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"Here is the Patience of the Saints: Here are they that keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus." Rev. 14 :12

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"THE THIRD DAY SINCE THESE THINGS WERE DONE" (Page 52)

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ON what day of the week was Christ crucified? and on what day did he arise from the dead? These are questions which have been the occasion of no little discussion. There are substantially two views held in reference to them. The first is, that Christ was crucified on Wednesday, was laid in the tomb near the close of that day, and rose from the dead a corresponding hour on the Sabbath, or Saturday, having lain in the grave exactly seventy-two hours; this being the three days and three nights during which the Son of man was to be in the heart of the earth, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly. The second view, and the one most generally entertained, is, that Christ was crucified on Friday, and rose early on the morning of the first day of the week. There are others who place the crucifixion upon Thursday instead of Friday, thinking this necessary to make harmony between all the statements of the evangelists concerning that event. This view, however, does not obviate the difficulty which the first view is designed to meet; namely, the apparent failure of the words of Christ that the Son of man should be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, if a period of time less than seventy-two hours elapsed while he lay in the tomb. The main question lies between the first and second views here stated.

As already intimated, the first view rests wholly upon the testimony respecting Jonah. No other reason, at least of which we are aware, exists for placing the crucifixion so early in the week as Wednesday, except the statement of Christ that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the body of the fish, the Son of man should be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Assuming that the phrase "heart of the earth," means the grave, which may perhaps be questioned, all rests upon the meaning of this phrase, "three days and three nights." What do these words signify? Must they be taken absolutely as they would be understood if used at the present day? or, was there in that age a *usus loquendi*, in accordance with which they could be taken in an accommodated sense? There is nothing in the record in Jonah to throw any additional light upon the expression; that is, there is no other testimony there, and no other events recorded, which show us that a period of time, absolutely seventy-two hours in length, is meant by the term "three days and three nights." We do have, however, in the evangelists, records of predictions and narrations of events, from which we can determine something respecting the time during which Christ lay in the tomb. Now, instead of taking the bare expression, "three days and three nights," assuming that the meaning attached to it when it was used, was the same as we would give at the present day, and then using that as proof that Christ was for seventy-two consecutive hours in the grave, and trying to make all other testimony harmonize with this view, it seems to us it would be fully as legitimate a mode of reasoning to try to ascertain from the evangelists how long Christ was actually in the tomb, and use that as a key for the interpretation of the expression, "three days and three nights."

The words placed at the head of this article give us, if we mistake not, a good clue to the solution of this question. They are the words used by the disciples to Christ when on their way to Emmaus. The time when they were used is beyond dispute. It was in the latter part of the first day of the week. And they said, "To-day is the *third* day since

these things were done." From this, then, as a starting point, let us count back and see how early in the week it is possible to place the crucifixion. If the first day of the week was the third day, the day before the first day, or the Sabbath, was the second day, and the day before that, or Friday, the first day, since the events of which they were speaking took place; and this would forbid our placing the events themselves farther back than the preceding day, or Thursday. Reasoning from this statement of the disciples, we see not how the trial and crucifixion of Christ can possibly be placed earlier in the week than Thursday.

How, then, do those who place this event on Wednesday, meet this testimony? We have never heard any one try; but we have heard that some do attempt to get around it (for we can call it nothing less) by saying that the word since means from the first day; that is, the third day from the first day of the occurrence of these things. But it looks to us that this is not even respectable sophistry. If we are to reckon from some point subsequent to the occurrence of the events, then we are cut loose from all moorings, and might just as well say that that was the third day since Jonah was put into the whale's belly.

The original is very definite. "*Tpirnv ravrnv, nucpav ayei onyepov, aq ov ravra eyevero.* This day is the third day from the time when these things took place." Suppose, now, that the crucifixion took place on Wednesday. He was laid in the tomb that day. All was accomplished before Thursday began. Would not Thursday, then, be the first day following those events? Would not Friday, be the second, and Sabbath the third, even stretching the time all that it is possible to stretch it? The expression, since these things occurred, cannot exclude Thursday; for Thursday was not the day of the occurrence of these things, but the day following their occurrence; and the disciples did not say, To-day is the third day from the day following the occurrence of these things; but the third day from the time when they occurred. This is a nail in a sure place; for, in view of this testimony, we cannot go back more than two days from the first day of the week for the crucifixion, making it occur on Thursday, the third day, according to the most liberal reckoning, from that point. We do not say it did occur then, but only that we cannot go back farther than that day.

