

NOTES ON "AFTER THREE DAYS"

§71.6 According to Mark 8:31, Yeshua said he would rise from the dead "after three days," yet he also said he would rise "on the third day" (Matthew 20:19). The explanation we give in §37.5-39 has been challenged by Bacchiocchi:

This interpretation, however, is discredited by the fact that the very same statement of Christ which contains the phrase "after three days" in one Gospel, is reported in another Gospel with the phrase "on the third day" (*The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection*, Samuele Bacchiocchi, pg. 28).

We readily admit that the passages appear to be parallel (Mark 8:31 = Matthew 16:21 = Luke 9:22; Mark 9:31 = Matthew 17:23; Mark 10:34 = Matthew 20:19 = Luke 18:33). This may prove only one of the following in each case:

1) The gospel writers took the liberty of reporting Yeshua's word's "after three days," or "on the third day" in two different ways. Nevertheless, both ways must still compute true. If Matthew and Luke did indeed understand Mark's "after three days" as "on the third day," then they must have converted Mark's use of the standard day (sunset reckoning) to their use of the common day (sunrise reckoning), as we have indicated above. To conclude they believed "after" and "on" to mean the same thing, in the contradictory sense necessary to resuscitate the Friday-Sunday chronology, is illogical.

2) Yeshua actually said it both ways in a longer discourse on his coming death and resurrection, which the gospel writers abbreviated in different ways. Also, in this case, both reckonings must still compute true, and no doubt, in the longer original discourse, it would be plain (or at least plausible) that Yeshua was using two methods of reckoning a day.

3) The scribes corrupted the original texts of the parallel passages. If so the evidence is they changed "after three days" to "on the third day." We discuss this more below.

Anyone of these above explanations is far more likely than the assumption that "after" and "on" mean the same thing in the contradictory fashion described by the traditionalists.

The traditionalist headlong rush to plug the holes in the breaches, however, does not end with the absurd logic described above. Bacciocchi continues:

Further evidence for the basic identity of the two phrases is provided by Matthew 27:63-64. [And on the morrow, which is after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, "After three days I will rise again." Therefore order the sepulchre to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go

and steal him away, and tell the people, "He has risen from the dead," and the last fraud will be worse than the first.] In verse 63 the Jewish leaders tell Pilate that Christ had said, "After three days I will rise again." In actual fact, up to this point only the expression "on the third day" occurs in Matthew (16:21; 17:23; 20:19), which suggests the identical meaning of the two phrases.

In light of Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:34, however, Matthew 23:63-64's "after three days" is additional evidence that the parallel passages in Matthew ought to read the same as those in Mark. See below on textual question.

Two possibilities arise from the Pharisee's statements: 1) They are using the common day (sunrise-sunrise) when they say "until the third day," or 2) They are using the standard day (sunset-sunset),

Figure 4: Using the common day

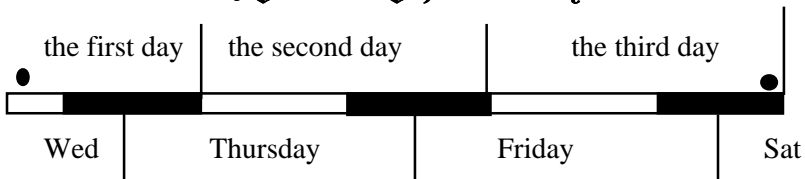
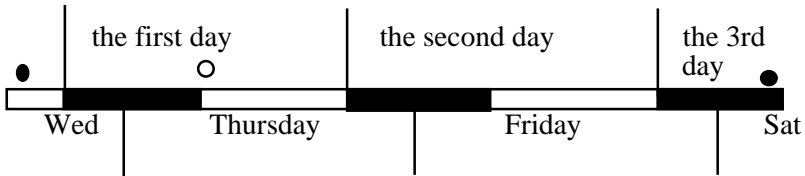


Figure 5: Using the Standard day



and they count from the day after the preparation, since the statement was made on that day.

The open circle marks the point at which the Judean authorities went to Pilate. "Till the third day" from that point would be until Saturday sunset, if they are using the standard day.

Matthew's statement suggests Matthew should have reported Yeshua saying "after three days" at some earlier point. In fact, as mentioned above, there is textual evidence for this. It is possible scribes changed the texts to "on the third day" in order to eradicate the problematic "after three days" statements.

The scribes would have been motivated by both intentional and unintentional factors. The more numerous "on the third day" passages may have caused them to make a careless mistake. Furthermore, most sermons are in terms of "on the third day," so it is that phrase the scribes would accidentally use, not "after three days." Also, the scribes may have tried to "correct" what they

thought was an error by changing "after three days" to "on the third day."

The principle of the more difficult reading, and the above motives, intentional and unwitting, suggest that the pressure for the change is all one way, i.e. from "after three days" to "on the third day." There is little reason why a scribe would change "on the third day," to "after three days."

Matthew 16:21 (=Mark 8:31) should read "after three days" according to all Bohairic MSS (300-500), some old Latin itala MSS (100-200 A.D.), and Codex Bezae (400-500 A.D.). The old Latin is more significant due to the lack of any Papyri for Matthew 16.

Luke 9:22 (=Mark 8:31) should read "after three days" according to Codex Bezae, all itala (old Latin), and Marcion (ca. 140 A.D.) This is contradicted by one papyri, i.e. P75 (200-300).

Matthew 17:23 (=Mark 9:31) should read "after three days" according to Codex Bezae, all itala (old Latin), all Bohairic MSS, and the Sinaitic Syriac. The MSS tradition is divided on Mark 9:31, some having "after three days," and others having "on the third day."

Matthew 20:19 (=Mark 10:34). There is no evidence of change in Matthew 20:19, and the MSS tradition is divided on Mark 10:34. However, the principle of the more difficult reading, and the motivations cited above still suggest that Matthew 20:19 should agree with Mark 10:34.

Luke 18:33 (=Mark 10:34). No evidence of change.

Conclusion: Matthew 16:21 and Luke 9:22 should be read "after three days" to agree with early MSS and Mark 8:31. Matthew 17:23 should be read "after three days" to agree with early MSS and Mark 9:31. Matthew 20:19 and Luke 18:33 should be left unchanged at the present time for lack of evidence. Textual critics cannot say this is slim evidence with any absolute certainty, or even that it represents a low probability. Luke 9:22 (= Mark 8:31) should read "after three days" according to Codex Bezae, all itala (old Latin), and Marcion (ca. 140 c.e.).

We must also observe that Mark was written first. For both Matthew and Luke appear to depend on his material in the Parallel passages. Therefore, the priority of "after three days" is established.