



Tidings of Peace 2024

March



Newsletter of Peace Memorial EPC

From the Pastor...

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN BY "THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS"?

Author: Rick Lanser MDiv

Notwithstanding that Good Friday has a long-standing history as the accepted day of the Crucifixion, in our skeptical era when long-held views are routinely questioned, some Christian groups have used modern ways of counting to adopt a Wednesday or Thursday Crucifixion as an essential point of their doctrine. They claim that, notwithstanding its long acceptance by Christianity, Good Friday reflects a faulty understanding of Scripture. But we must attempt to look at the matter as the Jews themselves did, not impose a modern understanding of counting on the ancient text.

If we accept the inerrancy of the Scriptures, all of the passages in the New Testament dealing with the Crucifixion/Resurrection period simply *must* put Christ in the grave for the same amount of time. We cannot focus on just a single passage interpreted in isolation from its parallels. We owe it to the God of the Bible to seek a way to reconcile *all* of the various Scriptures on this subject with each other, not favoring one over all the rest.

Those who advocate for a Wednesday or Thursday Crucifixion over Friday adopt a particular interpretation of the expression "three days and three nights" in the "sign of Jonah" Jesus gave in Matthew 12:39-40:

But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of

the earth." (NASB 1995)

The traditional date for the Crucifixion puts Nisan 14 on a Friday. This makes the Nisan 15 "high day"—the proper biblical term, not "high Sabbath," which is an interpretation—coincide with the regular Saturday Sabbath. The result is that, from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection, two nights and one full day pass. But those who see a so-called "high

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Sabbath" as an extra rest day to count say this is not enough time and violates Scripture. They adopt a hyper-literal modern perspective that insists each day and each night of Matthew 12:40 must be 12 hours long, no more and no less, then seek to account for three 12-hour days plus three 12-hour nights—a total of 72 hours for Jesus to be "in the heart of the earth." They therefore object to the historical understanding that He was in the grave only from Friday evening to early Sunday morning.

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Well, we may say the hearts of these folks are in the right place; they want to honor Scripture as the Word of God. But their understanding of the Word is improperly influenced by modern ways of counting time, so that what they are honoring is actually *their particular interpretation*. The fact is, “three days and three nights” in Matthew 12:40 reflects a known Jewish idiom. It is not to be understood as requiring exactly a literal 72-hour period from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection.

“Three Days and Three Nights” as a Jewish Idiom

It goes without saying that during His life, Jesus learned as a child the common language of His time, including its figures of speech and idioms. He did not speak King James English, or any English at all! Any idiomatic expressions He would have used would have reflected the vernacular of His day.¹

When we do a search for verses in the New Testament dealing with the time between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, we find that Jesus Himself used different expressions at different times when speaking about it: “three days and three nights” (Mt 12:40), “after three days” (Mk 8:31), “in three days” (Jn 2:19), and “on the third day” (Lk 9:22).² He would not have contradicted Himself; therefore all of these expressions must mean the exact same thing. The apostles Peter and Paul likewise used “on the third day” in Acts 10:40 and 1 Corinthians 15:3–4.

It is obvious that, despite the differences in expression, these passages must all refer to the same span of time. The only way we can reconcile them is if we do not try to apply a strictly literal modern English sense to them all. A solution is needed that allows them to peacefully coexist, to speak with one voice. We get this when we acknowledge that the ancient Jews characteristically reckoned the passing of time inclusively, such that part of a day was counted as a whole. This may not be the way we today are accustomed to reckoning time, but no matter. If we accept the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, we are obliged to view the writings in the New Testament through first-century eyes, acknowledging when they use idioms that are distinctive to them. It is pure stubbornness to do otherwise.

If we accept the reality that there were particular turns of phrase distinctive to Jewish expression in the time of Christ, it prepares us to understand how the statement in Matthew 12:40 was probably understood by Jesus’s hearers. The basic question before us is, does “three days and three nights” equate with 72 hours—three periods of 12 hours of daylight plus three periods of 12 hours of darkness—as a mathematically correct English rendering seems to indicate, or does it reflect an idiomatic Jewish expression that should not be interpreted that way?

