

THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH



The Christian church has historically viewed the sign of the prophet Jonah regarding the length of time Jesus said He would rest in the grave as an idiomatic expression rather than an actual time period. The sign is recorded in its most complete form in Matthew 12:39-42, with a slightly truncated parallel rendering in Luke 11:29-32, and briefly mentioned in Matthew 16:4. The traditional view of the time Jesus was in the tomb is limited by the resurrection on Sunday morning and the burial late on Friday afternoon. Because this does not allow for the sign to be fulfilled as a literal time period, the traditional view has truncated the time to be about one and one-half days and created a rationale to justify this teaching. But what if the traditional view is a distortion of the record of scripture? What if the short time of the traditional view relies on arguments that are contrary to scripture? Does scripture support recognizing the sign of Jonah as a literal time period? Whether the *sign of the prophet Jonah* should be treated as figurative and fictional or actual and literal is the topic of this chapter. This review will also include a discussion of some of the principles that should guide our thinking.

The setting for the statement begins in Matthew 12:22 and Luke 11:14 when a blind and dumb demoniac man is brought to Jesus and is healed by Him. All in the crowd are amazed and ask “Is not this the Son of David?” The *Son of David* is a reference to the anointed one, promised in the Hebrew scriptures, who would come to rule Israel in righteousness. See Psalm 118:26, Jeremiah 33:15-22. By posing this question publicly, the people in the crowd were making a statement of belief that Jesus was the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies. By implication this public question revealed their understanding that the LORD’s people were not being ruled in righteousness. When the Pharisees heard of this event, they claim that Jesus cast out the demon by the power of Beelzebul, the ruler

of demons. Jesus responded by saying that a house divided against itself cannot stand, that if Satan expels Satan, he is divided against himself and his kingdom cannot stand. Then Jesus turns the tables on the Pharisees and asked them that if He cast out demons by Beelzebul, then through whom do their sons cast out demons? But if He cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has passed them by. After a few more statements about forgiveness, right speaking about the Holy Spirit, and the judgment day, someone among the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a token of proof that He is working with the Holy Spirit. The implication is that they refuse to believe that He teaches and heals by the Spirit of God.

It seems incredible that anyone among the scribes and Pharisees could ask Jesus for a sign that He is working with the Holy Spirit when they have the very evidence before them in the form of the deaf and blind demoniac who had just been healed in the presence of the crowd. In spite of this, Jesus responds to their request, first by telling them that they don’t deserve a sign because they are a wicked and adulterous people, then by creating the sign of the prophet Jonah. This response has four key elements that need to be examined. Here is His statement from Matthew 12:39-42 in the MKJV:

³⁹But He answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign. And there shall be no sign given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the huge fish, so the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the proclaiming of Jonah, and behold, *One* greater than Jonah *is* here. ⁴²The queen of the south shall rise up in the Judgment

with this generation, and shall condemn it, for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, *One* greater than Solomon *is* here.

Part One - Three Days and Three Nights

Those who promote the traditional view regarding the time Jesus was in the tomb admit that it does not agree with the words of Jesus. So, what is a believer to do? Should one dismiss or edit the meaning of the words of Jesus in order to embrace the traditional view? Or should one cling to the words of Jesus and call into question the traditional teaching? Is it possible that there actually were three days and three nights between the time Jesus was placed in the grave and His resurrection just as He said there would be?

The first and most important key element in His response is the length of time Jesus stated for His listeners. The time element is “three days and three nights” and this period of time is *just as* the “three days and three nights” that Jonah was in the belly of the fish. Jonah 1:17. The Greek word used to compare these two time periods is ὥσπερ (*hōsper* = *hoce'-per*) which means *just as* or *exactly like*. Jesus wants His listeners to make no mistake that the time element He is directing them to look for is exactly the same amount of time that the prophet Jonah spent in the belly of the fish. The use of the word ὥσπερ (*hōsper*) in this statement should be sufficient reason to prevent anyone from truncating the time into something shorter than the actual time of Jonah’s experience. It is not possible for these two time periods to be *exactly alike* if one episode is twice as long as the other.

This is a problem for the traditional view because the traditional teaching requires that the time element of Jesus’ death is only half that of Jonah’s experience in the fish and includes only parts of three days and just two nights. This is where the argument is introduced that the phrase “three days and three nights” is an idiomatic expression that should be understood to be simply “three days” as in Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Removing the night from the sign of Jonah to make it “three days” reduces the time Jesus was in the grave by one night or 12 hours, but still leaves too much time for a Friday afternoon burial and Sunday morning resurrection. Now the claim is introduced that the Jews counted days by the method of inclusive reckoning where any part of a day is considered to count for the entire day. Thus, the little

sliver of time on Friday before sunset is counted for an entire day and night, the Sabbath is a full 24 hour day, and from sundown Sabbath to Sunday morning makes the third day. Thus the three days and three nights that Jesus specified is now reduced to little more than one day and two nights. This is a significant departure from the statement Jesus made and is *not* exactly like the time Jonah spent in the belly of the big fish.

Clever as they might be to create the appearance of good reasons for a Friday afternoon burial and Sunday morning resurrection, both the elimination of the night portion of the sign and counting by inclusive reckoning are contrary to scripture and need to be examined in more detail.

The LORD’s Covenant with the Day and His Covenant with the Night

What authority does anyone have to eliminate the reference to the “three nights” where Jesus included that in His prophetic statement? Does God consider the night time to be just an undistinguished portion of a 24-hour day? Is it true that the Jews in Jesus’ day understood that references to the “night” were appropriately transposed to mean a portion of a 24-hour day? Does the night not have its own identity, separate and distinct from the daylight portion of a day cycle? Does the LORD not know the difference between the day and the night?

Jesus had no difficulty distinguishing the night from the daylight part of a day. Before going back to Judea to resurrect Lazarus, the disciples objected to returning to a place where the Jews had just been trying to kill Him. But “Jesus replied, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If one walks during the day he does not stumble, for he sees the world’s light; but if he walks during the night, he stumbles because in him there is no light.”” John 11:9-10. Jesus had no problem identifying that there were twelve hours of daylight and twelve hours of night in every day cycle and they are not one and the same.

