of the sabbath would have been Friday night. The expressions *In the end of the sabbath as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week* (Mt.28.1) and *when the sabbath was past* (Mk.16.1) mean that the evening of the first day of the week has begun to come in. That is, 6:00pm our Saturday night is the beginning of the first day of the week by God's calendar, or Jewish reckoning of days.

Mk.16.1; What does this verse say? When the sabbath was past, when their 7th day sabbath had completed at our time, 6:00pm. Saturday evening the Marys of this text went to buy (probably more) spices to anoint the body of our Lord when morning came. Notice that Mk.16.2 continues in the narrative to give us this fact:

Mr 16:2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

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Lu 24:1 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. (Mt.28.1 should be read to include this fact.)

John Gill explains the meaning of Mt. 28.1 and Mk. 16.1 as well as any:

'Ver. 1. In the end of the sabbath, & c.] This clause is by some joined to the last verse of the preceding chapter, but stands better here, as appears from Mark xvi. 1. and intends not what the Jews call the sabbath-eve, for that began the sabbath; but what they call מוצאי שבת, the goings out of the sabbath; and as Mark says, ch.xvi. 1. When the sabbath was past: that is, when the sun was set, and any stars appeared. ... must mean, not the evening and night, which preceded the sabbath, and was a part of it, but what followed it, and belonged to the first day. As it began to dawn; not the day, but the night ...'

What about the first day of the week. Did our Lord raise from the dead **on** the first day of the week or not? Can we tell by the information that we are given in Scripture?

Mt.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.

2 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. {was: or, had been }

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

*6 **He is not here: for he is risen**, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead ...

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Mk.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.

*2 And **very early in the morning** the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre **at the rising of the sun.***

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

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

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted.

*6 And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: **he is risen; he is not here:** behold the place where they laid him.*

*Lk.24.1 ¶ 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.*

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

*6 **He is not here, but is risen:** remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee ...*

*Jn.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.*

*2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, **They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.***

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Since we can prove that the Lord Jesus did not raise from the dead on the first day of the week, we can dismiss the Friday crucifixion as an erroneous tradition that the early false church raised. But the Wednesday crucifixion doctrine still has its

problem. How can the Lord be raised from the dead in three days and fulfill the three days and nights of Jonah's prophecy. Read the text again. The answer is right before us:

*Mt 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**.*

When did our Lord enter into the heart of the earth? When he died on the cross, or when He was buried in the tomb? Our answer must be, when He died on the cross.

This expression *heart of the earth* specifically refers to the place called 'hell.' In hell there was then a partitioned place where all of the saints who had died before Christ's resurrection were being comforted and resting. This place is called Abraham's bosom. (Lk.16.22)

When did O.T. saints go to this place? When they died, or when they were buried? Obviously the answer is that they went to this place immediately upon their death. So let's look at the details surrounding our Lord's death.

The Scriptures state that our Lord died on the cross at the ninth hour of the day (3:00p; I want to say here, on our Wed.)

*Mt.27.45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the **ninth hour**.*

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.

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48 *And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.*

49 *The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.*

50 ¶ *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, **yielded up the ghost.***

*Mk.15.33 ¶ And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the **ninth hour.***

34 *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

35 *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.*

36 *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.*

37 *And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and **gave up the ghost.***

*Lk.23.44 ¶ And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the **ninth hour.***

45 *And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.*

46 *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he **gave up the ghost.***

He died when did he draw His last breath? Or, as the Scriptures phrase this, *yielded up the ghost.*

Who would deny that our Lord descended into the heart of the earth at that moment in time? Shouldn't we begin to mark the time that our Lord descended into the heart of the earth as about the 9th hour of that day? (3:00pm our Wednesday afternoon) So, to fulfill Jonah's prophecy, our Lord could rise from the heart of the earth and from the grave any time after 3:00pm our Saturday afternoon. Isn't that correct? Now let's consider the Scriptures which plainly state that our Lord raised on or in the third day.

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Concerning our Lord's rising from the dead in three days, let's read Jn.2.19:

*Jn.2.19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and **in three days** I will raise it up. (... from the dead)*

20 Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

*21 But he spake of the temple **of his body**.*

*Lu 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise **from the dead** the third day ...*

Our Lord clearly died on the cross and immediately went into the heart of the earth. The reference to the temple was of our Lord's body. Now our Lord's body will be laid where the dead are placed. ... in a tomb or grave. It is from this that He is to be raised on the third day.

*1Sa 2:6 The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth **down to the grave, and bringeth up**.*

*Isa 53:9a And he made his **grave with the wicked**, and with the rich in his death ...*

Joh 12:17 The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.

Now let's begin to put this together. Jonah's prophecy was fulfilled as of 3:00pm. Saturday, our time. Anytime after 3:00pm He can raise from the dead. Since our Lord's **body** was buried just before 6:00pm our Wednesday evening, isn't it also true that if He rose from the tomb any time before 6:00pm our Saturday evening that could be said to have risen **in, on,** and **within** the third day? Have we not now proved that both Jonah's prophecy and His own claims are precisely as it is written in the Word of God? Ticking off the clock of Jonah's *three day and three night* prophecy from the time of His death, and our Lord's claims to *building this temple* in three days, He could have raised any time between 3:00pm to 6:00pm our Saturday night. Don't we have sufficient evidence which supports the fact

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that our Lord, after His resurrection, was for a time in that tomb with guards stationed outside, unwinding Himself from His grave clothes? Is this information for nothing, or does it reinforce the truth of our Lord's bodily resurrection?

