

WAS JESUS' LITERALLY BURIED IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH FOR THREE DAYS?

LOOKING AT THE EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LAST 24 HOURS OF JESUS' EARTHLY LIFE: -

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NOTE: - All Bible texts are taken from the King James Version; and the compiler has supplied all emphasis throughout this Study Document.

THE PROBLEM TO BE EXAMINED: -

The following well known statement from Jesus is often misunderstood by many Christians.

Matthew 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.**"

The understanding of the expression "*so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*", has been interpreted in several different ways: -

This statement of Jesus is understood as to be referring to a period of three complete 24 hour days [that is, 72 hours], that He was to be in the tomb after His crucifixion, until His resurrection on the morning of the 1st day of the week. The expression "*in the heart of the earth*" is understood as being a reference to His burial in the tomb.

- A. Those Christians, who believe this understanding of this verse, draw several conclusions from it.
- (1) While accepting the traditional understanding of Jesus' resurrection taking place on the morning of the 1st day of the week, the three full days [that is, 72 hours] from this event, don't actually add up mathematically from the time of Jesus' death and burial on the Friday afternoon until His resurrection. No serious attempts are made to solve this mathematical difficulty.
 - (2) Other Christians, while holding to a time period of three complete 24 hour days from the death and burial of Jesus until His resurrection, to avoid the mathematic difficulties of the previous understanding, they have moved the day of the crucifixion from the Friday of Passover week, to a Wednesday crucifixion.
 - (3) Some of those Christians who hold to the above understanding, believe that Jesus' resurrection actually took place upon the weekly Sabbath day, and not upon the 1st day of the week.
- B. The following group of people are rare to find. These Christians examine carefully how the Hebrews measured a day in Bible times; they also examine the event that started the three days prophecy, they still hold to the resurrection of Jesus occurring on the morning of the 1st day of the week. Their conclusions in these two areas are that, to the Hebrew mind, the Jews considered that a part of any one day, no matter how small of a part of the day, was to be received as the whole of that day. Also, the crucial expression "**the third day**" in this issue, is always viewed as **being the day after tomorrow**. Therefore, they believe that Jesus' expression "three days and three nights", is not covering a period of three full 24 hour days; but rather, that a period of 2 days and part

of the third day are actually involved in this time period. They have also concluded that the event that starts the three days, is NOT the death of Jesus on the Friday afternoon; but rather, His betrayal and arrest by the Jews in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Thursday night, is the start of the three days.

☞ Which is the correct understanding of this verse? What view can harmonize all of the Biblical evidence that has any bearing upon Jesus' death and resurrection, including some of the prophecies of the Old Testament, that relate to His resurrection? As we proceed in our examination of this matter, it will become clear that **BELIEF B** is the Biblically sound teaching that harmonizes all the passages that have any bearing on this subject.

GOD'S MEASUREMENT OF A DAY: -

When researching into this question, too many professed Christians approach it from a Gentile mindset, in relation to the measurement of a day. That is, they have the common mindset of a day beginning and ending at 12 o'clock midnight. But this is **NOT** the Biblical teaching concerning when a day begins and ends.

From the start of the creation of this world, God has measured a day as consisting of an evening and a morning, with the day commencing at evening.

Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23 & 31: - "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. ... And the evening and the morning were the second day. ... And the evening and the morning were the third day. ... And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. ... And the evening and the morning were the fifth day. ... And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

Evening is defined in the Scriptures as being at sunset. A day is viewed in the Bible, as beginning and ending at sunset.

Leviticus 22:6 & 7: - "The soul which hath touched any such **shall be unclean until even**, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water. And **when the sun is down, he shall be clean**, and shall afterward eat of the holy things; because it *is* his food."

Leviticus 23:32: - "It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth *day* of the month at even, **from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.**"

Deuteronomy 16:6: - "But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, **there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun**, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt."

Joshua 8:29: - "And **the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down**, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcass down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, *that remaineth* unto this day."

2nd Chronicles 18:34: - "And the battle increased that day: howbeit **the king of Israel stayed himself up in his chariot against the Syrians until the even: and about the time of the sun going down he died.**"

Mark 1:32: - "**And at even, when the sun did set**, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils."

THE HEBREWS RECKONED A PART OF A DAY AS THE WHOLE DAY: -

To the Hebrew mindset, they considered that a part of any one day, no matter how small of a part, was to be received as the whole of that day.