Scripture is replete with examples that show we should regard “three days and three nights” as an idiom. A particularly clear example is seen in the story of Cornelius, the Roman centurion who asked Peter to visit him in Acts 10. Verse 3 says he saw a vision at the ninth hour of a certain day. Verses 7–8 then say he promptly responded to the vision by sending a couple servants and a soldier to Peter that same day. Then the **next** day (Acts 10:9), right after Peter saw a vision, the messengers from Cornelius arrived at his gate and explained their mission, and Peter invited them in to spend the night (10:17–23a). Then the **next** day (10:23b), Peter and some brethren left with Cornelius’s servants. They did not arrive at Cornelius’s home in Caesarea until the **following** day (10:24). The way we count time today, we would say that Peter arrived at Cornelius’s house three days after Cornelius dispatched his servants to fetch Peter. We would not include the day of their departure from Cornelius as part of the elapsed time. But what does Cornelius do? He relates his story, saying that “**four** days ago”—to the very hour, the ninth—he had his vision that prompted him to send his servants to Peter (v. 30). When one counts the hours from the time of the vision to the arrival of Peter, there were exactly 72 hours (three days), yet Cornelius called it the **fourth** day. This reflects the characteristic Jewish idiomatic way of reckoning time inclusively.

In the Tyndale commentary on Matthew, R. T. France likewise argues that “*three days and three nights* was a Jewish idiom appropriate to a period covering only two nights.”³ A webpage on Evidence Unseen that refers to France’s statement adds that the phrase “can be understood as ‘spanning three calendar days’” and further lists three examples from the Old Testament that show the phrase’s idiomatic usage: **Joseph** put all of his brothers in prison for “**three days**,” but then we read that they were released “**on the third day**” (Gen. 42:17-18). Did they actually stay in prison for 72 hours? No, but this demonstrates that the Hebrews counted the part as the whole. **David** came to his men in Ziklag “**on the third day**,” but then we read that David had not eaten for “**three days and three nights**”

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(1 Sam. 30:1, 12-13). Again, this is an idiom where the part is being counted for the whole. **Esther** told Mordecai to fast for “three days, night or day,” but she came to the king “on the third day” (Est. 4:16-5:1). Again, this same idiom is being used for less than 72 hours.⁴

The website summarizes by observing,

Critics might argue that three days and nights are explicitly mentioned. But this misses the meaning of what an idiom is. Idioms—in any culture—simply shouldn’t be pressed for literality. . . .

. . . An idiom shouldn’t be pressed for technical precision.⁵

Other examples could be cited. Scripture defines “the third day” in Exodus 19:10–11 and Luke 13:32, where both speak of “today and tomorrow, and the third day.” This illustrates the kind of inclusive reckoning seen in the crucifixion accounts, which sees the day counting began as the first day. Leviticus 19:6–7 is similar: “It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and the next day; but what remains until the third day shall be burned with fire” (v. 6; NASB 1995). This idiomatic Jewish way of counting a third day inclusively should remove any doubt from our minds that it also applies to Matthew 12:40.

Jewish Christians today, who know the quirks of their language better than Gentile believers, agree that we are dealing here with a Jewish idiom. One, Joseph Hoffman Cohen, draws our attention to John 19:31:

“For that Sabbath day was an high day.” Bible students unacquainted with Jewish law and custom do not realize the significance of this passage, and so stumble into a wrong interpretation. The Sabbath day to the Jews means only the seventh day of the week; but Scripture often speaks of other holy days; if, for instance, any feast began on a Monday, then that Monday was a holy day in the Jewish colloquial, although the Scriptures, in order to distinguish between the common days and that holy day, call it a Sabbath but never, the Sabbath. A holy day is called a Sabbath only for the reason that certain work is forbidden and differs from the Sabbath on which all work is forbidden. Now it so happened that on this particular occasion, the first day of the Passover fell on a Saturday; hence the scrupulous care taken by the Evangelist, to specify, “that Sabbath day was an high day.” That is, it was a sort of double Sabbath, it being the regular weekly Sabbath Day as well as the first day of the Passover Feast. To prove that this Sabbath was the weekly Sabbath, one has only to consider the words, Day of Preparation. In Exodus 16:5 we read, “And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in,” which is the only time such an expression occurs in the Old Testament. On this expression the ancient rabbis built up hundreds of laws forbidding the eating, on the Sabbath, of food not prepared on Friday, whether it were fruit that fell from the tree or an egg laid on the Sabbath. Therefore, the words “Preparation Day,” which is another expression among the Jews for Friday, can never be applied to the day preceding any other day than the Sabbath when food could not be prepared.⁶

Another Jewish perspective is given by Rich Robinson, who is on the staff of the Jews for Jesus organization.⁷ Among other things, he points out that Josephus, in *Antiquities* 7.280–81 and 8.214, 8.218, uses “after three days” and “on the third day” interchangeably (in the latter passage, the original Greek literally says “after three days”). Robinson also observes the parallels between Matthew 4:2—“And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry” (NASB 1995)—and Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:1–2, which simply say that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days. In his estimate, the parallels in Mark and Luke suggest that the “forty days and forty nights” in Matthew is an expression equivalent to “forty days.”

