

## Appendix J

(From *The Holy Bible In Its Original Order*  
*A New English Translation*  
*A Faithful Version with Commentary*)

### Jesus' Three Days and Three Nights of Entombment and His Resurrection

Many prophecies in the Old Testament foretold of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The prophet Daniel foresaw that Jesus' life would be taken (Dan. 9:26), and both David and Isaiah described the suffering and humiliation that He would endure before His death (Psa. 22; Isa. 53). Other prophecies pointed to His resurrection to immortality (Psa. 16:10-11; Dan. 7:13-14; Isa. 9:6-7). However, there is *no* passage in the Old Testament that directly foretells the length of time that the Messiah would be in the tomb before He was resurrected. This prophecy is found only in the Gospel accounts, spoken by Jesus Himself: "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Master, we desire to see a sign from You.' And He answered *and* said to them, 'A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, in like manner **the Son of man shall be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights**'" (Matt. 12:38-40).

The fulfillment of this sign—the *only* sign Jesus gave that He was the Messiah—was a testimony not only to that generation, but to all future generations that He was, and is, the Christ.

Nearly all churches within Christendom have misinterpreted or rejected the scriptural record. The majority of Christians today believe that Jesus was crucified and laid in a tomb on a Friday, and that He was resurrected on Sunday morning. Thus, according to their reasoning, He was not actually in the tomb for *three* days and *three* nights, as He had prophesied, but for two nights and one full day—which, if true, would discredit Him as our Savior.

However, the Gospel accounts do *not* support the traditional belief in a "Good Friday" crucifixion and an "Easter Sunday" morning resurrection. The facts recorded by the Gospel writers reveal a significantly different time frame for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

#### *The Scriptural Definition of a Day*

Most Orthodox Christian scholars claim Jesus was using an idiomatic expression when He declared that He would remain in the tomb for "three days and three nights"—suggesting that His words should be interpreted as referring to *parts* of days rather than to *whole* days. But when the scriptural use of the term "day" is examined, one finds that it is very *specific*. The Old Testament shows that a day consists of an evening and a morning (Gen. 1). An entire day has two portions—the night portion, which begins at evening or sunset, and the day portion, which begins at sunrise or morning. These consecutive periods are identified as one complete day, reckoned from sunset to sunset, or evening to evening (Lev. 23:32).

According to Scripture, each day has an average of 12 hours in the night portion and 12 hours in the day portion, making a complete day of 24 hours. Jesus Himself verified that the day portion is about 12 hours long (John 11:9.) This scriptural method of reckoning time had been used by the Hebrews for centuries.

#### *"Three Days and Three Nights" in the Book of Jonah*

Christ's own prophecy that He would be in the grave for three days and three nights is a direct reference to Jonah 1:17, which speaks of Jonah's symbolic entombment in the belly of a great fish: "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**."

The construction of the Hebrew text here does not allow the expression "three days and three nights" to be interpreted in any manner except the literal sense of three 24-hour days. In Hebrew, the phrase "a day and a night" denotes a full day of 24 hours. In the same way, the

expression “three days and three nights” denotes three whole days of 24 hours each.

The Hebrew terminology cannot be interpreted as an idiomatic expression describing *part* of a day and *part* of a night. To denote incomplete units of time, the Hebrew uses a word that means “to divide”—such as in Daniel 12:7, where the term is translated “half a time.” However, this word is not found in the expression “three days and three nights” recorded in Jonah 1:17. It is evident that the text is describing *three* complete 24-hour periods of time. Fully aware of this fact of Scripture, Jesus declared to the Jews that He would be in the heart of the earth for “**three days and three nights**” (Matt. 12:40).

### ***Jesus Said That He Would Rise Three Days after His Death***

The Gospel writers record that Jesus made specific statements to His disciples concerning the length of time that He would be in the tomb and when He would be resurrected: “And He began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of man to suffer many things, and to be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and **to be killed, but after three days to rise from the dead**” (Mark 8:31; see also Matt. 16:21 and Mark 9:31). Jesus proclaimed to His disciples that He would not rise from the dead until **three days after He had been killed**.

Jesus’ statement that **He would rise three days after He had died** is acutely significant. According to Jewish law, to be declared *legally* dead, a person had to be dead for *three full days* or more. Therefore, if Jesus had risen from the dead *before* 3 PM on the afternoon of Nisan 17, a weekly Sabbath, He would not have been considered legally dead. As a result, His return to life would not have been considered a true resurrection from the dead.

If He had been crucified on a Friday and restored to life on Sunday morning at sunrise, His death would not have been “valid” since only two nights and one day would have passed between Friday sunset and Sunday morning. In order for His death to be publicly recognized and acknowledged, it was necessary for Jesus to remain in the grave for three nights and three days before He was raised from the dead.