Here are some clear Biblical examples which establish this principle of Biblical time measurement. All of these examples are extremely relevant to our examination of Matthew 12:40, because they are all dealing with the expressions, “*three days*”, “*the third day*”, “*three days and three nights*”, and “*after three days*”. Please take careful note, that the actual hour of the day is not given in any of the following passages. This has enormous importance when we will look at Jesus’ account concerning His resurrection.

Genesis 42:17 & 18: - “And he put them all together into ward **three days**. And Joseph said unto them **the third day**, This do, and live; *for I fear God.*”

NOTE: - There is no specific hour mentioned. We only know that this occurred on the third day.

1st Samuel 30:11 – 13: - “And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk *any water*, **three days and three nights**. And David said unto him, To whom *belongest* thou? and whence *art* thou? And he said, I *am* a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because **three days ago I fell sick.**”


NOTE: - There is no specific hour mentioned. We only know that this occurred on the third day.

2nd Chronicles 10:5 & 12: - “And he said unto them, **Come again unto me after three days**. And the people departed. ... **So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day.**”

NOTE: - There is no specific hour mentioned. We only know that this occurred on the third day.

Esther 4:15 – 5:1: - “Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and **fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day**: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which *is* not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him. **Now it came to pass on the third day**, that Esther put on *her* royal *apparel*, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.”

NOTE: - There is no specific hour mentioned. We only know that this occurred on the third day.

 The Bible has made it clear, that the expressions “*three days*”, “*the third day*”, “*three days and three nights*”, and “*after three days*”¹ do **NOT** necessarily refer to a time period of three full 24 hour days as having elapsed. Rather, they are referring to a time period which takes us into the third day. Never forget, the third day is always the day after tomorrow. Again, if you are of the mindset of three full 24 hour days as making up the three days, if you are going to be consistent, you must have the starting hour given as well, so as to start the calculation of the three days.


¹ This Biblical truth helps explain the following statement of Jesus’ predicting His future resurrection to take place “**after three days**”. As we shall soon see, this statement harmonizes with the truth that Jesus was to rise from the dead on the third day.

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

THE NEW TESTAMENT REPEATEDLY MAKES IT CLEAR THAT JESUS WAS TO BE RAISED FROM THE DEAD ON THE THIRD DAY: -

NOTE: - The New Testament writers have repeatedly recorded the truth, that Jesus was to be raised from the dead **on the third day** [See footnote 2]².

One other vital point is clearly revealed in Jesus' statements concerning the third day in the following passages. And that is this: - Jesus clearly taught that the event that we should measure as the starting point of the "third day" until His resurrection, was **NOT** His death and burial in the tomb. Rather, it was His betrayal and deliverance into the hands [or power] of sinful men – His betrayal to the Jewish leaders in the Garden of Gethsemane, on the Thursday night.

 We shall now use Jesus' own teachings concerning what events had to take place during the three days, and He always starts with His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Let us not forget that when Jesus was arrested by the Jewish leaders in the Garden, He stated that now was their hour and the power of darkness. Jesus voluntarily submitted to be in the control of evil men to do to Him as was prophesied.

Luke 22:52 & 53: - "Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but **this is your hour, and the power of darkness.**"

NOTE: - Please remember the expression "**the power of darkness**", because this is a very important foundation to this whole question.

Matthew 16:21: - "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that **he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.**"

Matthew 17:22 & 23: - "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, **The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again.** And they were exceeding sorry."

Matthew 20:18 & 19: - "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and **the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.**"³

Mark 9:31: - "For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, **The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day.**"

Mark 10:32 – 34: - "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things

² The following simple illustration may help to demonstrate this point. If I was lying down on my bed resting, and stated, "In three days I will rise from my bed and set my house in order", I have given no exact time concerning what part of the third day I will rise up. Just like Jesus' statements concerning the third day.

³ Matthew 27:62 – 64: - "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, **After three days I will rise again.** Command therefore that **the sepulchre be made sure until the third day**, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first."

NOTE: - The Pharisees did not understand when the three days started, as according to what Jesus told to His disciples.

should happen unto him, *saying*, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and **the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.**”

NOTE: - Remember that Jesus’ betrayal to the Jewish leaders comes first, and then He was delivered over to the Gentiles.

