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**THE THREE PROPHETIC DAYS.**

**A Harmony of the Apparent Discrepancies in the Gospel Narratives about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

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**II.**

We have, in the preceding discussion, sought to show that Jesus Christ was crucified on Wednesday, was buried Wednesday evening, just as it turned into Thursday. The burial was in progress when the hour struck which closed Wednesday and introduced Thursday, so that the entombment was not really completed till just in the first minutes of Thursday. Exactly "three days and three nights later," or "in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn into the first day of the week," the two Marys approached the tomb, and were told by the angel that Jesus was risen from the dead. This visit, we are sure, took place in the evening, just after six o'clock, in the first minutes of what we now call Sunday, but which then began, as all will agree, at six o'clock in the evening, at the very end of Saturday, the Jewish sabbath. This being exactly "three days and three nights" after the corresponding hour on the preceding Thursday, fills all the requirements of the Savior's words. Unless we shall find some declaration or palpable requirement of the Scriptures which will not harmonize with this view, we may rest confidently, being assured that we have the correct view. For, if this will meet every requirement of the Scriptures, it is the only theory, so far as we know, that does so.

**THE WOMEN AT THE TOMB.**

So far, we have taken account of only one visit of the women to the tomb where Jesus was buried. That is the visit of the two Marys, which took place in the evening of the Jewish

weekly sabbath. But there were other visits made by them, and by other women as well. But none of these other visits took place in the evening. They were on the next morning, yet on the same day, the day which began at six o'clock the evening before. There are certain features of these visits that must be accounted for. It must be shown how certain women could come to the sepulchre "early in the *morning* of the first day of the week, *while it was yet dark,*" and "in the deep twilight of the morning," and yet "when the sun was risen." All these things are said about the visits of the women to the tomb.

If we will but remember that Matthew is the only writer who mentions the visits of the women "in the evening" at the time of His resurrection, and that the time is accurately fixed by the two Greek words, *ὄψέ* and *ἐπιφωσκούση*, which we have previously examined, we may be relieved from other care about that visit, for the present. And just as Matthew does not mention any *morning visits*, so none of the other writers mention this *evening visit*. Matthew's record is peculiar. He alone undertakes to place *the hour* of the resurrection, as he alone tells of the Savior's promise to be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." He alone tells of the sealing of the tomb, and the placing of the guard. So, he alone mentions the night vision of the angel, and the flight and report of the guard. The visits of the women, mentioned by the other writers, all have certain time marks about them which limit them to the morning hours of the day. But it must be continually borne in mind that the day of which we speak began at six o'clock on the previous evening. Thus will the mind avoid much confusion.

John tells of another visit made by Mary Magdalene, but made alone. This visit he places in the morning, very early in the morning, while it was yet dark, *πρὸ σκοτίας ἔτι οὔσης*. When she approached she saw the stone rolled away. It had been rolled away the previous evening. She ran to tell Simon Peter, and that disciple whom Jesus loved, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid Him." These words are plain enough and make no dif-

faculty as long as we let them stand alone, as they should. But while she was going to make this report certain other women came to the tomb. Since it was a little later in the morning, we should expect the words which describe the hour to show the day a little more advanced, because every detail about the resurrection is so carefully guarded. And this is exactly what we find in Lu. 23:55—24:2. He says that certain women who had come up with him from Galilee, and who had prepared spices and rested on the sabbath, came to the tomb "in the deep twilight of the morning (*ὄρθρον βαθείως*) at the early dawn." They found the stone rolled away, also. But they found not the body of Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed concerning this, behold *two* men stood by them *in shining garments*. "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, He has been raised up." And returning from the sepulchre, they reported all these things. Take note of the fact that the angels who were seen in the dark had on shining garments, or their faces shone radiantly, while those that were seen by daylight had on white raiment. It was, perhaps, at this point that Peter and John visited the tomb. Then a little while later, as Mark tells us in the 16th chapter, Mary Magdalene, having joined other women, came to the tomb, bringing spices. They reach the tomb very early, *λίαν πρωί*, on the first day of the week. The *πρωί* shows that it was in the morning, but it was not so early as the previous visit of Mary, which was "while it was yet dark," nor was it so early as that of the other company of women, which was "in the deep twilight" (so the Greek), nor was it so late as the experience of Mary which followed the departure of the women who came with Mary. For that was "when the sun was risen," *ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου*.

