

Transcript 89

Shea Houmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. This time of year around Easter every year, this exciting 'cause from really Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday is our busiest time of year. But that's fun to see so many people landing on our website. Questions about Easter. Questions about the death and resurrection of Christ. It's those are the type of questions we really want to answer, so that's exciting. But we also get some unique questions every year around Easter that we really don't get any other time of the year. And one of those questions is what we're going to be covering today, and that is on what day was Jesus crucified?

Shea Houmann

You might be asking well, isn't it obvious? Isn't every year on our calendar we have Good Friday, the day on which Jesus was crucified, followed by Easter Sunday or Resurrection Sunday. The day that he rose from the grave. Really, for most of church history it's been a pretty almost unanimously held view that Jesus was crucified on a Friday and was resurrected on a Sunday. Well, it's not quite that simple, so we're going to be discussing the different options that are out there.

Shea Houmann

You know, through all this, I hope you hear us saying that well it's interesting to look into these things. And we should study God's word and not be dogmatic just because that's the way Christians have always believed, or a position Christians have always held. But ultimately, what's truly most important is that Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave. According to the scriptures. So that's that's the heart of what we're saying today, but all these issues are important enough and interesting enough that we really want to discuss them with you today.

Shea Houmann

So today on the podcast I have Kevin, the managing editor, Got Questions Ministries. And Jeff, the administrator of bibleref.com. So we're gonna each going to be taking one of the main viewpoints, and it's not necessarily the one that we hold but there's quite a bit of research that can go into this, so we kind of divided it up, so I'm gonna be taking the Friday view. And what's most interesting about the Friday view is that at first glance, it seems very simple. On in Mark 15:42 it says that Jesus was crucified the day before the Sabbath day. And the Jewish weekly calendar would be from sundown to sunset. That's that's how the day's work account.

Shea Houmann

So if Jesus is crucified the day before the Sabbath, the Sabbath being Saturday, then Jesus had to have been crucified sometime before sundown on Friday. So seems like a very simple answer, but then you look at different things that have been said it's a Matthew 12:40 for example, for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the huge fish. So the son of man will be 3 days and three nights in the heart of the Earth. So the counting from Friday is, let's say if Jesus was crucified on Friday afternoon so you have Friday day, that's one, Friday night, that's the first night. Saturday day, that's second day,

two Saturday night that's evening two. Then the Bible is clear that Jesus resurrected on Sunday morning, so we're at least one night short in this accounting. So how can Jesus be crucified on a Friday if it was three literal days and three literal nights that he was in the grave? So that's that's what 'causes this debate is trying to figure out. OK if the Bible says this will then. It obviously it's not wrong. There's not an error. How do we make sense of this all?

Shea Houmann

So while the Friday has been again the most popular view throughout Christian history and more recently, some people are interpreting that Jesus may have been crucified on Thursday or even on Wednesday. So now Kevin is going to jump in and kind of present a little bit more about the Thursday viewpoint, so Kevin take it away.

Kevin Stone

Thanks, I feel like I'm back in speech class in high school where we were handed little slips of paper saying what your topic is for your debate and then you had, you know, prepare that topic. Whatever you felt about that topic, you know this was your topic, so my topic is the Thursday crucifixion of Jesus Christ. So this is one of those theories that bucks the tradition of the Good Friday Jesus crucified on a Friday so of with a Thursday view it really hinges on two things, maybe even 3.

Kevin Stone

I should say that this all hinges on the fact that Jesus was crucified in the year 32. And now the most popular years before Jesus crucifixion are usually listed as AD 30 and AD 33, so this falls in between the year 32. So, having said that, this theory that Jesus was crucified actually on a Thursday hinges on fact number one that there were two Sabbaths that week. There was the regular Sabbath, which Saturday that happened every week.

