

Dating the Crucifixion: Everything Harmonizes!

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There is some debate within Christendom as to whether Jesus was crucified on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. The question is admittedly technical and difficult, and has given skeptics the opportunity to confound sincere and faithful Christians. There are some Christians who hold to a Wednesday or Thursday crucifixion day, and I don't condemn them for that, though I believe that they are sincerely mistaken on this point. The chronology of the crucifixion is not the essential litmus test of salvation unto eternal life, but essential Christian belief is "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; NKJV). Notwithstanding, I agree with the traditional view that Jesus was crucified on Friday, and rose from the dead on Sunday. In this paper, I will lay out my reasoning for this. There are no contradictions in God's Word. "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).

We seem to have conflicting statements regarding the amount of time that Jesus was in the tomb. Matthew 12:40 reads, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Later on, in Matthew 20:19, Jesus also says that after His crucifixion, "And the third day He will rise again." So, in our English reckoning of this, one could understand the "three days and three nights" as exactly 72 hours, but "the third day" would of necessity be a shorter amount of time than that. There is a simple solution to this problem. Jesus was not using English reckoning of time. He was using Jewish/Hebrew reckoning of time. Everybody understood Him that way in His day. Surely, the Jews would have pounced on His words if they saw a contradiction here. By way of explanation, in Jewish reckoning, any part of a day could be reckoned as a day. So the idioms translated "three days and three nights" and "the third day" meant the same thing—all or part of 3 different days. One Bible example (Cf. 1 Samuel 30:12-13) of this is found in the Old Testament Book of Esther. In Esther 4:16, the fast is declared "for three days, night or day." Yet Esther stands in the court of the palace of the king "on the third day" (Esther 5:1). Yet nobody ever accused Esther, either in those days, Jesus' day, or today, of having an error in it! Why not? I submit this may be because while Esther is not the most convicting person to ever walk the earth, Jesus is! So if Jesus was crucified on Friday, was in the tomb on Saturday, and rose on Sunday, we have our three days. Or alternately, if we use the Hebrew reckoning of days in

Genesis—“evening and the morning” (Genesis 1:5), then we have Thurs/Fri, Fri/Sat, and Sat/Sun. Again, three days.

Further Explanatory Notes:

1. Luke 23:54-56: Jesus died on the Day of “Preparation”. This term was used by the Jews to describe Friday (that is, Thursday evening-Friday evening), the 6th day of the Jewish week, before the Sabbath. This Scripture is set within the context of Jesus’ burial. The body and anointing spices and oils were prepared on what was left of Friday before sundown (Jesus had died at 3 pm, “the ninth hour”, according to Luke 23:44-46). Then, they rested Friday-Saturday, “according to the commandment.”
2. Mark 16:1: Once the sun had set Saturday night, stores would re-open, and the work of anointing the body could resume. Technically, according to Jewish reckoning, it was now already Saturday-Sunday, the first day of the week.
3. The Jewish Talmud independently attests to the day of Christ’s crucifixion as Friday during Passover (b. Sanhedrin 43a; p. 281, n.7; http://www.come-and-hear.com/sanhedrin/sanhedrin_43.html). It is well known that the Jews did not accept Yeshua as their Messiah, so they surely would not have any purpose in corroborating the early church.
4. So, we determine that the Last Supper was prepared Thursday, to be received in the evening (Thursday-Friday), Cf. Luke 22:7-13, Jesus was crucified at 9 am on Friday according to Mark 15:25, He died at 3 pm according to Luke 23:44-46, He was buried and His body laid in the tomb (rest of Friday and all of Friday-Saturday), and “He rose early on the first day of the week” (Sunday morning) according to Mark 16:9.

Everything Harmonizes! You can trust the Bible. And if that is true, then it’s all true, and you have a decision to make. What will you do with Jesus? He said, “I am the way the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).