This second company of women, with whom Mary came, also found the stone rolled away and entered the tomb. Mk. 16:5. They saw "a young man sitting on the right side, arrayed in a white robe," not a dazzling one. He said to them: "Be not acrighted. Ye are seeking Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has been raised up; He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go and say to His disciples, and Peter, that He goes before you into Galilee. There

shall ye see Him, as He said to you." And they fled from the tomb, and said nothing to any one; for they were afraid. The messages sent from the tomb by the women differ so materially that these messages alone should have suggested to us that there were several visits of the women to the tomb. One is tempted to think that the great enemy of the Lord has been confusing the minds and blinding the eyes of devout students at this point lest they should get the resurrection of the Savior above challenge. For herein is the deadliest shaft that gave him his mortal wound, and insures his ultimate overthrow. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the final proof of His divinity. But we pursue our study of these visits.

When the other women left the tomb Mary Magdalene lingered there alone. She is weeping. She looks into the tomb and sees "two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus lay." There were *two* angels, clad in white. They asked her why she wept. Then she turned to see Jesus, standing near her, whom she supposed to be the gardener. He discovers His identity by speaking her name. But when she worships Him, He will not allow her to touch Him, but tells her to go and tell His brethren that He is about to ascend to his Father—His Father and theirs. This information is given us in Jo. 20:11-18. Mark must have been reporting the same interview in 16:9, when he says: "Now when He was risen, early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene." And this passage throws a whole flood of light on the question, when carefully examined. One hesitates to propose another translation than that given by these careful revisers, who have given us such an excellent translation, as we have it in "The American Standard Revision." But will some capable Greek scholar say whether this would not be a literal translation of Mk. 16:9, which in the Greek is as follows: ἀναστὰς δὲ πρωὶ πρώτῃ σαββάτου ἐφάνη πρῶτον Μαρία τῇ Μαγδαληνῇ -- "And having risen, in the morning of the first sabbath, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene." The *πρωὶ* says that it was "in the morning watch." The *πρώτῃ σαββάτου* says that it was on "the first sabbath." And the *πρῶτον* says that the "first appearance

was to Mary." In other words, the *first* appearance which He made on the *morning* of the *first* sabbath was to Mary. This could not be true if we consider the appearance mentioned by Matthew as taking place on Sunday morning. That was not in the morning at all, nor was it to Mary alone. But of the appearance made on the next day, this was the first, and it was in the morning, and it was to Mary alone. When we remember that the day on which He rose was the first of the series of Christian sabbaths, then this text becomes a very illuminating one. This meeting occurred just before Mary went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. (Mk. 16:10; Jo. 20:18.)

Luke is most probably speaking of this interview when he says (24:10): "Now they were Mary Magdalene, and Joana, and Mary the mother of James: and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles." These women had all come to the apostles about the same hour, each company with their several reports. This takes account of all the visits, and all the reports of the women concerning the resurrection.

It now remains for us to examine certain Scripture statements in connection with the resurrection which have been considered difficult to harmonize. We enter this study with all confidence in the Scriptures, whether we shall be able to show how they can all be made to harmonize with all the others or not. And let it be remembered that we are following our "Postulate," viz.: "The facts concerning the trial and crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ were such that every statement made in the New Testament about them is true, and happened just as the Scriptures say they happened." Relying on this safe rule, we proceed to the examination of

#### CERTAIN SCRIPTURES.

We now proceed to examine certain Scripture phrases used by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament when speaking of the resurrection. Let us see if they will harmonize with the theory announced. Our contention is that Jesus was buried on Wednesday evening, the fourteenth of Nisan, the entomb-

ment being completed just after six o'clock. This, according to the Jews, would make the burial to be completed in the very beginning of Thursday, the fifteenth, from which time we are to reckon three full days of twenty-four hours, or seventy-two hours. This would bring us to the very beginning of the first day of the week, our Sunday, which began at six o'clock on Saturday evening, according to the manner of reckoning time then. The phrases which we are to explain are these: "Within three days," "in three days," "the third day," "after three days," "this is the third day."