In Old Testament days, Jeremiah was told to write out some thoughts from God that might help us understand how to view the references to the “three nights” spoken of by Jesus in Matthew 12. The principle is recorded as a messianic prophecy in Jeremiah 33:14-22.

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I shall fulfill that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and the house of

Judah. In those days and at that time, I will cause a Branch of righteousness to spring forth for David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely. And this is the name by which He shall be called, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." For thus says the LORD: David shall never lack a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; neither shall the priests, the Levites, want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings and to burn oblations and to do sacrifices continually.

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: Thus says the LORD: **If you can break My covenant with the day, and My covenant with the night so that day and night will not come at their appointed times**, then may also My covenant be broken with David My servant, that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne; and with the Levites the priests, My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant, and the Levites who minister to Me. MLB/NBV [Bold added.]

This is clearly a messianic prophecy and Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy as the people recognized Him as the Son of David. Matthew 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42. Jesus is also identified as our High Priest in Hebrews 3:1-3. The LORD directed Jeremiah to convey the concept that He, the LORD, controls the day and the night and He knows the difference between the two. It appears from the record in Jeremiah that anyone who disregards either the LORD's covenant with the day or His covenant with the night is attempting to change the appointment times of the LORD, to throw off the covenant of the LORD, and is not in a position to claim Jesus as Messiah or as one's priest or minister. Because of the disregard for the covenant which the LORD has with the day and the night, such a person appears to be outside the covenant relationship the LORD has expressed for His people. This is exactly the position of the Little Horn and those who follow his boastful claims. See Daniel 7:11 & 25.

However, so far as the LORD is concerned, no human can actually break the covenant He has with the day or the covenant He has with the night so that these conditions of day and night will ever fail to arrive at their appointed times. The fact that we continue to

experience the day and the night at their appointed times is evidence that the LORD is still in control of this Earth and knows how to count time.

Unfortunately, some people incorrectly think they can change God's appointed times or the meaning of the appointed times. Refusal to recognize the Father's covenant with the day and His covenant with the night is equivalent to attempting to remove Jesus from the throne of David and/or an attempt to remove Jesus out of His priestly role of the Levite who ministers on our behalf. At the very least, we must recognize that the LORD does indeed distinguish day from night showing that each is distinctly controlled by a separate covenant. When God makes these kinds of distinctions, when He makes statements about time periods with the same or similar language, He clearly intends for us to understand that we must recognize these same distinctions. It seems clear in light of these dual covenants that the LORD is telling us that we are not at liberty to disregard the night portion of Jesus' statement regarding the sign of Jonah the prophet.

In a practical sense, it is not possible to ignore the distinctions of the day and night. Isaiah 62:6-7 states:

Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen who shall not be silent any day or night; and you who put the LORD in remembrance shall take no rest and give Him no rest until He establishes and sets up Jerusalem for a praise in the earth.

The purpose of having watchmen along the wall is to give the warning when an enemy approaches. Would this verse have the same meaning if reference to the *night* was removed so that watchmen were stationed on the wall only during the sunlight portion of the day? Would the city have the same degree of protection if the watchmen were stationed on the wall only during the sunlight portion of the day and not also during the night? Of course not. Yet, the traditional teaching regarding the *night* mentioned in Matthew 12:40 is that the night is just a part of the day and any part of the day includes the night.

In Acts 9:23-25, Saul had an experience that involved the day and the night. The KJV reads:

And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: But their laying await was known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. And the disciples took

him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

Is the *day* and *night* identified in these verses just an idiomatic expression for a calendar day or perhaps many calendar days? If so, is it appropriate to dispense with the *night* portion of the verses and explain this passage to say that “a day came when Saul was let down by the wall in a basket”? This does not have the same meaning as the text which says the event took place at *night*. This rendering loses the significance that the gates were closed at night to prevent invaders from coming in, that the city officials were watching 24-7 to see if Saul would try to sneak out, and that he was let down outside the wall in a basket. This escape had to be done at night as anyone could see the basket in the daylight being lowered outside the city wall. Reference to this being done at night is critical to our understanding of this event. Changing the explanation of the meaning of the words of scripture constitutes a corruption of scripture just as much as changing the actual words in the text. The night time must have been significant or else it wouldn't have been written that way. A similar argument could be made regarding Samuel's grieving over king Saul where Samuel cried all night to the LORD. See 1 Samuel 15:11.

Obviously, this event in Saul's life was not so significant that an annual celebration was created for it such as we have for the death and resurrection of Jesus. How much more important to correctly describe the days and nights and other events involving the sign of Jonah which Jesus said we should look for as the proof that He was heaven sent!

The importance of the sign of the prophet Jonah as a determining factor regarding the authority Jesus had from the Father cannot be overstated. Jesus equated His authority to heal the deaf and dumb demoniac with the authority God gave Jonah to carry His message to the people of Nineveh. He pointed the scribes and Pharisees to the three days and three nights of Jonah's experience in the belly of the great fish as an exact model of the future three days and three nights He would spend in the grave. The fulfillment of this prophecy exactly as Jesus said it would be done is evidence that Jesus is Divine.

Counting by Inclusive Reckoning

The traditional view of the events of Passion Week

is dependent on counting the days Jesus was in the tomb by the method of inclusive reckoning. This method of counting considers that any part of a day can be counted for an entire day. Thus, the Friday Jesus was supposedly placed in the tomb is counted as a full day since Jesus was placed in the tomb a few minutes before sunset, and Sunday is also counted as a full day since He was supposedly resurrected shortly before sunrise on Sunday morning. The traditional view argues that these two partial days, with a full Sabbath day sandwiched in between, represents the full “three days and three nights” Jesus said He would be in the heart of the Earth even though this time period amounts to only about 36 hours.