*Jn.20.6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,
7 And **the napkin**, that was about his head, **not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.***

Below, in the Diagram 1, we have how much time that our Lord Jesus spent in the heart of the earth. Beyond question is the fact that He must fulfill this period of time in the heart of the earth, as simply as it is stated. If this is not true then we cannot believe any prophecy. All the Word of God stands or falls together.

Diagram 1 Christ in the heart of the earth 3 days and 3 nights

1st Day	2nd Day	3rd
Died on the cross and descended into the heart of the earth.	Still in the heart of the earth.	Ascends from the heart of the earth.
Wednesday @ 3:00pm – Thursday 3:00pm.	Thursday 3:00pm – Friday 3:00 pm	Friday 3:00pm – Saturday 3:00 pm
		Our Lord Jesus enter the temple of his body, rising alive from the dead!

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In Diagram 2, we have the three days that our Lord's body was in the tomb. He we can see that our Lord was truly raise **on** the third day.

*Lu 24:7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, **and the third day rise again.***

*Joh 2:19 Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and **in three days I will raise it up.***

*1Co 15:4 And that he was buried, **and that he rose again the third day** according to the scriptures ...*

Diagram 2 Christ raise His body from the dead on the third day

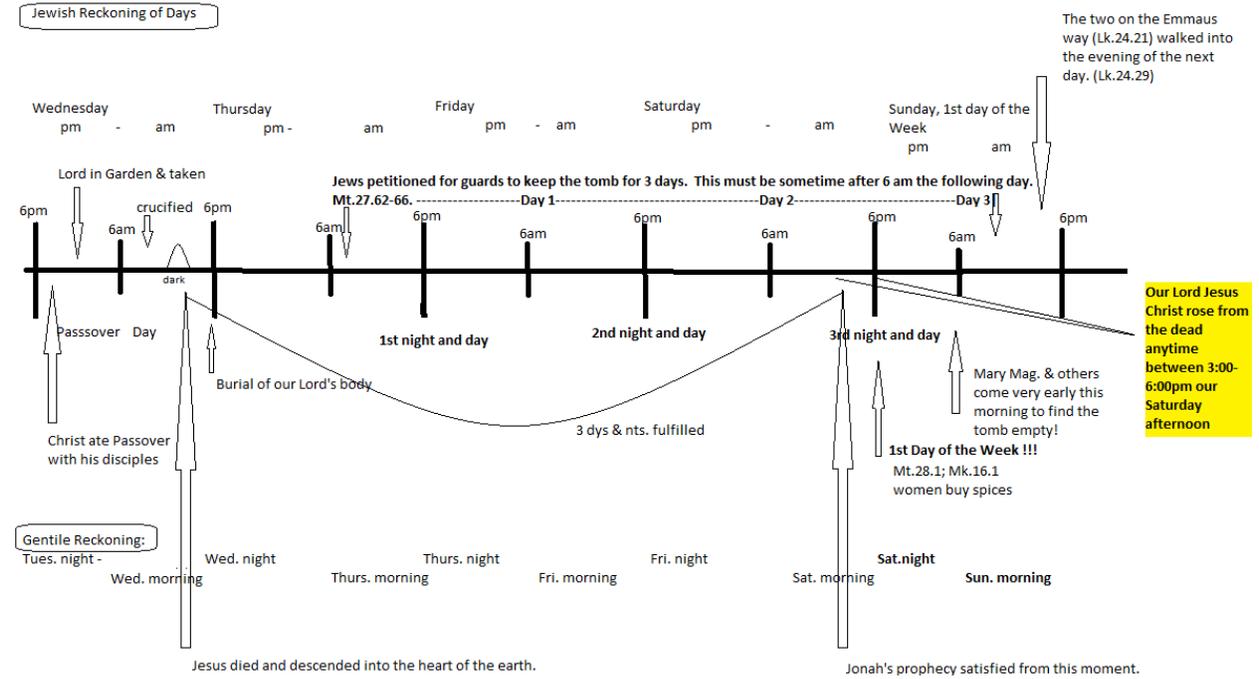
<p>Crucifixion on Wednesday and died at 3:00pm this afternoon.</p> <p>Laid in the tomb this Wednesday evening</p>	<p>Body laying in dead in the tomb Thursday</p> <p>1st day in tomb</p> <p>Thursday evening</p>	<p>Body laying in the tomb Friday</p> <p>2nd day in tomb</p> <p>Friday evening</p>	<p>Body laying in the tomb Saturday</p> <p>3rd day in tomb</p> <p>Jonah's prophecy is satisfied as of 3:00pm this afternoon. If Christ rises anytime between 3:00pm & 6:00pm He has truly risen on the third day!!!</p>	<p>Sunday</p> <p>Our Lord was already risen by the time Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb.</p>
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We are able to explain the fact that 72 hours can pass while at the same time He rose **on** the third day according to the Scriptures. When once we take each truth as stated and allow them to speak for themselves we have solid ground for concluding that both statements are absolutely correct.

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Diag. 3



We deny the traditional teaching of Christendom that our Lord raised in the morning of the first day and maintain that He died on Wednesday afternoon. Our Lord Jesus could have risen from the dead any time between 3:00pm and 6:00p.m. our Saturday evening.