The seventy-two-hour theory thus falls to the ground; and we are held to the conclusion that the expression, "three days and three nights," cannot be taken to mean absolutely that length of time. The way is, therefore, now all open to adjust these events in such a manner as a harmonious interpretation of all the testimony shall demand.

And first, we call the attention of the reader to those passages which declare that Christ would rise on the third day from the time of his trial and crucifixion. There are eight of them, as follows : Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mark 9:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7; and two passages state that he did rise on the third day; Luke 21:46; 1 Cor. 15:4. Take these texts with the declaration of the disciples, "Today is the third day since these things were done," and, as it seems to us, the day of the resurrection is clearly identified. Christ was to rise on the third day after certain events, and the disciples, naming those very events, and speaking on the first day of the week, say, "Today is the third day since these things were done." The day on which the disciples uttered these words, if they were correct in their reckoning, was the very day on which Christ was to rise, according to his own predictions. Did his predictions fail? If not, his resurrection is immovably fixed upon the first day of the week.

There is a passage in Mark which we consider a direct declaration that Christ did rise on the first day of the week; Mark 16:9; "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary 'Magdalene." Greek; "*Avaorac de npwl npwrn naBBarov, boavn npwrov Mapla rn Maydahnv,*" &c. Literally, "And having arisen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene," &c. The only question here is, whether the words, "early the first day of the week," are an adjunct of the participle, having risen, or of the verb, appeared. We think they qualify the participle; for, first, the verb has a qualifying word, in the word first, which seems to be all that the evangelist wished to assert respecting his appearing. There would be no propriety in saying that he appeared first to certain ones on the first day of the week, unless it is told to whom he appeared first upon some other day. Secondly, it would appear more important that the time of his resurrection should be named than the

time when he appeared to his disciples. But if it is said that this is the important point, then we reply that this certainly took place on the first day of the week, and hence Sunday-keepers retain all the force of their argument for first-day, based on the resurrection of Christ, even though the resurrection itself be removed to another day.

This brings us to another difficulty involved in the view that Christ lay in the tomb seventy-two hours, from near the close of Wednesday to near the close of the Sabbath; namely, it makes the resurrection of Christ occur on the Sabbath. Is there any testimony to show that Christ arose on the Sabbath? Matt. 28:1 is claimed for this purpose. It is held by some that this language means, "Late in the Sabbath [the day ending at sunset] as the first day of the week was drawing on;" that is, before sunset on the Sabbath, came the two Marys to the sepulcher. Previous to their coming, there had been [margin] a great earthquake, the stone was rolled away, and an angel, assuring them that the Lord was not there, but had arisen, bade them go quickly and tell the disciples that he was risen, and would go before them into Galilee where they would see him. This, it is claimed, is the record of a previous visit, which none of the other evangelists mention, they all speaking of a visit on the following morning, after the Sabbath was past.

We showed two weeks since that the language of Matt. 28:1, is clearly susceptible of the translation given it in our common version, and that it means, after the Sabbath, in harmony with the other evangelists. Let us now inquire whether this idea of a previous visit, in Matt. 28:1, is consistent with the record of the other evangelists.

1. According to the view under notice, this visit was made on the Sabbath. But Luke says (23:56) that the disciples rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment. It is hardly probable that they would thus clip the end of the Sabbath by a journey to the sepulcher, work from which they had so scrupulously abstained at its commencement; nor could such a course easily be reconciled with the testimony of Luke, above referred to.

2. The same Marys, according to Mark (16:1,2), came to the sepulcher very early in the morning of the first day of the week; and they brought the spices they had prepared to anoint the Lord, Luke 24:2, and wondered who would roll away the stone for them. But how can it be supposed that they would come for this purpose on first-day morning, if they had been to the sepulcher the night before and found the stone rolled away, and been assured by an angel that the Lord was not there, but had risen? Were they so forgetful, or so thoughtless?

3. While the women were returning to tell the disciples, as the angel had bidden them, according to the record in Matthew 28, the guard went into the city, and between them and the chief priests the story was fabricated that the body of Jesus was stolen while they slept. Now, the supposition that Jesus rose in the daytime before the close of the Sabbath, involves the absurdity of supposing that the guard would acknowledge that they were asleep, in the daytime! and that the body was taken in broad daylight! To avoid this, it is said that only the first eight verses of Matt. 28 refer to the Sabbath visit, the language of verse 9, and onward, referring to the morning visit, which is noticed by the other evangelists. But this is a most forced and unnatural interpretation; for there is nothing in the language to denote a jump of a whole night between verses 8 and 9, and not an intimation that the record from verse 9 applies to an occasion different from that introduced in the preceding verses. But this view involves an absurdity equal in magnitude to the other; for it follows that the guard, after being struck down as dead men by the glorious manifestations attending the resurrection of Christ on Sabbath afternoon, waited a whole night, till first-day morning, before they went into the city to acquaint the chief priests with the wonderful events which had taken place.