Kevin Stone

But then there was also the special Sabbath that was associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which started with Passover. And we read about that in Leviticus 23 and verses 5 through 8 that says that the Lord's Passover would begin at twilight on the 14th day of the first month. Then on the 15th day, the Lord's Festival of Unleavened Bread would begin, and that day the Jews were to hold a sacred assembly and then Leviticus 23 says they were to do no work on that day, so it was a day of rest. There was a special Sabbath that started off the feast of unleavened bread. And so when we read Mark 15 verse 42 which says that Jesus was crucified on preparation day, that is the day before the Sabbath. What Mark is referring to there according to this theory, is this special Sabbath. The Sabbath that was required by Leviticus 23, the Sabbath associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of the Passover. And there is actually a some support from this in the book of John John 19 verse 31 says that this was the day of preparation followed by a special Sabbath, and John uses that word special. It was a special Sabbath, so there was a normal Sabbath and there was the special Sabbath.

Kevin Stone

So these two Sabbaths came back to back on this particular week in AD 32. There was a Sabbath on Friday, which began the Feast of Unleavened bread, and there was then the regular Sabbath on

Saturday. So Jesus crucified on Thursday, the day before the special Sabbath on Friday. So that's the first thing that this theory hinges on.

Kevin Stone

The second thing would be that the Last Supper that was celebrated by that we continued to observe that Jesus held with his disciples. That Last Supper was not the Passover meal, so people come to this conclusion because of these facts that there's no lamb mentioned in any of the accounts of the of that Last Supper meal, and that would of course have been the main course. That's an argument from silence. It's not very strong, but it is true, that no lamb is mentioned as part of that. Also, when Judas left the meal in John 13 verse 29, the other disciples assumed it was because Judas had to go and get some things for the Passover. And so, and they were already eating the Passover why did he get up and leave to go get stuff for the Passover? It kind of sounds like the Passover was yet future that that Passover feast was that he was yet future. In John 13 and verse one then John specifies that this they sat down to eat a meal before the Passover. So it sounds like again, Passover is yet future. They were eating this meal on Wednesday evening and Passover had not yet occurred. And in John 18 verse 28, the Jews, the Jewish authorities did not enter Pilate's place because the feast was coming and they were already cleansed ceremonially and they did not want to defile themselves by going into a Gentile area and so they stayed outside Pilate's place. And so that again sounds like the Passover is yet future as they are trying to talk to Pilate.

Kevin Stone

And then also in Luke 22. Jesus says that he has desired, with great desire to eat this Passover with the disciples, but he will not eat of it until he eats it with them again in the Kingdom. And so again people take from that that Jesus was not actually eating the Passover at that time, but he was looking forward to the Kingdom, the coming Kingdom, where he would again eat the Passover. He was not going to eat it with them at that time.

Kevin Stone

So that's the Thursday view that Jesus was crucified on that Thursday, the day before the Special Sabbath on Friday. Then we had the regular Sabbath on Saturday and he rose from the dead of course, on Sunday, the first day of the week. This view would explain a couple things then, Jesus statement in Matthew 12 and verse 40 about the three days and three nights that Shea you mentioned with the Thursday view, he would have been in the grave on Thursday day. He was put in the grave before Sunday. So Thursday Day, then he would have Friday day and all day Saturday and then he would have of course that what we would call Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night he rose from the grave before sunrise on Sunday. And so it would give us a full. It would make Jesus words very literal about the three days and three nights.

Kevin Stone

Also on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection, the day of the Resurrection, Jesus is talking with two unnamed disciples here in Luke 24 and verse 21 the disciples say to Jesus, it's been three days since all this took place. Speaking of the crucifixion of Christ. And if it were three days since the crucifixion that would be Friday, Saturday and Sunday. So Sunday would be the third day since Thursday, and so there was some support for it there, possibly as well. So am I ready to start celebrating good Thursday this

year instead of Good Friday? Probably not, but the Thursday theory does have a few things to commend it.

Jeff Laird

When it comes to Wednesday, there's a lot of overlap with the Wednesday and the Thursday views, and part of that is because a lot of the information that comes into the Thursday view is meant to show how it can be, it can be awkward or difficult to try to pack some of the things that are going on all into Friday. Part of what the Wednesday approach to the Crucifixion does is it takes that not necessarily a step further, but it uses a similar approach in noting that there's a lot of things happening that are explained in the gospels between the point of Jesus being crucified and him being resurrected and that makes it awkward to try to cram all those things necessarily into that particular time frame.