Let us take these in order. The phrase "within three days" occurs once in the accepted version at Mk. 14:58. And yet the identical Greek phrase, here translated "within three days," occurs at Matt. 26:61. It is there translated "in three days." This is a part of the false testimony borne against Jesus by the suborned witnesses. They said He promised to build the temple "within three days." This, John said, He spoke concerning the resurrection of His body. While they distorted His words, yet the expression is so associated with the thought of His period in the grave that a complete study must properly take account of what they said. We are in no sense called upon to make their words good. But, since the Holy Spirit has preserved them for us, let us take account of them. Matt. and Mark agree at both points. When they report what the false witnesses said they use the expression *διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν*, That is *διά* with the genitive case. But in reporting the sneers at the crucifixion they both use *ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις*. That is, *ἐν* with the dative. And these two expressions are equal to each other. If we could determine either, then we should have the value of the other. We are able to determine both, and show that they are equal. This first pair ( *διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν* ) express a measure of time, during which, or at the end of which, a thing is promised to be complete. If Jesus had really promised to build a temple "within three days," and the expression had been just as we have it here, He would have been allowed till the end of the third day in which to complete His work. And if He had finished it by the end of the third day, he would have kept His word. Harrison, page 195, says: "With regard

to time, *διά* with the genitive case is used with the same sense as 'through,' to mark the period of time through which an action or event extends." That is to say, Jesus would have kept His word if He rose at the end of three full days. Winer, page 380, says: "Applied to time, *διά* denotes *during* (i. e., within a space of time)." Thayer: "Of time elapsed, and which has, so to say, been passed through." This quite fits our contention. Jesus needed three full days in which to keep His word, even if we require that He should do as the false witnesses said He had promised to do. How could the Friday-Sunday theory get through three days with their scheme? Let it be remembered that those who mocked Him at the cross were expressing the identical thought, when they said He promised to build the temple in three days. And yet both Matthew and Mark agree in expressing that by the use of *ἐν* and the dative. This may be seen by examining Matt. 27:40 and Mk. 15:29. The Greek is *ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις*. But we shall have further occasion to study the dative case as used in expressing time. Here, in both instances, in the use of *διά* and the genitive, as in the use of *ἐν* and the dative, it is found that the time extends *through* three days. Whatever we may find elsewhere, it must conform to this measure, for the same writers agree in using all these expressions when speaking of the same thing.

Matthew uses four expressions when speaking of this same thing, namely, the length of time that Jesus was in the grave. These are as follows: "After three days," 27:63 (Greek, *μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας*); "the third day," 16:21, 17:23, 20:19 (Greek, *τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ*); "in three days," 26:61 (Greek, *διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν*); "in three days," 27:40 (Greek, *ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις*). Now, all these expressions must be equal in their time value. Mark uses the last two, 14:58 and 15:29. Luke uses one of them, "the third day," 9:22, 18:33, 24:7, 24:46; Acts 10:40. John uses "in three days," expressed by *ἐν* and the dative. Paul uses "the third day," 1 Cor. 15:4. We conclude, then, that there are several ways to say the same thing. They will differ according to the angle of vision. It is manifest that these several expressions mean the same thing, somehow. If we shall be able to determine some of them with certainty, that



will enable us to ascertain the meaning of others with confidence. It is like an axiom in mathematics: "Things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other." This may help to confirm us where we would otherwise be less confident. So that possible explanation which will make all agree, is presumably the correct one. If there shall be *one point* at which all can agree, and *but one point*, then we shall be doubly assured that such is the real explanation. The center of a circle is the one point at which all the radii can meet. Each radius is a true radius, but it leads from a different point on the circumference. There are two requirements for a radius. It must be of the same length with all the other radii, and it must meet all the others at the centre. The centre of the circle, in this instance, is the hour of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The several radii must meet there. They must have the same length. In this instance each radius must reach from the burial to the resurrection of the Lord, and it must be exactly three days and three nights long, seventy-two hours. Then, if there is any common length of the radii, or time measures, as given in the N. T. which will allow them all to meet at the very beginning of the first day of the week, that must be the common measure of these several radii. We have seen that Jesus was buried on Wednesday evening, just after six o'clock, or in the first minutes of Thursday. Three days and three nights from that hour would bring us to the very first minutes of the following Sunday. This Matthew calls the dawn of "the first day of the week." We must, therefore, find an explanation for each several measure of time that will make it fit into that space. If there is such an explanation it will meet all the requirements, and relieve us of much embarrassment. Somehow there is an explanation, if we can find it. May the Holy Spirit who inspired all these words help us.