There is also what that famous Messianic Jew, Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul, wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised **on the third day** according to the Scriptures.* (1 Cor 15:3–4; NASB 1995)

The sequence Paul gives implies the Lord died on Day 1, remained buried on Day 2, and was raised on Day 3 (the day of the wave sheaf of First Fruits—the typology of this ceremony with the resurrection of Christ is inescapable).

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To summarize this discussion, “three days and three nights” is known to be a Jewish idiom that is equivalent with saying “three days.” Both Scripture and modern Jews know the idiom, and it is the height of presumption to argue against this united testimony and say

March Birthdays

22nd Rodney Todd

28th Vickie Zeller

March Anniversaries

17th George & Sheryl Keady

NOTES FROM THE HANDBELLS

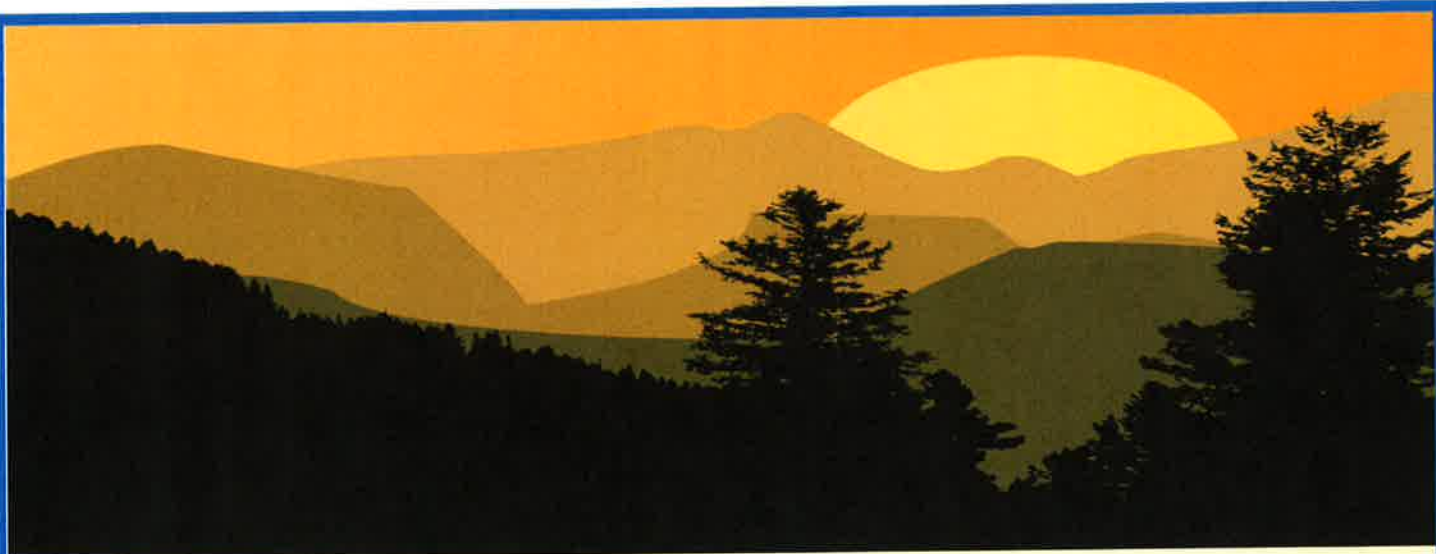
We started our journey from Medford the day after Christmas. Our destination was Jeffers Handbell Service Department in South Carolina to be refurbished. We were taken apart, cleaned and our metal parts polished. Our leather handles and other leather on our clapper heads were oiled. All felts were replaced and certain parts were oiled before re-assembling. We were packaged in separate bags before being put in our cases. Even the inside of our cases were cleaned and the outside cleaned and polished as well.

