

The Crucifixion Question Revisited

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On what day was Christ crucified? Was it Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday? This study will espouse a Wednesday crucifixion, instead of a Thursday, or “Good Friday” traditional interpretation.

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.”

These are three literal days – not partial days! The Jews reckoned the start of their days from evening to evening as God did (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; Lev. 23:32). This means the Jewish day always began 6 hours before our own day. We follow Roman time which begins the day 6 hours later at 12:00 AM.

Let's look at the Jewish days and convert them into Roman time (our time). It's like converting MP3 Files (shorter musical files) into wave files (longer musical files). The thing we must remember is there are six hours of difference between the beginning of the Jewish day and our Roman day. The same would be true with the ending of the day. Below is a comparison of the Jewish and Roman ours that we follow today.

Jewish Monday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) - evening to evening

Converting to Roman time it would be: 6:00 PM our Sunday evening to
*Roman day starting at 12:00 AM 6:00 PM our Monday evening

Jewish Tuesday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) - evening to evening

Converting to Roman time it would be: 6:00 PM our Monday evening to
*Roman day starting at 12:00 AM 6:00 PM our Tuesday evening

Jewish Wednesday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) - evening to evening

Converting to Roman time it would be: 6:00 PM our Tuesday evening to
*Roman day starting at 12:00 AM 6:00 PM our Wednesday evening

Jewish Thursday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) - evening to evening

Converting to Roman time it would be: 6:00 PM our Wednesday evening to
*Roman day starting at 12:00 AM 6:00 PM our Thursday evening

Jewish Friday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) - evening to evening

Converting to Roman time it would be: 6:00 PM our Thursday evening to
*Roman day starting at 12:00 AM 6:00 PM our Friday evening

Jewish Saturday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) - evening to evening

Converting to Roman time it would be: 6:00 PM our Friday evening to
*Roman day starting at 12:00 AM 6:00 PM our Saturday evening

Jewish Sunday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) – evening to evening

Converting to Roman time it would be: 6:00 PM our Saturday evening to
*Roman day starting at 12:00 AM 6:00 PM our Sunday evening

The figures do not lie. Christ was in the earth three days and nights (Matt. 12:40). When the Bible speaks of the “third day” (1 Cor. 15:3) it means the completion of three full days. Elsewhere the Bible confirms this and says that “**after three days**” (Matt. 27:63; Mark 8:31), or after the completion of three full days, He would rise from the dead. The prophecy of Jonah (Matt. 12:40) was given to confirm that Christ would rise from the dead sometime after three days which consisted of three periods of daylight and nighttime hours. **From the Jewish reckoning of time this would mean Christ died and was buried on the Jewish Wednesday, prior to 6:00 PM, which would be the beginning Jewish day of Thursday.**

Wednesday would be the actual “preparation of the Passover” (John 19:14, 31, 42), or the day before the Jewish Passover week began, which would begin at 6:00 PM, on Thursday evening. This was actually a “Sabbath week of festivals” that the Jews identified as the entire Passover Week, which included the Passover Feast on Thursday, followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This would be a total of seven days (Leviticus 23:6, 34), and include the feast of firstfruits (Lev. 23:11), which occurred on the

Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (“on the morrow after the Sabbath” - the first day of the week – Sunday). The important item to note is that it was done on the first day of the week.

Here is the point. Jesus would die on the Jewish Wednesday (Passover – 1 Cor. 5:7) and be put in the grave before 6:00 PM. He would then be in the grave a Jewish Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and rise from the dead on the Jewish Sunday, in fulfillment of the feast of firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20). **The Jewish time of Christ’s crucifixion would correspond to our Wednesday, between the hours of 12:00 PM and 3:00 PM in the afternoon, 3:00 PM being the time when Christ actually died.** This is what the Scripture verifies.

Now let’s consider several important time designations.

Roman Time: When John spoke about Pilate’s trial with Jesus and the sending away of Jesus to be crucified (John 19:14), he used the well-known Roman time. The “**sixth hour**,” according to the way that Romans figured time (morning to evening), would be **6:00 AM**. The Roman day began at 12:00 AM and they normally counted hours from this starting point. Therefore, the sixth hour into the Roman day, which began at 12:00 AM, would actually be 6:00 AM. John reveals that Pilate’s trial and the sending away of Jesus to be crucified took place about the sixth hour or 6:00 AM by Roman reckoning of time.

Jewish Time: The “**third hour**” (**9:00 AM according to Jewish time**) was the time when Jesus was initially crucified upon the cross (**Mark 15:25**). This time designation is taken from a Jewish perspective. *The Jews also had the practice or custom of counting their hours of daylight from 6:00 AM, even though their day had begun the evening before at 6:00 PM. **Therefore, the third hour of Jewish daylight, when counting from 6:00 AM, would actually be 9:00 AM.** Three hours of Jewish daylight had already expired on the Jewish day (Wednesday). A Sabbath week of feasts would begin the very next Jewish day (Thursday) at 6:00 PM. **The Jewish perspective informs us that Christ was initially crucified on the cross at 9:00 AM on Wednesday.** However, the actual timing of Jesus’ death would correspond with the Passover Sacrifice, which was to be sacrificed in the evening, at the going down of the sun (between 3:00-5:00 PM), before the beginning of the next day (Thursday), and the commencement of the Feast of Passover (Exodus 12:6; Deut. 16:6).

The Bible teaches that from the “sixth hour,” according to the Jewish reckoning of time (12:00 PM), until Jesus’ death, at about the “ninth hour” (3:00 PM), there was darkness covering the land of Israel (Luke 23:44-45). Matthew records that Jesus died “about the ninth hour” (Matt. 27:45-46). This was 3:00 PM according to the Jewish way of counting their daylight time and hours. **From 6:00 AM, add nine hours, and you come up with 3:00 PM** (the ninth hour of the twelve hours of Jewish daylight – John 11:9). Of course, the time of darkness, which preceded Christ’s actual death, was the time when Jesus bore the sins of the entire world and the judgment connected with those sins. Moses prescribed the time for the sacrifice “at twilight, at the going down of the sun” (Deut. 16:6). This would be on Wednesday. According to Josephus, it was customary in his day to slay the lamb at about 3:00 PM. You will remember that this was the time of day that Christ, the Christian’s Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), died (Luke 23:44–46).

The figures below give us a visual. Christ died on the Jewish Wednesday, 3:00 PM, just before the Jewish festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread began, on the next day, which would be Thursday at 6:00 PM. Now let’s count the three full days (Matt. 12:40), starting on the Jewish Thursday, which followed on the heels of Christ’s death on Wednesday, and convert this into our Roman time. *Remember that the Jewish day started six hours before the Roman day (our time). **Since there is a Bible emphasis on three normal days (Matt. 16:21; Mark 10:34), we will begin to count from the new Jewish day on Thursday.**

Jewish Thursday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) - evening to evening = Day #1

***6:00 PM our Wednesday evening – 6:00 PM Thursday evening = Day #1**

Jewish Friday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) - evening to evening = Day #2

***6:00 PM our Thursday evening – 6:00 PM Friday evening = Day #2**

Jewish Saturday (6:00 PM to 6:00 PM) - evening to evening = Day #3

***6:00 PM our Friday evening – 6:00 PM Saturday evening = Day #3**

Jesus would have risen on the *Jewish Sunday*, which actually began on our Saturday evening, 6:00 PM, following the Jewish observance of the Saturday Sabbath. The Jews ended their day, six hours before our day, which officially closes at 12:00 AM, the start of the new Roman day. **Christ apparently arose “after three days” had expired (Mark 8:31), or sometime after the completion of three full days, early in the Jewish Sunday, between the hours of 6:00 PM (our Saturday evening) and 6:00 AM (our Sunday morning).**

The resurrection prophecies never said Christ must rise at the exact time He was buried, three days earlier, but only that He would rise on the third day (Luke 24:46; Acts 10:40 – “the third day”). The combined expressions “until the third day” (Matt. 27:64), “the third day” (Matthew 27:63-64), and “after three days” (Matt. 27:63) are used interchangeably and must, out of necessity, refer to the completion of the third day, or the three days that have expired. It could not refer to Christ rising before the third day had closed or else the prophecy of 72 hours in the grave would not be literally fulfilled (Matt. 12:40).

The important thing is that Christ arose on Sunday (the first day of the week), whether it was a Jewish Sunday, which began Saturday evening at 6:00 PM our time, or a Roman Sunday, which began at 12:00 midnight our time (six hours after the Jewish Sunday had already begun).

John 20:1 says:

“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.”

Mark 16:2 adds:

“And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”

Christ had risen before the dawning of the Roman Sunday morning. The timing related to Jonah’s prophecy (Matt. 12:40) was literally fulfilled in Christ’s own resurrection. The early church worshipped on Sunday in commemoration of Christ’s resurrection, which took place on Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2), the third day after Christ’s death (1 Cor. 15:3-4). As stated above, Christ could have risen after 12:00 AM, according to the reckoning of Roman time (our time), which would place His resurrection

sometime on the Sunday morning that we celebrate today. **The point is this; whether it was on the evening of the Jewish Sunday, or the morning of the Roman Sunday, makes no difference. Christ arose on the first day of the week – Sunday!**

Let the record stand! Jesus is alive forevermore!

Revelation 1:18

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”