Let us take first the expression "after three days." This may be found, when the Greek is correctly translated, in Matt. 27:63; Mk. 8:31, 9:31, 10:34. In the original it is thus: *μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας*. It will be observed that the time is expressed by the use of *μετά* and the accusative case. This is true at each place above mentioned. The correct translation is "after three

days." Winer says, page 403: *μετά* denotes into the midst of something, then it signifies motion *after, behind*, something; in prose, however, it more frequently means *behind, after* (post) of a state of rest." He then refers to Heb. 9:3, and adds: "In all other passages of the N. T. where it occurs it signifies *after* in regard to time (the opposite of *pro*), even in Matt. 27:63, where the popular expression presents no difficulty." That is just what the phrase ought to mean, if it is to fit our time measure from the beginning of Thursday to the beginning of Sunday. After three days will bring us to this centre. Thayer says of *μετά* and the acusative case: "It denotes (following accompaniment), sequence, i. e., the order in which one thing follows another—order of time, after." It will be seen then, that where *μετά* and the acusative case is used to mark out a time limit, the thing spoken of must take place when the time limit is out. That is, "after three days," will require that three days shall pass and then the thing shall happen, otherwise it would not be after three days. We are told that where such expressions occur in the Greek it will allow that the first day may or may not be full. But the *other two must be full days* before the conditions are fulfilled. This is true when speaking of any number of days. If a period of time begins within the limit of any day, that day, being the *first* of a series, may be counted as one of the days, whether full or not. But all the other days must be full days before the time limit is completed. If, then, we shall allow that Thursday was not exactly a full day, because a few of the earlier minutes of that day were occupied in completing the burial, still it might be properly counted as a day. But Friday and Saturday would have to be full—both come to an end before the three days were completed. So that "after three days," if we begin with the first minutes of Thursday, would require the resurrection to take place after the close of Saturday (the Jewish sabbath). Any one who wishes to test this rule can do so by examining the following passages: Matt. 24:29; Mk. 13:24; Lu. 5:27; Jo. 13:27; Acts 18:1.

The expression "after three days" is fully satisfied when we reach the end of the Jewish sabbath, if we begin, as we have

found we must, in the beginning of Thursday. One day from that point would take us to the same time on Friday. Two days would bring us to the same hour on Saturday. Three days would bring us to the same time on "the first day of the week," our Sunday. Then "after three days" the resurrection would occur. So this radius fits, for this is the time when Matthew says the resurrection did occur. And that is the time Jesus said He would be in the heart of the earth. And Luke makes the hour of the burial to have been in the very beginning of Thursday. Now, let the Friday-Sunday theory try to satisfy the measure "after three days," when they begin on Friday evening and end on Sunday morning. Should they begin on any hour of Friday, and so count Friday as one full day, as they might properly do, where are the other full days that must elapse? They would take them over into Monday, as we count days. After one day would bring the close of Friday. After two days would bring the close of Saturday (the Jewish sabbath), and "after three days" would bring the end of "the first day of the week," our Sunday. So they cannot explain "after three days."

We now give attention to the other time expression, "the third day." This occurs, in connection with the resurrection, at the following places: Matt. 16:21, 17:23, 20:19; Lu. 9:22, 18:23, 24:7, 24:46; Acts 10:40 and 1 Cor. 15:4. The Greek is *τῆ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ*. It is a measure of time which is applied to the time which Jesus spent in the tomb. It must be equal to the expression "after three days," because Matthew uses both when speaking of the resurrection. So Luke and Paul use it. Whether we are able to make it appear so or not, it is equal to the same thing because the Holy Spirit has said so. He says so by having chosen men use both expressions when speaking of the same thing. We have, in more than one way, found that eJesus was "in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." Then this, too, must mean that. We must find a centre so placed that this radius, "the third day," will reach it also. It is the measure of time that is three days long. It may have all the three days full. It points out an event that takes place exactly at the end of the third day. It is the answer to

the question, "when will the resurrection occur?" It will occur "the third day." It is the same as "in three days," and it must be the same as "after three days." Allowing that the burial occurred in the very beginning of Thursday, the first day will bring us to the very beginning of Friday. The second day will bring us to the very beginning of Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath), and "the third day" will bring us to the very beginning of "the first day of the week" (our Sunday). Why may not that be the meaning of it? Turn to Winer, page 218. He says: "Time as the substratum with which all events are connected, is expressed by the dative in answer to the question *when*, whether it denotes space of time, or (more frequently) a point of time, *at* which something takes place—and that, too, in words that directly signify the notion of time or a division of time." As an example he quotes Matt. 20:19: "The third day shall He be raised up." Here we have "a point of time at which something is said to take place." And "it is expressed in words that directly signify the notion of time or a division of time." The third day, then, may bring us to the very end of the third day, or seventy-two hours from the starting point. This is what we need in order to make this radius fit into our circle, and reach from the circumference—the burial—to the centre, the resurrection. Can any exacting critic ask for more? There is just one point at which all these Scriptures can be true. The hour of the resurrection is fixed with more precision than any other event in the Bible. With all that is said about it, it could not occur at any other point of time and satisfy every demand. If one still objects to this theory let him show one which will let every expression have its true meaning. According to every test, the resurrection is found to have occurred at the very beginning of "the first day of the week," our Sunday, which all must remember began at six o'clock on what we call Saturday evening.