Applying the principle of counting days by inclusive reckoning to the days Jesus was in the tomb is tempting because the principle has been applied to counting the first and last years a king was in power in the Old Testament.¹ Any part of the year that a king reigned was generously considered as a full year when counting the years a king was on the throne. If a king began to reign during the last month of the biblical year, the entire year was considered as his first year of reign even though it covered only a short part of the year. The beginning of the next month which began the new year would begin the second year of his reign. This method of counting was also applied to the ending year of a king's reign. If a king began to reign in Adar and died just over a year later in the month of Nisan, the first month of the biblical year, the king would have reigned during 14 months, but would have reigned during three different calendar years and would have been given credit for a three-year reign. Moreover, when the son of a king was elevated to the status of king as a co-regent with his father, both kings would be credited with full rulership during those years. Thus, the years of a king's rulership are often confusing and identified as a longer time period than what we would count today because the principle of counting by inclusive reckoning was applied to both the beginning and ending years of a king's reign. This method of counting the years of a king's administration always caused an apparent overlap of time with the preceding and subsequent kings so that it was inherently and literally inaccurate by a straight, simple counting. But it is a useful technique as it reduces the apparent inaccuracies of scripture by providing us with a method of reconciling the year of ascension of any given king with the reign of another

in a different jurisdiction.

But the method of counting by inclusive reckoning has a very limited application and it is inappropriate to apply this method of counting to the time Jesus was in the tomb. The apparent overlap with the rulership of another person does not exist in the case of Jesus' time in the grave. The purpose of applying the principle of counting by inclusive reckoning is to resolve the apparent disparity between the length of reign of one king with the reign of another king because scripture often ties the start of the reign of one king to a certain year of the reign of another king. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus does not overlap with any other person so that an adjustment needs to be made to account for his time in the tomb. The time Jesus was in the tomb is not tied to any event other than the "three days and three nights" He stipulated in Matthew 12:40. If a comparison with any other time period is warranted, it must be the "three days and three nights" that Jonah was in the great fish.

Christian scholars have been far too eager to apply the concept of inclusive reckoning to the time Jesus was in the tomb and have misapplied the technique in to this case. Counting by this method has a very limited role when counting days.² The Lord has given explicit instructions through Moses on how days are to be counted. Following are two examples of how the method of counting days has been used, first the proper application and then an incorrect application.

Example 1: The proper application: Scripture commands that all male babies are to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth. Genesis 17:10-13. The day of the birth is counted as the first day in the sequence and must be followed by six more days to complete the seven days. After these seven days are completed the circumcision can take place on the eighth day. According to scripture the day begins and ends at sunset, so the circumcision can take place anytime on the eighth day. The eighth day is one full week after the day of birth. If a woman gives birth on a Tuesday before sunset, the circumcision would be on the following Tuesday before sunset.

It doesn't matter whether a woman gives birth an hour after sunset or 22 hours later at just an hour before sunset, the day of the birth is counted as the first day and six more days must be completed before the circumcision can be done. In this sense any part of the birthday counts for the entire day and it could be said that this is counting by the method of inclusive

reckoning. On the eighth day of life the circumcision is to take place.

Example 2: The incorrect application: Consider a farmer who needs a wheel replaced on a wagon. The farmer takes the wagon with the broken wheel to a wagon maker at 4 P.M. After looking over the situation the wagon maker tells the farmer that it will take a day to repair or replace the wheel. When should the farmer return to get his repaired wagon? By the words of the wagon maker, it would be the next day that the farmer would expect the wagon to be repaired. But if one counts the days by the method of inclusive reckoning where any part of a day counts for a full day, the farmer should be able to return in a few minutes, say at 4:30 P.M. the same day to get the repaired wagon. After all, if any part of a day counts for a full day and the wagon maker said he needed only a day to repair the wheel, then returning the same day satisfies the principle of counting the days by inclusive reckoning. Obviously, this is an improper application of the principle of counting by the method of inclusive reckoning. In this instance, the principle of counting by the method of inclusive reckoning has no proper application.

Christian scholars and teachers typically truncate Jesus' words and their meaning by a series of misapplications of logic: first, His statement is classified as an idiomatic expression which diminishes its literal importance as a reliable sign; second, references to the night time portion of His statement are eliminated to make it seem as though only half of the sign needs to be accounted for thereby diminishing the entire statement; third, the principle of counting days by the method of inclusive reckoning is incorrectly applied to the time Jesus was in the tomb; fourth, Jesus is said to have been resurrected on Sunday morning rather than at the close of Sabbath as all the Gospels testify. Then the Friday crucifixion — Sunday morning resurrection is declared to fulfill the sign Jesus cited in Matthew 12 as the primary evidence that He is sent from the Father while at the same time acknowledging that this isn't actually 'three days and three nights' and doesn't need to be. The traditional view misapplies the principle of counting days by the method of inclusive reckoning to the time Jesus was in the grave so that Jesus is said to be in the tomb for only half the time He foretold He would be there, which nullifies the sign Jesus promised we could rely on that He was sent from the Father. This

interpretation is taught as if it is in perfect harmony with the story of scripture when it factually conflicts with scripture on many points. There is no justification for such a misapplication of logic other than to create the appearance of making the pieces of the puzzle of Passion Week fit as the celebration of the resurrection of our LORD is transferred to a pagan holiday — Easter. In actuality, the pieces cannot be made to fit by incorrectly applying the principle of counting the days by the method of inclusive reckoning.

The notion that the Jews of the Second Temple Period typically counted consecutive days by the method of inclusive reckoning is contradicted by the ritual washing in the *mikvah*, a type of baptism, which a Hebrew woman was required to do after her monthly cycle. The ordinary method of counting can be seen in the language related to the time for cleansing. Historically, the orthodox Jewish people very carefully follow the biblical principles with respect to ritual cleansing and the time required for certain acts to be completed. For example, in order for a woman to experience the *Tevilah*, the ritual cleansing after her monthly cycle, the law requires “seven spotless days and nights” before she can immerse in the *mikvah* and be ritually clean.³ The Jews did not consider that any part of a day counts for a whole day in this situation. Counting the seven spotless days begins with the first full day on which there is no discharge. They knew that the days and nights are unique to each other and that seven days and seven nights must be completed before the *Tevilah* could be done, and that no short cuts were allowed. Leviticus 15:19-30 and Jewish writing certainly set a standard for the observance of these seven days stating that on the eighth day she is clean. If the method of counting by inclusive reckoning was commonly used, then she should be clean after the beginning of the seventh day, but scripture states she is unclean for seven days until evening. The significance of this evening time is that the day changes at sunset and the evening after seven days begins the eighth day. It is not until the eighth day that scripture says she is clean.