Luke 9:22: - “Saying, **The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.**”

Luke 18:31 – 33: - “Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. **For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.**”

ANGELIC WITNESS SUPPORTING CHRIST’S DETERMINATION OF WHEN THE THREE DAYS STARTED: -

Luke 24:4 – 8: - “And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down *their* faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, **The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men**, and be crucified, and **the third day rise again**. And they remembered his words.”

JESUS SPEAKING TO HIS DISCIPLES AFTER HIS RESURRECTION: -

Luke 24:19 – 21, 45 & 46: - “And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, **to day is the third day since these things were done**. ... Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus **it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.**”

NOTE: - Jesus spoke of **His suffering** as the start of the reckoning of the three days. The disciples recognized that the three days included the demonic activities from the Jewish leaders, by using the expression “today is the third day since **these things** were done”. So they **knew** and identified that you must include all of the events, that Jesus had prophesied about Himself, from the time He was betrayed into the hands of the powers of darkness until His resurrection.

Acts 10:38 – 40: - “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: **Him God raised up the third day**, and showed him openly.”

A SUMMARY OF THE PROPHESED EVENTS OF THE THREE DAYS: -

According to Jesus' statement in Luke 9:22 & 24:46, His sufferings started the three days. Below is a simple outline in the order of the events that Jesus prophesied to His disciples would occur during these three days. When we read the gospel accounts we can see that all these predictions of Christ were fulfilled to the very letter!

- His betrayal into the hands of the chief priests and scribes – into the hands of sinful men – Matthew 17:22; 20:18; Mark 9:31; 10:33; Luke 24:7.
- Suffering many things at the hands of the Jewish leaders – Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31.
- His being rejected and condemned to death by the Jewish leaders – Matthew 20:18; Mark 10:33; Luke 9:22; 24:20.
- The Jewish leaders delivering Him into the hands of the Gentiles – that is, unto the Romans – Matthew 20:19; Mark 10:33; Luke 18:32.
- Being mocked, spitefully entreated, scourged, spat upon and crucified – being killed by the Gentiles – the Romans – Matthew 20:19; Mark 10:34; Luke 18:32 & 33; 24:7 & 20.
- His being raised from the dead on the third day, after the above prophesied events were fulfilled – Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7 & 46.

THE DAYS OF THE WEEK SURROUNDING JESUS' DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION ARE CLEARLY NAMED: -

The gospel writers have recorded the fact that Jesus was crucified and died on the weekly Preparation Day [that is, on the Friday]; that He was buried in Joseph's new tomb just before the weekly, Seventh-day Saturday Sabbath commenced at sunset; that He rested in the tomb over the Sabbath day, and that He was raised from the dead before sunrise on the 1st day of the week – Sunday. [Therefore, He was arrested on the Thursday night in the Garden of Gethsemane, marking the commencement of the three days prophecy.] You cannot ignore this vital understanding!

Mark 15:37 - 39 & 42 & 43: - "And **Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.** And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. ... **And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,** Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus."

Luke 23:50 – 24:2: - "And, behold, *there was* a man named Joseph, a counsellor; *and he was* a good man, and a just: (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) *he was* of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This *man* went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. **And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.** And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and **rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.** 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. **And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.**"

Mark 16:1 – 4: - "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. **And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.** And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great."

NOTE: - No hour is given for Jesus' resurrection in the gospel accounts! We can only know what the Scriptures actually state, "**very early in the morning**", is the only indicator that it was indeed on the first day of the week, in the very early morning, that Jesus was resurrected. Thus vindicating what we showed you at the start of this study. We are not seeing a complete 24 hour day, because you do not see Jesus being raised at even on the first day of the week, which would then be according to the Hebrew time keeping, the beginning of the second day at even. You need to let your mind appreciate Hebrew time keeping.

IT WAS PROPHESED THAT JESUS WOULD NOT SEE CORRUPTION: -

The apostle Paul stated that Jesus arose from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures – that is, according to the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. Prophesied

1st Corinthians 15:3 & 4: - "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that **he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.**"

The following well known prophecy concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ has a direct bearing on how long Jesus was in the grave, so as to avoid His seeing corruption or decomposition. The Holy One of God had to be raised from the grave before He saw corruption.