Having now found that Christ's resurrection took place on the first day of the week, the only importance attached to fixing the day of the crucifixion is to show a fulfillment of Christ's words, and make all the statements of the evangelists harmonize. It has already been shown, that we cannot go back farther than Thursday for the date of that event. The question here, then, lies between Thursday and Friday where it is generally placed; and it is only material to take that day which is required by the testimony in the case.

Let us suppose it to have occurred on Friday. The betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and entombment of Christ, then, occupied almost that entire day. Could this be taken as the first day in the computation? If so, then Sunday would be the third day, as the disciples said. In Luke 13:32, we read that Jesus sent this word to Herod: "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." The to-day in which Christ speaks is here made the first in the order of reckoning.

In Acts 27, we have an account of some of Paul's perils by sea. In verse 17, he speaks of a certain day of their distress. The next day, he continues, they lightened the ship; and the third day, cast overboard the tackling. Verse 19. Here it is evident that the day mentioned in verse 17 is called the first.

In Esther 6, we have an account of a feast given by the queen, to Haman and the king. The next day she gave another; and that next day is called the *second*. Esth. 7:2.

So in reckoning backward, the day on which the person spoke was the first day, and the day but one before that, was called the third. See the marginal reading of Ex. 4:10; Deut. 19:4; Josh. 3:4; 1 Sam. 4:7; 19:7; etc.

From this it is evident that when Christ predicted that he was to suffer certain things, be put to death, and rise the third day, he reckoned the day of his suffering as the first day in the computation.

But how can a portion of Friday, the Sabbath, and a part of Sunday, be called, three days and three nights? There is no difficulty, if such was the manner of speaking in use among the Jews. What did they understand by it? This is the only question to be settled. There is a passage in Esther which would seem to throw some light upon the question. She told Mordecai (4:16) to gather the Jews together who were in Shushan, and fast for three days, neither eating nor drinking night or day; and she would do the same, and so would go in unto the king. This expression is certainly equivalent to three days and three nights. And how was it fulfilled? In chap. 5:1, we read that on the third day Esther appeared before the king. In like manner, we read of Joseph that he put his brethren into ward three days, but on the third day he released them and permitted them to depart to Canaan.

From these instances it appears clear that, according to Jewish usage, it did not require three full days and nights to answer to the expression, "three days and three nights;" but that it was applied to a period of time covering the part of one day, the whole of another, and a portion of a third.

The day following the crucifixion, the chief priests came to Pilate desiring a guard to be set; and it is objected that they would not do this upon the Sabbath. This is not the way, to be sure, we should expect the Sabbath to be spoken of; but as to the chief priests and Pharisees, we do not think we can presume much on the piety of men who were just then so infuriated with the spirit of the devil as to condemn the Saviour to the cross. It is far easier to suppose they would come to Pilate upon the Sabbath than to think that the Sabbath which followed that preparation day, Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54, and which the women kept according to the commandment, Luke 33:56, was only a ceremonial sabbath.

But, says one, if we could show that Christ did not rise on the first day of the week, how it would sweep away the argument for Sunday keeping. To be of any service, the argument to this end must be very plain and positive; for all the world almost are established in the belief that his resurrection was on Sunday. The evidence is not so clear; and to try to use it, is to seize the maul by the head instead of the handle; for it would be a hundred-fold harder to make a person believe that Christ's resurrection did not take place upon the first day of the week, than to show him that if it did, it proved nothing in favor of a Sunday Sabbath. Were we arguing with a Sunday-keeper, we would prefer to admit Christ's resurrection on Sunday rather than otherwise; for we like to agree with an opponent as far as possible; and because, after he has carefully built up his argument, it is so easy to show that point after point is only assumption, and that the whole structure falls in hopeless ruin to the ground.

And farther, to undertake to prove Christ's resurrection upon another day, is a tacit admission that if he did rise on the first day of the week, it is of force in behalf of a Sunday Sabbath; whereas if ten thousand resurrections could be shown upon that day, it would prove nothing whatever in its favor as a day of rest and worship.