Likewise, Leviticus 22:27 says that a newborn bullock, sheep, or goat is to remain with its mother for seven days and on the eighth day it can be used in a sacrifice. If counting by inclusive reckoning was commonly used, then the offspring should be acceptable for a burnt offering after the beginning of

the seventh day, but scripture states it is acceptable only from the eighth day on. The biblical and Jewish method of counting days does not support the concept of inclusive reckoning where any part of a day was considered equal to the complete calendar day. It is clear that when “seven days and seven nights” are specified, the time element must encompass all of the days and all the nights stated. There is no reason to believe that this biblical principle does not apply to Jesus’ declaration regarding the sequence of days that make up the sign of Jonah.

Jesus removed the possibility of counting His days in the heart of the Earth by the method of inclusive reckoning when He stipulated that the time would include “three days and three nights” just as Jonah was in the belly of the creature for three days and three nights. The correct method of counting the days in question is to count them literally just as they were counted for Jonah. Whatever method is used to determine the beginning and ending times that Jesus was in the tomb must account for both the “three days” and the “three nights” of His statement. Any method of counting the days that fails to account for this entire time period is nothing less than an attempt to discredit Jesus. The “three days and three nights” is the specific event that Jesus pointed the scribes and Pharisees to in Matthew 12 that would verify that He was sent to them by the Father. Any method of counting that truncates Jesus’ explicit words is nothing short of a veiled attempt to make Jesus seem to be prophetically incompetent and a liar. Who, more than anyone else in the Universe, wants Jesus to be seen as a liar? Who wants Jesus to be seen as prophetically incompetent? The Adversary — the one whose intent is to distort the record and subvert the message of the Anointed One. The traditional view does exactly that. Those who believe on Him and in the One who sent Him will be putting their efforts into exonerating the words of Jesus, not attacking and discounting them. Counting the days Jesus was in the tomb by the method of inclusive reckoning is an attack on Jesus.

The chief priests and Pharisees did not count by the method of inclusive reckoning when they came to Pilate the day after He was crucified and asked for soldiers to be stationed around His tomb. They remembered that Jesus had said, “After three days I will rise.” If counting by inclusive reckoning was the default method of counting, then one of the three days is completely finished, the second day is being

completed, and only one full day remains unprotected. Scripture doesn't record what time of the day this was, but it could have been late in the afternoon on the second day with just a couple hours left before sunset. That would put them just 14 hours or so away from the supposed time of the resurrection. Yet they ask for the soldiers to be stationed by His grave for three days. Matthew 27:62-66. Did the plan call for the guards to work only for 26 to 36 hours to guard the tomb, and not "three days"?

Several places talk about the *watch* as a time period of a day. Matthew 14:25; 24:43; Mark 6:48; 13:35; and Luke 12:38. These show that the Jews had a timing of *watches* during the day and night. These were in three-hour segments with four segments per day and four per night. It was a very orderly system and not a haphazard sometime, anytime way of counting time. So if "any part of a day counts as a whole day" as the method of inclusive reckoning argues, then how would one know when to be on watch? If you were scheduled for the third watch for three days, and your brother was scheduled for the third watch for three nights, how much work would you do this week? How much time did the guards schedule to watch the tomb? 24 hours? 36 hours? Friday night till Sunday morning? Sabbath afternoon till Sunday sunset?

By promoting a shortened version of the time Jesus was in the tomb, significant understandings about the character of God have been overlooked by the masses of individuals who have come to call themselves Christians. Certainly there is a need for more education and reformation.

Three Day Stories

This brings us back to the basic issue of determining the full meaning of the "three days and three nights" of the sign of Jonah. There are plenty of other stories in scripture with a three-day time element. If "three days and three nights" is an idiomatic expression with a meaning different from the literal words, why didn't Jesus choose a story from scripture that better fit the actual time he would be in the tomb as the sign that He was working with the Spirit of God? For other stories with a three-day time frame see Genesis 22:1-14 (the three day trip to sacrifice Isaac), Genesis 42:17-18 (Joseph put his brothers in prison for three days), Exodus 19:10-11 (waiting by Mt. Sinai for three days), Leviticus 19:5-7 (eating the peace

offering before the third day), 1 Samuel 20:12 (Jonathan's promise to get word to David the third day), 1 Samuel 30:12 (the discovery of the abandoned Egyptian slave who hadn't eaten for three days and three nights), 2 Kings 20:5 (Hezekiah's illness and recovery after three days), 2 Chronicles 10:1-15 (advisors returned to Rehoboam on the third day), Ezra 8:15 & 8:32-33 (Ezra waited three days by the river Ahava), Nehemiah 2:11 (Nehemiah waited three days before he revealed his mission), Esther 4:16 & 5:1 (three days of fasting), and Hosea 6:2 (the revival of the people in two or three days). Didn't Jesus know these other stories in scriptures? If He did, why did He choose to quote from Jonah which has the most specific time factor of any of these three-day stories? If the time periods were not exactly alike, would it not be fair to conclude that Jesus did not give His listeners proper directions on what to look for? Was it His intent to trick the doubters regarding the timing of these important events? Would Jesus be trustworthy if this was His intent?

The story of Joseph putting his brothers in prison for three days and visiting them on the third day seems to be the closest to the traditional view of the time Jesus was in the tomb. If this was the best time element, why didn't Jesus say, "Just as Joseph put his brothers in prison for three days, so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the Earth for three days"? Perhaps the story in Hosea that the LORD would revive His people in two or three days is an even better fit than the story of Joseph's brothers. Why didn't Jesus say, "Just as the LORD revived His people in two or three days, so shall the Son of man be revived from the heart of the Earth in two or three days"? The answer has to be that the time Jonah was in the belly of the fish — "three days and three nights" — was the best representation of the time period His doubters and believers were to look for.

