

Three Days and Three Nights

“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.”
Matthew 12:40



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Question

Did Christ have to be dead for a full 3 days and 3 nights in order to fulfill this prophecy?

The question is asked because Christ said that as Jonah was in the belly of a whale for 3 days and 3 nights so must the Son of man be.

Answer

Jonah was alive while in the belly of the fish.

Thus, Christ did not have to be dead for 3 days and 3 nights to fulfill this prophecy.

Let us read these verses carefully:

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."

Matthew 16:21

"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priest and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

Matthew 17:22, 23

"And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry."

Matthew 20:17, 18

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again."



Mark 8:31

“And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

Mark 9:31

“For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.”

Mark 10:33, 34

"Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again."



Luke 9:22

“Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.”

Luke 9:44

“Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.”

Luke 24:46

“And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.”



Comments

After reading these verses carefully, we can see that the 3 days and 3 nights were not implying that Christ was dead for 3 days and 3 nights. In fact, the 3 Gospel writers agree and repeat many times what Christ told them. The sign of Jonah was 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the fish, yet Jonah was alive.

Christ was to be 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth. Christ Himself repeats the steps of these 3 days and 3 nights:

Matthew 16:21

- He must go unto Jerusalem,
- and suffer many things of the elders and chief priest and scribes,
- and be killed,
- and be raised again the third day.

Matthew 17:22, 23

- The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:
- And they shall kill him,
- and the third day he shall be raised again.

Matthew 20:17, 18

- we go up to Jerusalem;
- and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes,
- and they shall condemn him to death,
- And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge,
- and to crucify him:
- and the third day he shall rise again.



Mark 8:31

- the Son of man must suffer many things,
- and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes,
- and be killed,
- and after three days rise again.

Mark 9:31

- The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men,
- and they shall kill him;
- and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.

Mark 10:33, 34

- we go up to Jerusalem;
- and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes;
- and they shall condemn him to death,
- and shall deliver him to the Gentiles:
- And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him,
- and shall kill him:
- and the third day he shall rise again.

Luke 9:22

- The Son of man must suffer many things,
- and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes,
- and be slain, and be raised the third day.

Luke 9:44

- Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

Luke 24:46

- Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer,
- and to rise from the dead the third day.”



- Thus, Matthew, Mark and Luke agree, the 3 days and 3 nights include: the going up to Jerusalem to prepare the lamb, Abib 13th to celebrate the Last Supper with His disciples.
- The night of the betrayal to the elders and the scribes by Judah in the garden of Gethsemane, the trials by night and early morning of Abib 14th, the condemnation, the scourging, mocking, spitting, the crucifixion and death on Passover day.
- The rest in Joseph's tomb at sunset changing to Abib 15th Creation Sabbath and Feast of Unleavened Bread till the next sunset changing to Abib 16th.
- The resurrection day, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Abib 16th, at the Feast of Firstfruits.

We have always calculated the nights as being the 14-15 and 15-16, leaving us with only 2 nights. But Christ was very clear in His teachings to His disciples and because they were slow of hearing, as we are, He repeated often:

- how He must go to Jerusalem,
- be rejected by the elders and the scribes,
- be mocked, scourged,
- given over to die,
- be crucified,
- die,
- then rest in the tomb
- and resurrect the third day.

That third day is not from the time of the crucifixion which came at last, but from the time He went to Jerusalem purposely, because He knew His hour had come. No man took His life, He gave Himself freely.

This we believe is the solution to the 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth. As Jonah, Christ did not have to be dead to pass through a similar experience. However, He did die as prophecy foretold, and resurrected the third day of His suffering and betrayal.

All this He accomplished to pay the ransom for our sin!

Blessed be His Holy Name!