This is what service department wrote about us: "Your bells were absolutely beautiful and it was a pleasure to work on them. Your group is doing a fantastic job taking great care of them. My staff was impressed of their condition before we took them apart". That was quite a compliment since they do not know how old we are!

The bill came to \$2,874.84 which included shipping; there was more than enough in the Handbell Fund to cover the cost. Our ringers thank the congregation for supporting our special fund and having funds available on the yearly budget for music and supplies.

We are handbells made at Whitechapel in London, England and are valued at double the cost of American made bells such as Malmark or Schulmerich, which are popular among churches and other groups because of the cost.

We are the “Cadillac” of handbells”“ - our church is very fortunate to own us
- long may we ring!



Small Groups for Spring

Our Sermon-Based Small Groups will be taking the month of March off and resuming with the third quarter in April.

May the Lord Bless you and keep you in Christ our Lord.

-Pastor Aaron

The Book of **Revelation**

Our Sunday class on the book of Revelation will take the month of March off and will resume on Sunday, April 7th.

We hope to see you there: Sundays 9:00-10:00, Fireside Room

4/7 The Wicked Lament & the Saints Rejoice

4/14 The Victorious Rider & The Chained Dragon

4/21 The Final Judgment

4/28 The New Jerusalem

Stewardship & Finance Committee

January 2024

Here is our monthly update on finance:

Operating Income:.....	\$10,201.52
Operating Expenses:.....	<u>\$13,516.17</u>
Monthly Net:.....	(\$ 3,314.65)
YTD /Net:.....	(\$ 3,314.65)
Checking 1/31/24:.....	\$70,020.11
Money Market 1/31/24:.....	\$35,620.72
Endowment 1/31/24:.....	\$21,302.11
TOTAL 1/31/24:.....	\$126,942.94

Expenses in January beyond regular operations: Federal and State taxes, building insurance, continuing education, and office equipment.

Wishing everyone a Blessed 2024!

Kathy Todd

MISSION MEMO

One of the ministries our church has supported for years is the Pregnancy Hope Center. The Center doesn't just help those dealing with an unexpected pregnancy to choose life and support the woman through her pregnancy. The Center continues that support for life- the life of the mother and the life of the child. This support includes providing certain necessities such as formula, clothing, and car seats. And DIAPERS. We received word the Pregnancy Hope Center is in need of diapers! And this is a good thing- it means many have chosen to give life.

To help meet this need, the Mission & Outreach Committee will be hosting a "LUV TACOS LUNCH" on **SUNDAY, MARCH 17** after church. We'll set up a taco bar with all the fixings so you can build your own with what you like best. We'll be using seasoned meat and crispy corn tortillas. If tacos aren't your thing, you can make a taco(less) salad instead. We are asking for a free-will donation of **diapers (size newborn, 4,5 & 6)**. We've already posted flyers about this so you may have already found some diapers on sale. Hope you'll allow us to "Pamper" you with this fun fellowship time while giving "Huggies" to young families.

Please note that sometimes, despite all the efforts to make a different choice, a woman may decide to terminate her pregnancy. But that doesn't mean love and concern is terminated as well. The Pregnancy Hope Center offers support after an abortion through their "Set Free" ministry, offering a healing journey whether the abortion was a few weeks, a few months, or a few decades ago. Please pray for the women who made a decision that haunts them. And pray for the staff and volunteers at the Center who counsel these women, and bear the weight of answering the call "Jesus, Friend of sinners, break our hearts for what breaks Yours" (Casting Crowns, "Jesus, Friend of Sinners").

Presbytery Report

The winter Presbytery meeting was held February 1-3, 2024. The host church was Woodland Presbyterian Church in Washington, under the leadership of Pastor Kevin Leach, whose wife Cindy is also a leader of the Women's Link. They just completed a remodel that they had been planning for several years, with the intention of hosting this meeting. They are a great team with all of their volunteers that helped and the meeting went very smoothly. Cindy said this was their first time, but they were pros in every way.