Most Christians seem content that Jesus spent only one and a half days in the tomb just as their leaders have taught them. Fortunately, God is not so confused by the day and the night, nor so sloppy in His calculations. God can count in half numbers as well as in whole numbers. Numbers 5:15 specifies that "three and one-half quarts of barley flour" is to be brought to the priest. Revelation 11:11 specifies that it was "after three and one half days" that breath returned to the two witnesses. If Jesus was going to be in the tomb for one and one-half days, our Father was perfectly capable of

revealing that time period to Jesus and Jesus was perfectly capable of pointing to that time period as the evidence of having been heaven sent. But Jesus said it would be three days and three nights that He would spend in the heart of the Earth and compared it to the three days and three nights Jonah was in the belly of the big fish so we wouldn't get confused with the numbers. Despite this carefulness on the part of the Father and Jesus, the numbers have been distorted. Failure to account for this set of three days and three nights is equivalent to rejecting what Jesus told His listeners to look for and would make both Jesus and the Father appear to be liars.

Jesus as Witness

Jesus stated that He did not speak of His own accord, but that everything He taught He was directed to teach by the Father. John 5:19-21; 12:44-50, 8:13-16, and 14:8-11. The Father is a witness to the teaching of Jesus, and the Father has directed us through an audible declaration at the mount of transfiguration to listen to Him. Matthew 17:2-5; Mark 9:2-8; and Luke 9:28-36. Scripture requires that two witnesses are necessary to validate a claim. See Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15; John 8:17; and 2 Corinthians 13:1. Here we have Jesus and the Father in agreement about the teaching of Jesus and we are instructed to listen to Him. Moreover, the Father's testimony regarding Jesus is stronger than the testimony of any number of human witnesses. Romans 3:4, 1 John 5:9. Did the Father make a mistake in directing Jesus to cite the "three days and three nights" of Jonah as the time period He would be in the tomb? Or did Jesus misunderstand the Father regarding which story to cite and/or the actual time period? What does it say about us if we attempt to edit the meaning of the words of Jesus — especially for something so important as the sign identifying Jesus as the anointed One sent from the Father?

If we can believe the words of Jesus, the Father gave Jesus the sign of Jonah the prophet to relay to the Pharisees (and us) that they should look to the time of His resting in the tomb as the sign that He was working with the Spirit of God. Jesus and the Father stand as witnesses to the words of Jesus.

The issue before us now is one of recognizing that Jesus was careful and deliberate when He said "so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." The question each one of us must

wrestle with is this: Do we accept Jesus at His word recognizing that He was given everything to say by the Father? When responding to the request of the Pharisees for a sign, Jesus could have stopped at the point when He said they would not get a sign. But He didn't. He could have told them He'd be in the heart of the Earth for "a short time," "two days," "a day and a half," or "the Sabbath." But He didn't. His testimony is that He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth. So if Jesus did not really spend three days and three nights in the tomb as He was told by our Father to tell them, then one must conclude that either (1) Jesus didn't understand what the Father wanted Him to say, (2) Jesus lied to the Pharisees and to us, or (3) Jesus couldn't actually do what He and the Father said He would do. None of these conclusions is satisfying. It seems simple that we either believe Jesus in all that He said and determine how the three days and three nights figure into the sequence of events of Passion Week, or we consider Him to be a liar.

There is a long history in scripture that God does not misrepresent the truth. Review these passages.

Numbers 23:19. But God is not a man that He should lie, neither human that He should change his mind. When He gives His word, does He not perform it? Or does He promise and not fulfill it?

Psalms 111:7-8. The works of His hands are faithful and right and all His decrees are trustworthy, standing firm for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness.

Malachi 3:6. For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Matthew 24:35. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Hebrews 13:8. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

John the beloved agrees, but directed part of his comments to the one who disbelieves God.

1 John 5:9-12. If we accept human testimony, God's testimony is stronger, and God's witness is this which He testified regarding His Son. The believer in the Son of God possesses the witness within himself. He who disbelieves God, makes Him out to be a liar, because he has not believed in the evidence God has given regarding His Son. And this is the evidence: God has granted us eternal life, and this life is in

His Son. He who has the Son has that life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have that life.

Paul had no difficulty accepting the three days, not one and a half days, as the time Jesus was in the tomb.

1 Corinthians 15:3-5. I passed on to you what I received, which is of the greatest importance: that Christ died for our sins, as written in the Scriptures; that he was buried and that he was raised to life three days later, as written in the Scriptures; that He appeared to Peter and then to all twelve apostles.

Paul obviously believed that Jesus was resurrected three days after the crucifixion according to the scriptures and not just one and a half days after His death. Paul states that the resurrection was done according to scripture. Since most of the books that make up the New Testament had not been written at this time, he was obviously referring to the symbols and prophecies of the Hebrew scriptures. The only time sequence in the Old Testament that foretells of these events is Exodus 12, Leviticus 23, and other places where the dates related to the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Wave Sheaf Offering are given. We, too, must look to those passages to gain an understanding of the sequence of these events.

Another problem that the truncated version of the time in the tomb presents for Jesus is His authority to know and describe the experience of the afterlife for those who were under the influence of the Greek and pagan descriptions of life after death. It had become accepted even among some Jews during the Second Temple period that the soul is a separate entity from the body and that three days are required to transpire between the time of death until the soul departs for the house of Sheol. Because this three day requirement of the pagans and Greeks cannot be met by the 36 hours of the traditional view, it is not possible to discuss whether Jesus is qualified to describe what happens when one dies nor to demonstrate the type of bodies the righteous will have throughout eternity. Lazarus met the requirements of the three day rule when he died and was resurrected on the fourth day, so he is qualified to report on what one experiences at death. But the 36 hours of the traditional view for the time Jesus was in the tomb does not allow Jesus, from a

strictly human point of view, the same qualification and authority as Lazarus. Thus, the traditional teaching of a Friday afternoon burial and a Sunday morning resurrection makes Jesus appear to be unqualified to reveal the secrets of eternal life.

Jesus told the disciples that the purpose of prophecy is to strengthen their faith when they see the events of the prophecy come true. John 13:19, 14:29, 16:4. While fulfilled prophecy serves to strengthen faith, unfulfilled prophecy serves to diminish faith. Does it strengthen or diminish one's faith to realize that the three days and three nights Jesus was to be in the grave is actually a little more than one day and two nights? Taking the time to understand all the events of Passion Week so that they match the record of both the Old Testament and the testimony of the gospel writers will serve to strengthen one's faith.