Psalms 16:10: - "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; **neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.**"

Acts 2:25 - 32: - "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: **Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.** Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; **He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up,** whereof we all are witnesses."

We know that our Lord raised His follower Lazarus from the dead, a short time before the final Passover occurred at Jerusalem, when Jesus was put to death. Lazarus' sister Martha informed Jesus that Lazarus who had been dead already for four days, would already be stinking, because the decomposition process had already started its work.

John 11:39: - "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, **Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.**"

Let us also remember that the night, or the very early morning of Jesus' trial before the Jewish authorities, was cold at that time of year [spring in the Northern Hemisphere], so cold in fact, that the Jewish servants had a fire going to warm themselves, while Jesus was being tried.

John 18:18: - "And the servants and officers stood there, **who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold:** and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself."

NOTE: - The cold temperature at that time of the year, would also have helped prevent Jesus' body from seeing corruption when He died later that same day – on Friday afternoon! Also remember that there were three hours of supernatural darkness while Jesus hung upon the cross, which also contributed to the cooling of the daytime temperature leading up to evening.

We also know that Nicodemus brought an abundance of spices that were poured over and wrapt with the body of Jesus, according to the Jewish burial custom.

John 19:38 – 40: - “And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also **Nicodemus**, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and **brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.**”

NOTE: - These precious spices, would also interfere with the decomposition process. The tomb which Jesus' body was placed in, was cut out of the rock, and with the great stone rolled against the doorway, it would have been very cold inside the tomb, while Jesus was inside the tomb. The cave – tomb in reality would have had a similar effect to the temperature of Jesus' body as a cool room in a morgue does today.

☞ If Jesus had actually been in the grave for three full 24 hour days, as is commonly believed concerning Matthew 12:40, His body would already have started to see corruption – decomposition, and the prophecy of Psalm 16:10 would not have been able to be fulfilled. This is very strong proof that Jesus' statement “*so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” in Matthew 12:40, is **NOT** referring to the time He was to spend in the grave, as is traditionally assumed. Rather, as we already know that according to the Jewish reckoning of time, this time period is not referring to three 24 hour days, but to events occurring that continue into the third day from Jesus' arrest in the Garden Thursday night. It was at that point in time, He voluntarily submitted Himself into the hands or power of evil men, to do with Him as they wished, as was prophesied they would treat the Messiah. The expression “the heart of the earth” cannot be referring to the grave, but must be referring to the “powers of evil, **and darkness** of this world”.

THE TYPE OF JONAH CONSIDERED: -

Jesus has used the Biblical incident of Jonah being in the stomach of the whale for three days and nights, as a type for Jesus' own being in the heart of the earth for three days and nights.⁴ Notice the connection with the words “**as**” and “**so**” in the following verse.

Matthew 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.”

Jonah willingly allowed himself to be thrown into the sea, so as to save the lives of his fellow seafarers.

Jonah 1:9 - 15: - “And he said unto them, I *am* an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry *land*. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. **And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.** Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. **So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.**”

⁴ I have previously established from the Scriptures the correct understanding of the time aspect of this verse, in relation to Jesus' resurrection on the third day.

NOTE: - TYPE: - Jonah willingly offered himself just as Christ did to save the life of others. Jonah did not die immediately as he was swallowed by the great fish [we know that he did not die at all through this experience in the fishes' stomach, unlike Jesus who did die upon the cross]. This type finds its fulfilment in the fact that Jesus did NOT die as soon as He was betrayed and arrested in the Garden when the three days started. It was here that He voluntarily placed Himself in **the hands of the powers of darkness**. All the suffering that Jesus had to experience in order to fulfil what was written in the prophecies concerning the Messiah, took place before He suffered and died upon the cross.

Previous to His arrest, the Jewish authorities were not able to harm or seize Jesus in any way, because His hour had not yet come. But when Jesus was betrayed and arrested in Gethsemane, He willingly allowed Himself to be arrested and to suffer at the hands [or powers] of His tormentors, even to the point of allowing His life to be taken from Him.

John 7:30: - "Then they sought to take him: **but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.**"

John 10:17 & 18: - "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. **No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.** This commandment have I received of my Father."

