



25 Questions About The Only Sign



(All Bible scriptures are from the New King James Version)

But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. -Matt 12:39-40

And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. -Mark 8:31

Together, these two scriptures tell us that Jesus would be dead in the tomb for three days, awaiting resurrection. Nevertheless, a number of apparently conflicting teachings are often heard, including the following, which are listed with the scriptures typically given in support of them.

A) Jesus was with the thief in Paradise on the day that they both died:

And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." -Luke 23:43

B) Jesus was preaching to spirits in Hell during the time He was in the grave:

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. -1 Pet 3:18-20

C) Both Hell and Paradise are "in the heart of the earth."

This conclusion is the result of the effort to harmonize the interpretations in A and B above with Matt 12:40.

D) Jesus was resurrected the moment he died at the time of the great earthquake:

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. -Matt 27:50-53

E) Jesus was entombed just before sunset Friday, and was resurrected on Sunday morning.

Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. -Luke 23:50-54 (similarly Mark 15:42-46 and John 19:38-42)

Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away - for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him." -Mark 16:1-6

Evaluate these teachings by way of considering the following questions.

- 1) Understanding that all scripture is inspired by God, can it even be considered that the all wise and loving God would allow conflict in the original text of the Bible, let alone in relation to the only sign of the divinity of Christ upon which the salvation of all mankind rests? (2 Tim 3:16, John 10:35)
- 2) Since the meaning of 3 days and 3 nights in the Hebrew language as used in the book of Jonah is clearly a period of 72 hours, then is it not clear that this was the time period Christ was using as the only sign that He was the Messiah? (Jonah 1:17)
- 3) Are the scriptures clear that Christ actually died and gave up His spirit?
(Matt 27:50, Matt 28:7, Luke 9:20-22, Luke 23:46, John 19:30)
- 4) Are the scriptures clear that Christ had to be resurrected back to life from the dead?
(Matt 27:62-64, Matt 28:5-7, Luke 9:20-22, Luke 24:6-8, Acts 10:41, Rom 1:4, Rom 8:11)
- 5) Given that there was no punctuation in the Greek text of the New Testament, if in Luke 23:43 one placed the comma after (instead of before) the word 'today', would that not change the meaning to be that the thief would be with Christ in Paradise at only some unspecified future time?
- 6) Since the resurrected Jesus stated that He had not yet ascended to Heaven on Sunday at the time Mary met Him and first mistook Him for the gardener, how could He have been with the thief in Paradise 3 days earlier, if Heaven and Paradise are the same thing? (John 20:11-18)
- 7) Isn't paradise in fact different from heaven, and where and when will paradise exist so that the thief will be able to be with Christ? (Rev 2:7, Rev 21:1-3, 23-27, Rev 22:1-3)
- 8) From the perspective of the thief, would it not seem as though he reached Paradise the same day, being unaware of the passing of time between his death and his future resurrection?
- 9) When is the first time that any saved individual will be resurrected, and further, is there not a second resurrection to physical life for all unsaved thieves to have a full opportunity for salvation?
(John 11:21-24, Heb 9:27, 1 Cor 15:51-52, 1 Thes 4:16-17, Heb 9:27, Rev 20:4-6, 11-15)
- 10) Does 1 Pet 3:18-20 state when Jesus preached to spirits in prison, or does it only say that it was by the same spirit that He preached to them as the one by which He was resurrected?
- 11) Is it sound to assume that the term "spirits in prison" should indicate that there were spirits in a place called Hell, and in any case, is it not clear that these spirits must have been restrained fallen angels, given that human spirits are not immortal, and judgment of who is saved or punished is yet future? (Ezek 18:4, Matt 10:28, Rom 8:11, 1 Cor 15:53-54, Rev 11:18)
- 12) Does it not make more sense to infer from 1 Pet 3:18-20 that Jesus was preaching to restrained fallen angels during the time that Noah was preparing the ark?
- 13) Does it make sense that God would place Paradise and Hell adjacent to each other underground?
- 14) Wouldn't Jesus have been required to stand at some demarcation line between Hell and Paradise for Him to both be with the thief in Paradise, while also preaching to spirits in Hell?

15) Since Jesus was dead for three days, having yielded up His spirit, is it not sound to conclude that the spirit is not conscious to do other things (as though it were sleeping) when apart from either a physical or spiritual body? (Job 32:8, Eccl 9:5; 12:7, Dan 12:2, Matt 10:28, Luke 23:46, John 5:28-29; 19:30, 1 Cor 11:30; 15:20, 50-52, 1 Thes 4:13-17)

16) Should the expression "and the graves were opened" be construed to mean that the dead were raised to life at that same instant, or does it simply mean that the graves, which usually held 8-13 bodies, simply had their rolling stone doors moved aside by the earthquake?

17) Isn't it in harmony with the only sign Christ gave to conclude that "graves were opened" and "coming out of the graves" are two different events, separated by the 3 days and 3 nights between the earthquake that occurred when Jesus gave up His spirit and the time that He was resurrected?

18) Doesn't the Bible foretell that there would be those that would preach heresies in opposition to the truth, and isn't it heresy to deny the only sign Christ gave? (2 Pet 1:20, 2 Pet 2:1)

19) Since scripture tells us that God's spirit raised Christ from the dead, then Christ must have in fact been dead instead of in Paradise with the thief, or preaching to spirits in prison, right? (Rom 8:11)

20) How can one fit 3 days and 3 nights between Friday evening at sunset and Sunday morning?

21) Given that Christ was crucified on the Passover day, and that an annual high day Sabbath always followed the Passover day, regardless of the day of the week on which Passover fell, is it not in error to presume that the Sabbath before which Jesus was buried had to be a weekly Sabbath (Saturday)? (*Both types of Sabbaths are reckoned from sunset to sunset*) (Lev 23:4-8)

22) If the annual high day Sabbath was on a Thursday (beginning at sundown Wednesday), then would not 3 days and 3 nights fit perfectly between late Wednesday and late Saturday?

23) If Jesus was resurrected near sunset on Saturday, would that not be in harmony with the fact that early on Sunday, visitors to the tomb were told by angels that He had already risen and was not there? (Matt 28:5-7, Mark 16:2-7, Luke 24:1-9)

24) If there were in fact two Sabbaths during Jesus' time in the tomb - the annual high day Sabbath on Thursday and the weekly Sabbath on Saturday - would this not explain why some spices were purchased or prepared both before and after a Sabbath day? (Luke 23:56, Mark 16:1)

25) Is it not essential to Christian faith that one believe in the only sign that Christ gave of His divinity, that He would be dead in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights? (Gal 3:26, Rom 8:11)

The greatest importance must be granted to the only sign that Jesus gave of His Messiahship. That the Messiah paid for our sins is essential for the salvation of any human being. One must be careful not to accept any teaching which denies that Jesus gave up His spirit, was dead in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights, and was raised from the dead by the spirit of God. Jesus knew that the repentant thief would obtain salvation during the future Judgment period, and be with Jesus when Paradise, in which the Tree of Life grows, is created upon the earth at the end of the Millennium .