One other scripture awaits our study. In Luke 24:21, Cleopas and his companions, when speaking with Jesus, said, according to our translation: "This is the third day since these things came to pass." This was spoken towards the close of the very day when He rose, the first Christian Sabbath. This is the

same day whose glorious morning was so full of joy and astonishment among the disciples, when the women came from the empty tomb, bringing such thrilling reports. They had seen angel after angel, who said: "He has been raised up, He is not here." Mary herself came, saying that she had seen the Lord. But let it be remembered that this is the same day that began last evening when "it began to dawn into the first day of the week," as the two Marys went to see the sepulchre. That was at one end, the beginning, of this glorious day. This is at the other end, the close of the same day. If the Holy Spirit called that "the third day" then may we not so call it still? It is suggested that a literal rendering of the text would read: "But, indeed, besides all these things, to-day brings to a close the third day since all these things happened." They had been speaking of the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and say that this Sabbath brings to a close the third day since they occurred. But allow that the translation, which seems to be idiomatic, is proper, and the difficulty does not seem to be great in understanding this radius to be of the same length as the others. So every expression shows that it was "three days and three nights" from the burial to the resurrection. We know that He rose in the very beginning of "the first day of the week." Then He must have been buried three days earlier. We find that He was buried on Wednesday evening (when reckoning time as we do now), but really in the first minutes of Thursday, reckoning time as the Jews did then. If so, then He must rise in the first minutes of Sunday, as we call the day, but in the evening, just after the close of the Jewish sabbath, when reckoning time as they then reckoned it. Two points of time are fixed, by several tests, and they are seventy-two hours apart, or "three days and three nights."

We submit our plea. Have we not made good our claim? Is not this the correct theory about the burial and resurrection of our Lord? Have we not taken account of all the facts? Cannot this theory answer all proper questions that may be propounded to it? The Savior's claim to be the Son of God is fully vindicated without handling His words so as to make Him speak in such uncertain terms, with meaning so hidden as to awaken doubt where He manifestly intended to settle

doubts. It will still be proper to continue speaking enthusiastically of the morning of the resurrection, when we understand what it means. But "Ash Wednesday" and "Good Friday" must be relegated to the dark shades of tradition whence they came. For they have no place in Scripture. The seventh day sabbath will fall by the same rule, for our Savior rose on the first day of the week, which from that day forward became the Christian Sabbath, and is so recognized in all the after history of Christianity, both in the N. T. and in all history. We have a Scriptural sabbath, the "first day of the week," as it is translated in the N. T.

This calls upon us to say that, in this discussion, we have, for the sake of avoiding confusion in the mind of the reader, forborne to use the word sabbath instead of "the first day of the week." It is always the translation of "sabbath," that is "the first day of the week" is. There have been *three* sabbaths under consideration all through this discussion. The passover sabbath, which always occurred the day after the passover, and in this instance was Thursday; the regular Jewish sabbath, which, as all know, was Saturday; and the new Christian Sabbath, which began then with that "first day of the week." There were two sabbaths that came together, end to end. They met in the tomb of Jesus Christ. They were the last Jewish sabbath and the first Christian Sabbath. The whole system of Jewish sabbaths went down into the grave with Jesus and the new system of Christian Sabbaths came up out of the grave with Him. Our Lord died under the ceremonial law, and fulfilled it. With that He closed the ceremonial sabbaths. But there came up out of the grave with Him the brighter Christian Sabbath when He rose triumphant over death, hell and the grave. Is not this what the prophet Hosca said (2:11): "I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feasts, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn assemblies"? A new order, as pertaining to God and our service to Him, is introduced. And the very first feature of that new order was a new sabbath, with a risen Lord. Whenever we meet, now, on the Sabbath, we are celebrating the resurrection of the Lord and do not need to wait for the annual recurrence of Easter. The blessing of God rest upon His truth. Amen.