

What day was Christ crucified?

Written by Josh Winslett

Friday, 29 March 2019 19:52 - Last Updated Friday, 29 March 2019 19:55

There are three basic views concerning the day that Christ was crucified. The majority view is a Friday crucifixion, commonly called Good Friday. A second view that has gained some popularity is that Christ was crucified on Wednesday. There is also a third view that blends the other views and places the crucifixion on Thursday. Before we consider the biblical and historic evidence, let's lay out the 3 general views listed above.

The Wednesday view asserts that Christ's words to the unbelieving wicked Jews in Matthew 12:40 are literal 24-hour days. Matthew 12:40 reads, "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." This view would then see problems with Christ only laying in the grave for one complete day as held in the Friday view. Therefore, according to this view, Christ had to lay in the tomb for a total of 72 hours or this verse would be false. The 72 hour would be based on the Jewish calendar that would have each day starting at night fall of every evening (roughly 6:00pm). The Wednesday view would also assert that there were 2 sabbaths that week. The first being a high sabbath on Thursday (John 19:31), the first day for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The second sabbath would be the weekly sabbath on our Saturday. Christ would have been in the grave from sun down on Wednesday to Saturday evening at sun down.

The Thursday view would also see a problem with there only being one full day with Christ in the grave. However, unlike the Wednesday view, this view does not hold a rigid 72 hour period. It simply states that Christ must have laid in the tomb for part of three days and three nights. If Christ was in the grave for part of Thursday, then that would equal a complete day. So, they would count the days and nights as follows: day one as the end part of Thursday, night one as Thursday night, day two as Friday, night two as Friday night, day three as Saturday, and night three as Saturday night. Christ would be risen sometime between midnight and sunrise early Sunday morning. This view would have Friday as a high sabbath and Saturday as a weekly sabbath.

The Friday view would consider the language used by Christ in Matthew 12:40 as simply being a Jewish idiom. An idiom is a metaphor used to convey a meaning through cryptic language. For an example, consider the American idiom, "it is raining cats and dogs." According to this view, if Christ was in the tomb part of a day then it could be counted as the whole day. Any part of Friday Saturday, or Sunday would be considered the whole of the day, both day and night. John Gill writes of Matthew 12:40:

That Christ means himself by the "son of man", there is no reason to doubt; and his being laid in

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a tomb, dug out of a rock, is sufficient to answer this phrase, "the heart of the earth", in distinction from the surface of it; but some difficulty arises about the time of his continuing there, and the prediction here made agreeable to the type: for it was on the sixth day of the week, we commonly call "Friday", towards the close, on the day of the preparation for the sabbath, and when the sabbath drew on, that the body of Christ was laid in the sepulchre; where it lay all the next day, which was the sabbath of the Jews, and what we commonly call "Saturday"; and early on the first of the week, usually called "Sunday", or the Lord's day, he rose from the dead; so that he was but one whole day, and part of two, in the grave. To solve this difficulty, and set the matter in a clear light, let it be observed, that the three days and three nights, mean three natural days, consisting of day and night, or twenty four hours, and are what the Greeks call νυκθημερα, "night days"; but the Jews have no other way of expressing them, but as here; and with them it is a well known rule, and used on all occasions, as in the computation of their feasts and times of mourning, in the observance of the passover, circumcision, and divers purifications, that ככולו היום מקצת, "a part of a day is as the whole"³: and so, whatever was done before sun setting, or after, if but an hour, or ever so small a time, before or after it, it was reckoned as the whole preceding, or following day; and whether this was in the night part, or day part of the night day, or natural day, it mattered not, it was accounted as the whole night day: by this rule, the case here is easily adjusted; Christ was laid in the grave towards the close of the sixth day, a little before sun setting, and this being a part of the night day preceding, is reckoned as the whole; he continued there the whole night day following, being the seventh day; and rose again early on the first day, which being after sun setting, though it might be even before sun rising, yet being a part of the night day following, is to be esteemed as the whole; and thus the son of man was to be, and was three days and three nights in the grave; and which was very easy to be understood by the Jews; and it is a question whether Jonas was longer in the belly of the fish.

For a visual example, here is a teaching image created by my friend, Pastor Marty Smith.

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~~Multiple attempts to search for the date of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ have failed to produce a definitive answer. The date of the crucifixion is a matter of debate among scholars and theologians. Some believe it was on a Friday, while others believe it was on a Thursday. The date of the crucifixion is a matter of debate among scholars and theologians. Some believe it was on a Friday, while others believe it was on a Thursday. The date of the crucifixion is a matter of debate among scholars and theologians. Some believe it was on a Friday, while others believe it was on a Thursday.~~