Stated Twice for Confirmation

It should not be overlooked that Jesus stated the "three days and three nights" twice — once for the time Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster and once for His own time in the grave. There is a principle in scripture that a thing stated twice gives confirmation to it. Genesis 41 tells of God giving two dreams to Pharaoh on the same night that made one point about the future of Egypt. The first dream was of seven fat cattle that were eaten up by seven thin cattle that were still thin at the end of the dream. The dream was so disturbing that Pharaoh woke up briefly. Pharaoh's second dream that night was of seven fat ears of corn that were eaten up by seven thin ears of corn that were still thin at the end of the dream. In the morning Pharaoh called in his wise men who were unable to interpret the dreams.

The chief butler remembered that Joseph had correctly interpreted his dream when he had been in prison some time before and told Pharaoh what Joseph had done. Pharaoh called for Joseph to interpret the dreams and Joseph readily did so. The point of the dreams was that there would be seven years of plentiful harvests followed by seven years of famine. In Genesis 41:32 we are told that the dream was repeated to confirm that the matter was divinely settled and God would bring it to pass.

1 Kings 11 records the story that the LORD God of Israel appeared twice to Solomon to warn him to not worship the idols of his wives. Because Solomon ignored the covenant and statutes of the LORD and the

specific warnings of the LORD, the LORD told Solomon, “I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.” The LORD should not have needed to appear to Solomon at all to remind him of His covenant and statutes, but graciously the LORD appeared twice to Solomon to draw Him back to Himself when he had turned away from the LORD. It was after the second warning that went unheeded that the LORD promised to take away the kingdom from Solomon’s descendants.

In the story of Jonah itself we find that the LORD called Jonah twice. Jonah 1:1 states, “The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai with this message: Get up and go to Nineveh, that great metropolis, and preach against it, because their wickedness has mounted up before Me.” Instead, Jonah tried to flee to Tarshish, but his journey got interrupted by the storm and his three day side trip in the big fish. After he was given up by the fish, Jonah apparently went home because Jonah 3:1 states, “Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time: Get up and go to Nineveh, that great metropolis, and preach to it the message which I tell you.” God gave the instruction twice for Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach the message of the LORD. Jonah cooperated the second time, preached God’s message there, and the people of the city stopped doing evil and violence. Consequently, the LORD relented of the punishment He had planned for that great city.

In Genesis 22:11-13, when Abraham was about to take the life of his son Isaac on the alter, the Angel of the LORD spoke to Abraham and told him to do no harm to Isaac. Abraham then saw the ram caught in the thicket and sacrificed it. In verses 15-17, the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time and stated, “By Myself I have sworn, the LORD says, because you have done this and have not held back your son, your only one, I will bless you beyond words...” The promise of future blessings for the descendants of Abraham was given after the second time the Angel of the LORD spoke to Abraham on Mt. Moriah.

Consider Ruth, who begged her mother-in-law to allow her to go with her to Israel, her homeland, and so eloquently promised to be close to her after twice being told by Naomi to return to the home of her mother. Ruth 1:8-17. Ruth became an ancestor of king David and of Jesus. Matthew 1:5. Consider Elijah, who fled from Jezebel and prayed that he might die. After he

lay down and fell asleep under a broom bush, the angel brought him food twice and each time told him to “arise and eat” — adding after the second time that the journey would otherwise be too difficult for him. 1 Kings 19:3-7. Consider the promise given through Isaiah that the Lord will stretch out His hand a second time to recover the remnant that are left in Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea; that He shall gather the outcasts of Israel and those scattered of Judah from the four corners of the Earth, and there will be peace between Ephraim and Judah. Isaiah 11:11-13. Consider that John the Baptist twice declared that Jesus was the “Lamb of God.” It was after the second declaration that Andrew and John the beloved began to follow Jesus. John 1:29, 35-37.

When God gives a dream twice, as in the case of Pharaoh, or gives instructions or warnings twice, as in the cases of Solomon and Jonah, or calls to Abraham twice to acknowledge that he had not withheld his son and then gives His promise of future blessings, or works twice in any given situation, or states a thing twice, this is God’s method of offering two witnesses to confirm the truthfulness of that which is given. This is not unlike the scriptural requirement that two witnesses are necessary to validate a claim. See Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15; John 8:17; and 2 Corinthians 13:1. It is also the LORD’s way of providing a confirming witness when no human agents are willing to witness on His behalf. 1 John 5:9. The LORD of heaven is the God of second times, second chances, and repeat instructions who does not want that any should miss the meaning of His will in their lives by mistake.

It is significant that the sign that Jesus gave the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 12:40 contains the phrase “three days and three nights” twice. The first time it is given in the context of a positive statement regarding the time Jonah was in the belly of the fish and Jesus merely cited this as a fact well established. No serious challenge has ever been made to the veracity of the story of Jonah regarding the three days and three nights he spent in the fish. Jesus used the time factor of that well established story to identify the length of time He would spend in the heart of the Earth. By repeating the time factor of “three days and three nights,” He set certain the length of time He would be in the grave. By stating it twice, He confirmed that this exact length of time had been

divinely settled and God would bring it to pass.

Part Two - In the Heart of the Earth

The second key element in His response to the Pharisees has to do with the meaning of the phrase “in the heart of the Earth.” This is the place where Jesus said He would spend the three days and three nights. Traditionally this has been understood to mean the grave or tomb where He was placed by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Some have argued, however, that Jerusalem is the heart of the spiritual world, so the reference to the “heart of the Earth” is merely a reference to Him spending three days and nights in Jerusalem; and since Jonah didn’t die in the fish, then the three days and three nights does not refer to the time of His death, but just to a period of time He was in Jerusalem. Therefore, the sign of Jonah is not a reference to His time in the grave and He could still have been in the grave according to the traditional teaching of late Friday afternoon until early Sunday morning.

