

THE MEANING OF “3 DAYS AND 3 NIGHTS”

Relevant to Our Lord’s Crucifixion

Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

Excerpt from Apples of Gold

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Proverbs 25:11

Matthew 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. (King James 1611)

For as Ionas was three dayes, and three nyghtes, in the Whales belly: so shall the sonne of man be **three dayes, and three nyghtes**, in the heart of the earth. (Bishops Bible 1595)

For as Ionas was three daies and three nights in the whales belly: so shall the Sonne of man be **three daies and three nights** in ye heart of the earth. (Geneva Bible 1599)

Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, and Rheims all read the same as above at Mat. 12:40.

Matthew 27:63 Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, **After** three days I will rise again. (King James Bible 1611)

After three dayes I wil arise agayne. (Bishops Bible 1595)

Within three dayes I will rise. (Geneva Bible 1599)

Wycliffe, AD 1380: **After**

Tyndale, AD 1534: **After**

Matthew’s, AD 1537: **After**

Cranmer, AD 1539: **After** (also called “The Great Bible”)

Rheims, AD 1582: **After**

As Scripture cannot contradict itself, we logically conclude that “after” at Matthew 27:63 and Mark 8:31 is God’s definition and clarification as to what is meant by “3 days and 3 nights” at Matthew 12:40 as well as other passages dealing with Christ’s resurrection.

Textus Receptus Greek with literal translation for Mat. 27:63 & Mark 8:31

Meta treis hmeras egeiromai

After three days I arise (Mat. 27:63)

meta treis hmeras anasthnai

after three days to rise [again] (Mark. 8:31)

Thus, the collective testimony of the oldest English translations is that our Lord arose from the dead three days *after* His crucifixion. Now Christ’s resurrection was very early in the morning on the first day of the week (Sunday) while it was still dark but the sun was rising (Mark. 16:2; John 20:21; called “first light”). Therefore, Christ Jesus was crucified on

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Thursday, not Friday. Furthermore, the year that Nisan 14 fell on Thursday was **AD 30**¹ – not 32 (Anderson: Nisan 14 was a *Sunday* in 32 AD) or 33 (Hoehner et al.).

The testimony of Luke 24:21b (i.e., “since”) both supports and demands our conclusion.

trithn tauthn hmeran agei shmeron **af** ou tauta egeneto

third this day brings today **since** these things came to pass (literal translation)

to day is the third day **since** these things were done (King James Bible, cp. Luk. 24:1 & 13)

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¹ My calendar conversion program was designed by the Harvard Center for Astrophysics. It employs the ephemeris in Jean Meeus’ *Astronomical Formulae for Calculators* – the standard formula used by astronomers today. It differs by c.50 minutes or less from Fotheringham & Parker-Dubberstein for the 1 Nisan sundown on this date – making Nisan 14 a Thursday, not a Friday. Some take “3 days & 3 nights” to mean exactly 72 hours so that Wednesday was the crucifixion day; however, from 28 through 33 AD Nisan 14 never occurs on that day of the week.
