

Three Days & Three Nights

We quote Jesus' famous statement regarding the length of time He will experience Divine wrath.

Mat 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**.

Without much thought, we assume that Jesus is here merely speaking about His burial in the tomb. However, this is very far from the truth. This idea would lead to the assumption that Jesus' suffering for the sins of the world was predominantly physical. Let's first examine the illustration Jesus used to gain a clearer understanding of what He was saying to us.

We know the story. We pick it up from the place where Jonas was thrown into the sea.

Jon 1:17 Now the LORD had prepared **a great fish to swallow up Jonah**. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

The focus here is not so much the fish but Jonah's experience. Jonah was in the sea in a conscious state. When the fish swallowed him, he was still in a conscious state. Jonah then was consciously experiencing a living hell. He was alive and conscious, while experiencing being in a condition he had never before been in. In the heart of this fish, in the midst of this experience, he was unable to see any possibility of him escaping certain death.

While in this situation, in hell itself, Jonah began consciously prayed unto the Lord. His experience in the belly of hell began with him being conscious and in His consciousness, He prayed unto the Lord and submitted himself to his God.

Jon 2:1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

After Jonah's prayer, the record does not indicate that Jonah had lost consciousness. We can assume for being in the belly of a fish, under the water, with low oxygen content, there is that possibility he could have lost consciousness. We can only assume. However, three days and three night later the fish vomited him upon the shore of the beach.

Jon 2:10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it **vomited out Jonah upon the dry land**.

After Jonah recovered, again the word of the Lord came unto him to perform the task given him by the Lord.

Jon 3:1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

Jon 3:2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

We now go the Christ's experience. In what way was Christ's experience similar to that of Jonah? Let's follow the narrative of the path from the upper room when He had taken the Lord's Supper to the resurrection.

Christ ate the Passover the night of the 14th of Nisan. This was 24 hours earlier for He took opportunity to do so for His death was at hand when the passover lamb was to be slain by each household as part of the supper.

Jhn 13:30 He then having received the sop went immediately out: and **it was night**.

The evening watch is from 6pm to 9pm. It is during the evening watch that he ate the passover with the disciples on Nisan 14. After supper, he sang a hymn and left to go to the mount of Olives.

Mat 26:30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Around the beginning of the second watch, the midnight watch, which began at 9pm, Jesus made an interesting statement.

Mat 26:36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

Mat 26:37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and **began to be sorrowful and very heavy**.

Mat 26:38 Then saith he unto them, **My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death:** tarry ye here, and watch with me.

It is from this moment that Jesus was thrown into the sea as Joan was. It was here that his experience began. It was at this point that He began to feel the wrath of God against sin. It was from here that He was swallowed up in the experience typified by Jonah being swallowed by a great fish.

In this experience, like Jonah, He was conscious. He was aware of what was going on around Him. He could not see Himself returning from the jaws of eternal separation from His God and Father. Like Jonah, He prayed.

Mat 26:39 And he went a little further, and **fell on his face, and prayed**, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*.

Jonah didn't want to do what God asked him to. Christ, in His humanity, didn't want to go through with what He was expected to do. But three times, while in the heart of the earth, He cried out for deliverance, He only breathed a sigh of submission to the will of God. This was His experience throughout His entire ordeal in being taken by the Jews, seven trials and finally nailed to the cross at 9am. He was on that cross for 6 hours and then He lost consciousness, after crying out to His Father.

The reckoning of the time for Him to be in the heart of the earth then is the night period of the 14th, which fell on that Friday night when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane, around 9pm.

He died the 14th in the evening at the 9th hour before sundown. He was taken from the cross and placed in a tomb. All this time He was under the Divine Justice of God. This was not merely a physical death. This was an eternal death the Son of God was experiencing. He remained in the tomb the entire night of Sabbath, the entire day of Sabbath, the entire night of the first day and rose during the day of the first day.

Mat 28:1 In the end of the sabbath, **as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week**, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

Mrk 16:2 And very early in the morning the first *day* of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

Mrk 16:9 Now when *Jesus* was risen early the first *day* of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

Luk 24:1 Now upon **the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning**, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

Jhn 20:1 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.

He rose the morning of the first day of the week and appeared to the disciples the evening of the same day. This is to say that the evening of the day (daylight period of the 24 hour day) is the end of the day, coming onto sunset.

Jhn 20:19 Then **the same day at evening**, being **the first *day* of the week**, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

Let us therefore reckon the days and nights Jesus was in the heart of the earth. That is, the days and nights Jesus was under divine wrath for the sins of the world.

- 1st night - Friday night from 9pm of the 14th
- 1st Day - Friday during the daylight period, which was the 14th
- 2nd night - Sabbath night, which was the 15th
- 2nd Day - Sabbath day light period of the 15th
- 3rd night - Sunday night from the setting of the sun after the 15th, this being the 16th
- 3rd Day - Early in the morning of the first day, which was the 16th.

This is how we can have three days and three nights of Jesus being in the heart of the earth.