The Scriptures reveal that Jesus died at the ninth hour, or 3 PM, on the Passover day, Nisan 14, which fell on Wednesday, April 5, in 30 AD (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34). He was placed in the tomb just before sunset at about 6 PM. Matthew describes His burial by Joseph of Arimathea: “**And when evening was coming on**, a rich man of Arimathea came, named Joseph, who was himself a disciple of Jesus. After going to Pilate, he begged *to have* the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given over *to him*. And after taking the body, Joseph [with the help of Nicodemus (John 19:39)] wrapped it in clean linen cloth, and placed it in his new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and after rolling a great stone to the door of the tomb, he went away” (Matt. 27:57-60). Luke records that “*a Sabbath was coming on*” (Luke 23:54), which means that by the time they had closed the entrance of the tomb with a huge stone—at about 6 PM—a Sabbath was nearly upon them. Since all Sabbaths are reckoned from sunset to sunset, it is clear that the sun was about to set.

Jesus was resurrected from the dead precisely three days and three nights later, when the sun was setting at the end of the weekly Sabbath, or Saturday, Nisan 17. As He had prophesied, He remained in the tomb for three full days and three full nights. **Jesus Christ was raised from the dead just before sunset on the weekly Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. He had already been resurrected for nearly twelve hours when the sun rose on Sunday, the first day of the week.**

### ***Two Sabbaths During the Three Days and Three Nights***

According to religious tradition, Jesus was crucified on a Friday—which *appears* to be supported by the statement in John 19:31 that the day of His death “was the preparation [day].” Most have assumed that this statement refers to the Jews’ preparation on Friday for the weekly Sabbath. However, they fail to realize that the Passover day, on which Jesus died, has always been a preparation day for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follows (Lev. 23:4-6). The first day of this feast, Nisan 15, is observed as a *high day*—an annual Sabbath. The day portion of the Passover (Nisan 14) is always used as a *day of preparation* for this yearly holy day. It is erroneous to interpret “the preparation *day*” in John 19:31 as evidence that the day of the crucifixion was a Friday.

The Scriptures clearly reveal that during the crucifixion week there were *two* Sabbaths. The first Sabbath was an annual holy day, the first day of Unleavened Bread, which fell on Thursday that year. The second Sabbath was the weekly Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, or Saturday. Thus, that week there were *two* preparation days. The day portion of Nisan 14, the Passover day, was the preparation day for the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the 15th, which was an annual Sabbath. The following day, the 16th, which was a Friday, was the preparation day for the weekly Sabbath, the 17th.

In reading the Gospel of John, it is evident that the Sabbath following the day Jesus died was an annual Sabbath. “The Jews therefore, so that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, because it was **a preparation day (for that Sabbath was a high day)**...” (John 19:31). The term “high day” is never used to refer to the weekly Sabbath, but only to annual Sabbaths. John’s use of this term makes it clear that the Sabbath which was about to begin was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15.

The women who followed Jesus observed the annual Sabbath, as commanded by God. They could not purchase spices on that day because all the businesses were closed in observance of the command to rest (Lev. 23:6-7). After the end of that high day, they bought spices and aromatic oils to anoint Jesus. “Now **when the Sabbath had passed**, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the *mother* of James, and Salome bought aromatic oils, so that they might come and anoint Him” (Mark 16:1).

The women bought the spices “when the Sabbath had passed” and prepared them on the same day. When they had finished, they observed a **second Sabbath**. “And they returned *to the city*, and prepared spices and ointments, and *then rested on the* [weekly] **Sabbath** according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56). The Gospel accounts clearly reveal the observance of *two* Sabbaths during the crucifixion week.

### ***“Today is the Third Day Since These Things Took Place”***

Those who embrace a Sunday resurrection point to a statement in Luke 24:21 as evidence that Jesus rose from the dead at sunrise on the first day of the week. This statement was made by two of Jesus’ disciples as they walked along with a “stranger”—not knowing that the stranger was actually the resurrected Christ. As Jesus listened to their conversation, He asked what “things” they were talking about. They answered, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and **beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done**” (Luke 24:13-21 *KJV*).

Because this statement was made on the first day of the week, many have incorrectly assumed that Jesus rose from the dead early Sunday morning. However, the Gospel accounts clearly show that Jesus **had already risen** from the dead before the women came to the tomb at sunrise. There is no question that Jesus was in the tomb for “three days and three nights”—beginning at sunset on Wednesday, Nisan 14, and ending at sunset on the weekly Sabbath, Nisan 17. Jesus rose at the end of three full days and three full nights, exactly as He had declared.

The problem with Luke 24:21, according to A. T. Robertson, is that the phrase “today is the third day” is an idiomatic expression—and is most difficult to translate into English (Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, s.v. Luke 24:21). Because the phrase is idiomatic, its actual meaning cannot be understood by a literal translation—which only serves to distort the true meaning.

With this in mind, scholars and translators have studied how such idiomatic expressions were used by various writers of that era—such as the historian Josephus and others who used classical Greek. What they have discovered is that the idiom is an expression of *completed time*. In other words, “today is the third day” actually indicates “as of today, three days have already passed.”

Berkley’s translation, for example, renders the phrase as “three days have already passed;” Moffat translates the phrase as “three days ago.” Both of these translations properly convey the idiom to show a period of time which has been completed. Based on this information, a precise translation of Luke 24:21 would be: “But besides all these things, **as of today, the third day has already passed since these things took place.**”

Thus, Luke 24:21 in no way supports the teaching that Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week at sunrise.

