

Fact Check: Reconsidering Popularly Misinterpreted Scriptures

Sermon #1: Matthew 12:40

Matthew 12:40 – Proving our chronology wrong

- This verse has become the basis for a Wednesday crucifixion theory.
- Many passages of Scripture say that Jesus arose “the third day,” therefore (the theory proposes), Jesus arose at the end of the third day and before the fourth day.
- Since the crucifixion was on “the day of preparation” for the Sabbath, the first day of Unleavened Bread must have been Thursday, and this day was a day in which no work was done, thus *could be* considered a Sabbath. The crucifixion week therefore had *two* Sabbaths.

Some Basic Rules of Hermeneutics

- The whole counsel must be considered when building a doctrine or conclusion. That is, individual passages must be interpreted in light of the totality of Scripture.
- The easiest passages should shed light on the more difficult passages.
- The *normal* sense of the meaning of words must be abandoned only with overwhelming evidence of the need to do so.

Looking at the whole

- What conclusions are drawn from the following passages?
 - Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, 26:61, 27:40, 27:64.
 - Mark 9:31, 10:34, 14:58, 15:29.
 - Luke 9:22, 13:32, 18:33, 24:7, 24:21, 24:46.
 - John 2:19, 2:20.
 - Acts 10:40, 1 Corinthians 15:4
- Normally, what does *the third day* mean?
 - Genesis 42:17-18
 - Exodus 19:10-11
 - Leviticus 7:16-17
 - 1 Samuel 20:12
 - Luke 13:32-33
 - Acts 27:18-19.
- Does Luke 23:54-24:2 speak of *two Sabbaths* and a total of five days? Or does it speak of what took place *before* the Sabbath, *on* the Sabbath, and *the day after* the Sabbath?
- Does Mark 15:42, 16:1-2 speak of anything other than three days?
- Does John 19:31 teach two Sabbaths?
 - A *high Sabbath* occurs when a holy day coincides with a weekly Sabbath.

- There are three kinds of holy days:
 - Annual: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles.
 - Monthly: the new moon
 - Weekly: the Sabbath
- While the Hebrew words for the rest that occurred on annual and monthly holy days was related to the word *Sabbath* (Hebrew Strongs #7676) it is a different word (Hebrew Strong's #7677).
- A #7677 could occur on *any day of the week*, but a #7676 could only occur on a Saturday.
- Nothing in the Scripture would bring us to conclude that John speaks of anything other than Saturday, a particular Saturday that aligned with the first day of Unleavened Bread.
- The Day of Pentecost was 50 days after the *Sabbath* during Unleavened Bread, and always on a Sunday. This is only possible if the Sabbath is understood to be on Saturday.

Problems with the Wednesday view

- It is a theory that would have never arisen save Matthew 12:40.
- Crucifixion on the 14th would have made the 10th the Sabbath, and thus Palm Saturday. But too many Sabbath laws were broken for this to happen.
- Burial at sunset on Wednesday would have required resurrection on Saturday at Sunset, yet Scripture has a different testimony.
- To wait from Wednesday until Sunday to anoint the body with spices would have been unheard of, and very unpleasant (Compare Jn. 11:39).
- Does Matthew 28:1 prove that the resurrection was on Saturday?
 - Only if you take an abnormal sense of *Dawn*.
 - Only if you trust that the punctuation is correct.

What Does Matthew 12:40 mean?

- The verse does *not* say that Jesus must be *dead* and *buried* for three days/night.
 - The **heart of the earth** could refer to the time from the betrayal through the Resurrection. This would encompass Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, and Friday, Saturday, and Sunday days.
 - The entire reference could be to the death of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:9-15, a view which is intriguing, fits the context of the Kingdom in Matthew 12, but not without problems (the chief being the reference to the Son of Man).