This argument is without merit because Jesus often spent time in and around Jerusalem. How would a doubter know that the sign had been fulfilled unless there was something remarkable about the three days and three nights at issue? Moreover, where is the evidence that Jesus fulfilled this sign by visiting Jerusalem outside of the events of Passion Week? No one promoting this argument has ever pointed to any evidence that the sign was fulfilled. Indeed, there is no biblical evidence that supports the fulfillment of the sign in this manner. With the sign left unfilled, the doubters and disbelievers have no evidence to correct their misunderstanding and Jesus is made to look as one who could not fulfill the sign He gave them.

On the other hand, scripture is clear that there were remarkable and stunning events at both His death and resurrection. On the day of His death it became dark at noon until He died at the time of the evening sacrifice about 3 P.M. At the point of His death there was an earthquake and the temple veil was torn from top to bottom. Likewise, at the time of His resurrection there was an earthquake. Unlike the Roman soldiers who were bribed for their silence, these physical events were widely known by everyone and were not capable of suppression. These events were caused by God to focus the attention of the entire nation on the events that happened in Jerusalem during that festival and it is these events that bookmark the

sign of Jonah and secure its fulfillment.

There are two additional comments regarding the argument that the sign of Jonah does not apply to the time Jesus was in the tomb because Jonah did not die in the fish. First, Jonah apparently thought he was a dead man and was on his way to the grave when he said in Jonah 2:2, “I called to the Lord out of my anguish, and He answered me. From the innermost part of Sheol I cried for help — Thou didst listen to my voice.” The Hebrew word for sheol is שְׁאוֹל (sh’ōl = *she-ole’*) and means *hades* or the world of the dead or the grave. While Jonah did not experience an actual death, he believed he was in that realm. Second, when Jesus died on the cross, it was only his humanity that died. His divinity did not experience physical death, but rested in the grave until the angels called Him to rise. When the angels rolled away the stone and called him to rise from the grave, it was His own Divinity that gave life to His human body, which proves that He is immortal and has a rightful place with the Father.

Part Three - The Men of Nineveh

The third key element in His response to the scribes and Pharisees is His reference to the men of Nineveh rising up in the day of judgment to condemn those who were standing before Him because the people of Nineveh believed Jonah, while the scribes and Pharisees did not believe the One who is greater than Jonah. The preaching of Jonah to the people of Nineveh has often been cited as the sign of Jonah because the people of Nineveh responded favorably to his preaching. If preaching to the people of Nineveh and gaining their community repentance is the sign of Jonah, then the sign was fulfilled in Jonah’s day. The preaching of Jonah, which went on for 40 days, cannot be the sign of Jonah which consists of three days and three nights.

Contrary to this widely accepted notion, Jesus pointed to the experience Jonah had with the fish, especially the time of “three days and three nights”, as the *sign of Jonah* and not the preaching of Jonah in Nineveh. Jesus applied that same time period to the time He would be in the tomb. Why did Jesus say “just as Jonah...” if it was not just that same time period of three days and three nights that He wanted them to look to as the evidence that He was sent from the Father? Jesus points them to this very time period as the only piece of future evidence that He is sent

from God. The reference to the men of Nineveh who changed their behavior at the preaching of Jonah is the basis for making the comparison to those standing before Him who refused to change their behavior at His teaching.

Why did the people of Nineveh respond so favorably to Jonah when he arrived there? The book of Jonah is a very brief book and it contains very few details of the intervening events. For instance, when Jonah was thrown overboard and the storm stopped, didn't the men in the boat have to return to harbor and report their losses to the merchants for whom they were transporting goods? They had only been out of the harbor for a short period of time before the storm hit them, and the natural thing to do after the storm was over would be to return to the harbor they had just left. The loss of Jonah would have been a significant loss to the nation of Israel as Jonah was an advisor to king Jereboam II. 2 Kings 14:25. The story of Jonah's unusual demise would have been told in every city and village in Israel, and those foreigners traveling through Israel at the time would certainly take it with them to their people.

But before long there is an addition to the story. How did Jonah know he had spent "three days and three nights" in the belly of the big fish? Unless you believe this fish had portholes, it was dark inside that fish for the entire three days and three nights. When Jonah was disgorged on the beach, he would have confirmed the day and time with anyone who might have witnessed it. At that point the story gets unbelievably incredible. Here is the man, advisor to the king, who was thrown overboard by gentile sailors because a storm was about to swamp their boat, was swallowed by a huge fish, and now is deposited safely on the shore. If the previous story got the attention of the people of Israel and any strangers traveling through the land, this addition to the story would have garnered even more attention. The man who was presumed to have died because of the unfortunate events at sea was now fully alive and well.

People throughout Mesopotamia would have heard about his experience on the merchant ship, with the fish, and the time interval from the beginning to the end. The *sign of Jonah* to the people of Nineveh was the three days and three nights he spent in the belly of the great fish and survived. The three days and three nights that Jonah survived in the fish is the evidence that the people of Nineveh looked to which convinced

them that Jonah was sent to them from God. The story of Jonah's experience with the fish arrived in Nineveh before he did and Jonah's credibility was secured by the events of the boat and fish. Because of the events of Jonah and the fish, the people of Nineveh knew that (1) Jonah did not want to be in Nineveh, (2) God (Elohim—the God of creation, not Yahweh—the God of Israel) would not release Jonah from his mission to Nineveh, and (3) his mission was not to spy on the Ninevites or subvert their government in favor of the nation of Israel. Thus, Jonah was not viewed by the people of Nineveh as a threat to them for any political gain. This understanding was promoted by the testimony of the gentiles on the boat which gave credibility to the story of Jonah when he arrived in Nineveh. Even though his message appeared to be a failure in that the city was not destroyed at the end of the 40 days of preaching, the people of Nineveh did not rebel against Jonah when their city was not destroyed, nor did they immediately revert back to their evil and violent ways because they knew from the fish story that Jonah's message was from God and their lives were actually better now that much of the violence and evil had been given up.

Another reason why the message of Jonah cannot be the sign of Jonah is seen in the response of the people to the preaching after the campaign. Jonah's message was a wonderful success in that the people of Nineveh repented, but an utter failure in the sense that the city was not destroyed after 40 days. If the message was the sign, then what would the people of Nineveh have done when the message didn't come true? While Jonah's message must have contained more information than just the numeral countdown to the day of destruction, scripture gives us only that aspect of his preaching and Jonah was extremely disappointed when the destruction did not happen. How do we react to unfulfilled prophecies when a proponent sets a date certain and the predicted event doesn't happen? If someone gave a dire warning of some impending disaster that caused people to change their lifestyle and the warning turned out to be a hoax, would those people continue to live the new lifestyle or would they nearly instantly give up on that and go back to their old lifestyle? If the message was the sign and the message proved to be unfounded, the people of Nineveh would have been back to their old tricks in short order. Yet the people of Nineveh did not return to their evil ways quickly. Why? They had to have

other information independent of the message of impending destruction that verified to them that Jonah was not a hoax in spite of the fact that his message failed because of the grace of Elohim. In spite of the fact that Nineveh was not destroyed, they knew from the story of the fish that Jonah was sent to them by God. No doubt, there were many who wanted to learn more about this merciful God of creation after He spared their city from the predicted disaster.

The men of Nineveh will rise up in the day of judgment and condemn the generation of Jesus' day because the people of Nineveh accepted the teaching of Jonah about Elohim, the God of creation, while the scribes and Pharisees rejected the Creator who was in their midst and came to demonstrate the gracious character of the Father.

Part Four - The Queen of Sheba

The fourth key element in His response to the scribes and Pharisees is His reference to the queen of the South who will rise up in the day of judgment and condemn that generation. The queen of the South is a reference to the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon after hearing rumors of his wisdom and wealth. 1 Kings 10:1-13 After her audience with Solomon where she observed his great wisdom and abundant wealth, she became convinced that both His wisdom and wealth were from the Living God and she determined in her heart to be friends with Solomon. She gave him gifts of gold, spices, and precious stones and Solomon gave her everything she asked for. No doubt, she went home determined to be at peace with Solomon.

The significance of this reference to the Queen of Sheba and Solomon is that Solomon was the physical son of David. The people in Jesus' day had recognized Him on several occasions as the messianic Son of David. The priests, scribes, and Pharisees would hear from the people at the triumphal entry that Jesus is the Son of David and "blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." Jesus is here drawing a comparison between this gentile queen of the South, who made one short visit to Solomon and became a believer that Solomon was working with the Spirit of the Living God, and these scribes and Pharisees who had Someone greater than Solomon teaching in their presence for years, yet they rejected Him who was greater than Solomon. Their faith in the Living God was not as strong as that of the Queen of Sheba. Their

hearts did not desire the truth about the Living God that brings peace to one's life and contentment to an entire community and nation when it is ready to listen and learn of Him. The Queen of Sheba carried her responsibilities in a more noble manner to lead her people to respect the Living God who was working through Solomon than did the priests, scribes, and Pharisees who questioned whether Jesus was working with the Spirit of God, worked to generate doubt about the message of Jesus, and led the people of Israel into rebellion against Him. The LORD Jesus is the God of their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in rejecting Jesus they rejected the Spirit of God who was working through Him.

The Queen of Sheba will rise up in the day of judgment and condemn the generation of Jesus' day because she believed that Solomon was blessed by the God of Israel, while the scribes and Pharisees rejected Jesus who is the God of Israel.

Conclusion

The "three days and three nights" that make up the *sign of Jonah* spoken of by Jesus as the only future event that would demonstrate whether He was working with the Spirit of God should be treated as actual and literal, and not as figurative and fictional. The "three days and three nights" is not an idiomatic expression that is satisfied with parts of three days, but is an expression that means exactly what it says. The LORD has a covenant with the day and a separate covenant with the night so that the day and the night arrive at their appointed times. Those who presume to cast off the covenant the LORD has with the day or His covenant with the night thereby reject the Son of David as their Messiah and High Priest. The method of counting by inclusive reckoning has no application to the consecutive days Jesus was in the grave.

Jesus is a trustworthy witness who gave the words of life and directed His doubters and distractors to look for this event as the single piece of evidence that He was working with the Spirit of God. The Father is also a witness to the words of Jesus and we are directed to listen to Jesus. Not only did Jesus tell his listeners the time period to look for, He also told them where He would be spending that time.

The "three days and three nights" of Jonah 1:17 is the *sign of Jonah* that assured the people of Nineveh that he was not an enemy, but could be trusted as one sent from Elohim, the God of creation. It is that exact

same time period that Jesus would spend in the grave and not just an undocumented three day visit to Jerusalem. Just as Jonah survived his experience in the fish, so Jesus' Divinity survived His experience in the grave.

The men of Nineveh, who believed the message of Jonah with just a few days of hearing, will rise up in the day of judgment to condemn the people of Jesus' generation because they had great evidence and much longer than 40 days to learn of Jesus, but refused to believe.

Likewise the Queen of Sheba, who, after one short visit with Solomon, believed God was blessing Solomon, and determined to be a peace with Him, will rise up in the judgment and condemn the people in Jesus' day because they had One greater than Solomon in their presence and had a great opportunity to learn from Him, but rejected Him.

No aspect of scripture is diminished in any way by the teaching presented here that the *sign of Jonah* is an actual, literal "three days and three nights." What is shown by this review is that the traditional view has been twisting scripture to mean something the text doesn't teach. The traditional view relies on concepts that are not biblical, that are actually contrary to scripture, and distort and destroy the story of Passion Week. The traditional view makes Jesus out to be prophetically incompetent and a liar even while it claims to worship Him. The present explanation shows the words of Jesus to be completely true and trustworthy.

Rejection of God's advice, counsel, direction, encouragement, instruction, and nurture in the Old Testament — His Torah or Law — is at the heart of the rejection of a literal interpretation of the words of Jesus in Matthew 12.

Endnotes

1. See the SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 5, 1980 edition, page 249 on how the principle of counting by inclusive reckoning is applied to calculating the years of a king's reign. See also the Anchor Bible on Hosea, pages 36-37.
2. An electronic search in JewishEncyclopedia.com for the term "inclusive reckoning" returned no hits.
3. This is found at <http://jew.dp.ua/english/mikva.htm>. Under the heading "The Proper Time for Tevilah - Immersion in the Mikvah" they give the Jewish understanding that seven days and seven nights must be completed before the Tevilah could be done.