

# The Grave of Christ

*Related: [Sign of the Prophet Jonah](#)*

**Controversy over the three days and three nights in the “Sign of Jonas”.** In recent years, there has been an increase in confusion about our Lord’s resurrection following the three days and three nights buried in the earth. For almost two-thousand years the greatest chronologists of the bible have concluded from the gospel accounts that Jesus was in the grave a little over 24-hours, but including parts of three days, according to Jewish reckoning. This traditional view is that Jesus was crucified on Friday afternoon and was in the grave part of Friday (the day of preparation cf. Luke 23:54-55), all of Saturday (Luke 23:56), and part of Sunday, the first day of the week (Luke 24:1). According to Gentile reckoning, this works out to one day!

Recently, modern commentators have had difficulty with this, believing that this position of the crucifixion on Friday and Resurrection on Sunday is a position contrary to Jesus’ own prophecy. They look at [the sign of the prophet Jonah](#) and insist that days and nights need to be reckoned according to the Gentile mind.

“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.” Matt. 12:40

Instead of Friday, these modern commentators propose a Thursday crucifixion. But there are numerous implications of this view, including that the Jewish feast of the Passover had to fall on a Thursday that year, and the Sabbath on a Friday. To accommodate this, they say that the day following the Passover was automatically a High Sabbath. So that week, there would have been two Sabbaths, a high Sabbath (Friday) and a weekly Sabbath (Saturday).

However, this view puts Jesus in the grave for more than 72 hours! It leaves Jesus in the grave for a fourth day. The way they get around this is by discounting the partial days!

- Day 1 - Thursday (partial)
- Night 1 - Thursday Night
- Day 2 - Friday
- Night 2 - Friday Night
- Day 3 - Saturday
- Night 3 - Saturday Night
- Day 4 - Sunday (partial)

We must understand that the Jews reckoned time differently than we Gentiles do. Any part of a day counted for the four-and-twenty hour period; one day and one night.

- Day & Night 1 - Friday evening
- Day & Night 2 - Saturday all-day
- Day & Night 3 - Sunday morning

Here is a quotation from William Kelly that is very helpful (emphasis mine):

“It is a principle with God that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” This I do not doubt to be at least one reason for the three days, whether one looks at the case of Jonah, or of Christ, or of any other. It means a fully adequate testimony, as in our Lord’s case, to the reality of His death when He had been rejected to the uttermost; so with Jonah. Two would have been enough; three were more than sufficient, an ample and irrefragable witness. So our Lord Jesus, though by Jewish reckoning three days and three nights in the grave, literally lay there but the whole of Saturday — the Sabbath, with a part of Friday not yet closed, and before the dawn of Sunday. **For we must always remember in these questions the Jews’ method of reckoning.** Part of a day regularly counted for the four-and-twenty hours. The evening and the morning, or any part, counted as a whole day. But the Lord, as we know, was crucified in the afternoon of Friday; His body lay all the next or Sabbath day in the grave; and He rose early the Sunday morning. That space was counted three days and three nights according to sanctioned Biblical reckoning which no man who bowed to scripture would contest. **This was asserted among the Jews, who, fertile as they have been in excuses for unbelief, have never, as far as I am aware made difficulties on this score.** The ignorance of Gentiles has exposed some of them when unfriendly to cavil at the phrase. The Jews found not a few stumbling-blocks, but this is not one of them: they may know little of what is infinitely more momentous; but they know their own Bible too well to press an objection which would tell against the Hebrew scriptures quite as much as the Greek.”

- Kelly, William