Matthew 26:48 – 54: - "Now he that **betrayed** him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out *his* hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. **Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"**

After Jonah made the sacrifice of himself to save the lives of his fellow seafarers, by allowing himself to be cast into the sea, he was swallowed up in the stomach of the great fish for three days, he was in complete darkness, and he was at the mercy of the great fish where ever it wanted to go. He called out to the Lord from the depths of his despair in the stomach of the great fish.

Jonah 2:1 - 4: - "**Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly**, And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* thou heardest my voice. **For thou hadst cast me into the deep**, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, **I am cast out of thy sight**; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

NOTE: - The start of the three days of Jonah's imprisonment was in the darkness of the fishes' belly. He was living through this darkness, so showing that Christ was alive through part of the three days. The only difference is that Jonah did not die, but Christ did.

Jonah was subject to wherever the great fish took him [from the sea to eventually near the dry land]. So also was Christ led about by the sinful men who arrested Him, dragged from place to place, tied up as a criminal, in the early hours of the Preparation day.

When Christ was betrayed into the hands of sinful men and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He acknowledged that it was the time or hour for the powers of darkness to have control over Him. This was the first event that He had foretold to His disciples to be fulfilled, which commenced the three days prophecy.

Mark 14:41: - "And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: it is enough, **the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.**"

Luke 22:52 & 53: - "Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: **but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.**"

NOTE: - The Scriptures record the truth, that the people of this world are gross spiritual darkness.

Isaiah 60:2: - "For, behold, **the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people:** but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

John 1:1 – 5: - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. **And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.**"

John 3:19 & 20: - "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, **and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.** For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

The distinctive expression "*in the heart of the earth*" of Matthew 12:40, appears nowhere else in the Bible. So how are we to understand it? Jesus was never literally in the heart of this earth; the heart being the centre, or at least in the earth, beneath its surface. He was laid in Joseph's new tomb, which was hewn out of a rock, that is, of a cliff face. Jonah was in the bowels of the great fish. So in like manner, Jesus was never in the heart of this globe. Then the earth in this verse must mean **the powers of earth, or the power and control of the gross darkness of wicked men, and the Devil.**

In the following Scriptures, the earth does not mean this literal globe, but rather the people are addressed: -

Deuteronomy 32:1: - "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and **hear, O earth,** the words of my mouth."

Isaiah 1:2: - "Hear, O heavens, and **give ear, O earth:** for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me."

Jeremiah 6:19: - "**Hear, O earth:** behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even* the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it."

Jeremiah 22:29: - "**O earth, earth, earth,** hear the word of the LORD."

Micah 1:2: - "**Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth,** and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple."

☞ Jesus was in the heart of the earth, or controlled and held by the powers of earth, that is, the people, from the time that he was betrayed into the hands of sinners, until he arose from the dead on the third day, in triumph and victory. Jesus was as much in the heart of the earth when before Pilate, and on the cross, as He was while in Joseph's tomb.

Jesus allowed Himself to become sin for us to such an extent, that on the cross, He called out to His Father in desperation, at feeling Himself forsaken by God.

2nd Corinthians 5:21: - "**For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;** that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Matthew 27:46: - “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**”

As the Lord allowed Jonah to be in the stomach of the great fish three days and three nights, and then delivered the reluctant prophet from the stomach of the great fish, so the Father raised up Christ from the dead, on the third day.

Jonah 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.”

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

Acts 10:38 – 40: - “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: **Him God raised up the third day**, and showed him openly.”

CONCLUSION: -

When all the Biblical evidence is thoroughly examined on this issue, it is clear based upon how the Hebrew's reckoned a day, and reading Jesus' statements concerning His future sufferings, death and resurrection on the third day, that the three days and three nights of Matthew 12:40, are not describing a full 72 hour period. They are describing a time period that had entered into the third day, when Jesus was resurrected. The event that started this whole prophesied time period, was NOT Jesus' death and burial on the Friday afternoon. But rather, according to Christ, it started with His betrayal and arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Thursday night, when Jesus voluntarily allowed Himself to suffer at the hands [that is, the powers of darkness] of His tormentors, who were fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures, in the shameful mistreatment of Christ. Christ's triumphant resurrection from the dead on the third day – Sunday morning, was also a fulfilment of prophecy, in that His body was raised up before He could see corruption.

All these Biblical facts help to establish the evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the true Messiah, whose life, betrayal, sufferings, death, burial and resurrection were all a minute fulfilment of prophecy. Praise be to our Great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ!