

3 Days and 3 Nights  
(Matthew 12:38-40)

Introduction:

1. On this occasion the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus to perform a sign.
2. To illustrate the hypocrisy of these people,:
  - a. Jesus healed a man with a withered hand, and they questioned the Lord about violating the sabbath (vs.10-14)
  - b. Jesus cast a demon out of a man, and they accused Him of doing what He did by the power of Belzebul (vs.22-37).
3. Jesus responded by saying that He would be in the heart of the earth for 3 days and 3 nights, just as Jonah was in the whale's belly the same length of time (Jonah 1:17).
4. This is interesting because Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 that Jesus *"rose again the third day according to the scriptures."*
5. Is there a contradiction?
6. By searching and rightly dividing the Scriptures, we see that there is no contradiction.

Discussion:

- I. FIRST, LET US CONSIDER WHEN JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED, BURIED, AND RESURRECTED
  - A. Jesus was crucified at *"the third hour"* (Mark 15:25), and He died at *"the ninth hour"* (Mark 15:34-37).
  - B. The day when this took place was *"the preparation"* (John 19:30-31).
  - C. Joseph and Nicodemus buried the Lord's body the same day (John 19:38-42).
  - D. The Lord's body was in the tomb over the Sabbath (Luke 23:54-56).
  - E. Jesus was resurrected on *"the first day of the week"* (Matthew 28:1-6).
  - F. These passages indicate that Jesus was crucified on Friday, His body was buried Friday afternoon, His body remained in the tomb Saturday, and He was raised early Sunday morning.
- II. SECOND, LET US CONSIDER SOME STATEMENTS MADE BY JESUS
  - A. (Matthew 16:21) *"Be raised again the third day."*
  - B. (Matthew 17:22-23) *"The third day He shall be raised again."*
  - C. (Mark 8:31) *"After three days rise again."*
  - D. (Mark 9:31) *"He shall rise the third day."*
  - E. (Mark 10:34) *"The third day He shall rise again."*
  - F. (John 2:18-19) *"In three days I will raise it up."*
  - G. These are expressions that Jesus used to show how long He would be in the tomb.
- III. THIRD, LET US CONSIDER HOW THE JEWS UNDERSTOOD THESE STATEMENTS
  - A. See Matthew 27:62-64
    1. (vs.63) The Jewish leaders quoted Jesus as saying, *"After three days I will rise again."*
    2. (vs.64) They wanted Pilate to secure the tomb *"until the third day."*
  - B. (Mark 14:55-58) *"Within three days I will build another."*
  - C. (Mark 15:29-30) *"In three days."*
  - D. From their understanding of the Lord's statements, the Jews were concerned that something might happen to the Lord's body on the third day [Sunday].
- IV. FOURTH, LET US CONSIDER SOME ADDITIONAL PASSAGES
  - A. Genesis 42:17-18
  - B. 1 Kings 12:5, 12
  - C. Esther 4:16; 5:1

Conclusion:

1. From these passages we understand that people living when the Bible was written used several expressions interchangeably: "three days and three nights," "after three days," and "on the third day."
2. There is no contradiction concerning how long Jesus was in the tomb.
3. He was crucified on Friday, He was buried on Friday afternoon, He remained in the tomb on the Sabbath, and He arose early on the first day of the week.