I attended the Missions Workshop on Thursday where the presenter was Julie Hawkins from Chapel Hill, Gig Harbor Washington. Her topic was "Engaging with your Community" and the "Community Informed Church". She is a great speaker and connects well with the audience. She spoke about how to connect and understand our communities, and identify ministry opportunities by listening and collaboration with other people in our area. Use the tools already there, don't re-create the wheel, so to speak. Collaborate with other entities and churches for projects, talk to the folks you see. Ask: "can we pray with you?" "What do you need from us?" "Do you want to be involved?" etc. Try a prayer walk and when people ask you what you are doing, tell them...."we are praying for our community, may we pray for or with you?" One of the points she made was to not only bring "things" to the projects that you work on, but to reach out ahead of time and find out what the needs are at a particular time. Our Mission team here at Peace does a good job with this, as we contact the Pregnancy Hope Center and Stearns School ahead of time to find out what the children, and mothers and fathers need at this time.

Also Thursday evening, I attended the Women's link which is always a great time of fellowship with other women. Connie Badgley was the speaker for this group, and she also spoke about community, with a little different approach, but also a community centered action. Walking amongst the community, talking, sharing your faith. Sharing meals together to break the ice when coming into a new place. The scripture for the evening was Acts 2:42-47 which is about meeting together as believers, breaking bread together, and praising God.

Connie has been the Treasurer for the EPC of the Northwest and Pacific Southwest for many years. She is retiring and moving to Wyoming, so this was her last Presbytery as the Treasurer for our groups. She is a light in this world and will be greatly missed by everyone.

The general meeting was well attended and we installed a new Moderator, Doug Kortyna, replacing Ron Bengelink who is retiring. Doug did a great job with his new duties, and with a full docket. We examined one Ruling Elder, David Lamb from Omak, Washington as a Commissioned Pastor to serve that church, which was approved. We also welcomed Dawn Davis from Chapel Hill, Gig Harbor, as the new Treasurer for the Presbytery.

The teaching focal was presented by Teaching Elder, Zach Hicks and the topic was: "Worship and Emotions, Reformed and Presbyterian History and Theology." Some of this was a bit over my head, as most of this was deep theology and history, with references to many writings that someone without theological training might find hard to follow. But, he was a very good speaker and it was an interesting presentation. He spoke on Friday and Saturday.

The meeting also includes the business of our Presbytery with time for the Moderator's time of prayer, with scripture of Matthew 6:19-24, and Matthew 28:16-20. Business includes the Nominating Committee report, Treasurer Report, Session Minutes Review, Ministerial Committee, Church Planting, Care of Candidates, World Outreach, and other business that has to be addressed by the commission.

Their Worship service was awesome. Some of you will be happy to hear that the Woodland Church also has a Bell Choir. They were a great team and part of the Worship Service on Friday evening. A great time of prayer, and sermon from Pastor Leach, with Communion and a prayer team available. It was a very good meeting all in all, and I appreciate the opportunity to attend to represent Peace.

Blessings, in Christ,
Kathy Todd



Peace Memorial
Presbyterian (EPC)

4431 South 6th St.
Klamath Falls, OR 97603

Phone: 541-884-5057

E-mail: office@peacepres.org

Pastor: pastoraaronepc@yahoo.com

We're on the web!

www.peaceEPC.com

"like" us on Facebook

"Give thanks in every
circumstance, for this
is God's will for you
in Christ Jesus."

-1 Thessalonians 5:18

**Sermons for March:
LENT**

2 Corinthians

3/3 - Jars of Clay
2 Corinthians 4:7-18

3/10 - Our Heavenly Dwelling
2 Corinthians 5:1-10

3/17- The Ministry of Reconciliation
2 Corinthians 5:11-21

3/24 - The Day of Salvation (**Palm Sunday**)
2 Corinthians 6:1-13

3/28 - **Maundy Thursday**
"Jesus' Honor Guard"
2 Corinthians 13:26-56

3/29- **Good Friday: No Service**

3/31- EASTER



DEACONS

- Paul King - Chair
- Susan Orton
- Jocelyn Shellito
- Debbie Grant
- Marjorie Divine

*The Deacons meet the third
Sunday of each month
following worship.*

SESSION/ELDERS

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Pastor Aaron Beaty- | Moderator |
| Noreen Rhoades- | Clerk/ Discipleship |
| Kathy Todd- | Finance & Stewardship |
| Geri Coker- | Mission and Outreach |
| Sandi Deatherage- | Building and Grounds |
| Betty Shaw- | Worship |
| Stephen Goode- | Building and Grounds |

NO SESSION MEETING IN JULY

TRUSTEES

- Stephen Goode
- Harold Heaton
- Bill Dart