Jeff Laird

One of the things that we do have to remember is that scripture is not very specific on exactly when Jesus was resurrected. What Scripture is specific on is when the tomb was found to be empty, so we're not given some explicit particular time when Jesus actually arose from the dead, and that makes a difference in how we look at this, because that provides some sliding flexibility in how we choose to interpret things like the three days and the three nights. It comes from Jonah. The Wednesday view does have a few things going for it. I would say that the Wednesday view probably has the the most simple explanation in terms of harmonizing the different accounts in Scripture.

Jeff Laird

In other words, it requires the least amount of background explanation to simply be able to say if we look at it from such and such a perspective, so some of the things that Kevin has mentioned we've already gone through. One thing we should point out is that it is very possible from the Jewish standpoint to have Sabbaths that are not on a Saturday.

Jeff Laird

Leviticus talks about certain high holy days. And when you look at the dates that are on those just from a math standpoint, you can look at those and say if if they're being told that you're going to celebrate the Sabbath on the first day, the 10th day, the 15th day, those can't all be on the same day of the week, so even without having a deep background in Jewish festivals, we know that not every Sabbath was always going to be on a Saturday.

Jeff Laird

So the Wednesday view looks at a few different things. We see the women who are going to the tomb and one of the things that we notice is that it talks about them purchasing spices. It talks about them resting, then it says that they're returning and the way the different verses refer to the timing of that sort of conflicts with the idea that all of these Sabbaths were the exact same day, so Mark 15:42, Luke 23 talks about Jesus being buried on the eve of a Sabbath. So just prior to a Sabbath.

Jeff Laird

However, the women who are said to purchase the spices Mark 16:1 they're said to have gone and gotten those after a Sabbath, and then they rested. And then they went back with the spices that they

had prepared in order to go to see His body and so on and so forth. So that creates this this moment of going wait, it was before a Sabbath, but it was after a Sabbath.

Jeff Laird

Well in this Jewish context where you can have more than one Sabbath during a week, that's entirely plausible. The time frame then for something like Wednesday provides enough room to sort of easily fit in these multiple days.

Jeff Laird

The downside, so to speak of the Wednesday view. Some people would argue, is that the Wednesday view almost provides too much time. That there's now we're going beyond three literal days, 3 literal nights, and now it's actually extending on beyond that. And there's a few different things that we can look at with that. I know that the Kevin was talking about the disciples on the road to Emmaus and they talked about the third day. Well, the thing that they said with the third day was that Jesus was condemned and crucified. And it's been three days since the these things happened. But we don't know exactly which part of that they're talking about. Again, we're not given some explicit moment when Jesus was resurrected, so we're not necessarily looking to try to nail this down directly to the minute or to the second, and the the Wednesday view has a lot of things to commend it in that sense.

Jeff Laird

But it has the same issue that you're going to have with a Thursday or a Friday view, which is that unless we're going to to start to heckle over whether Jesus was resurrected after exactly 72 hours and 0 minutes and 0 seconds, or whether it was the clock started from when he died, or whether the clock started from when he was buried or some other kind of criteria. The primary idea here is not to be that minute, and that's specific, but in the Wednesday view you can see a fairly simple, straightforward approach. He's crucified on Wednesday. There's a Passover on Thursday. That's when they're talking about the women going to get the spices after that, which would be Friday. After that, they rest as Scripture says that would be Saturday. Then on Sunday, that's when the tomb is found open.

Jeff Laird

So that's how the Wednesday view kind of fits into that scheme of things and most of the actual scriptural or factual ideas overlap from what we see in a Thursday view. It is worth pointing out that there is, as Kevin said, the the most common views for the years of Jesus crucifixion and resurrection are 30 or 33 AD those are mostly because people are typically looking for a Friday event. However, in 31 AD, which is right in that time frame, the Passover would have been on a Wednesday, so we do have a date that fits within the the scheme of things. It cooperates with this, so the Wednesday view does have things going for it. But it's not as much of a slam dunk as any of the other views because none of them are necessarily so absolute that we couldn't possibly argue with them or argue against them.

Kevin Stone

I should add here too that there is some biblical suggestion that there were more than one Sabbath on that particular week in Matthew 28 verse one, it says that after the Sabbath the women came. Started coming to the tomb. Well, almost every English translation says the Sabbath, but in the Greek it's actually a plural word after the Sabbaths, plural, the women started coming to the tomb, so there's that

that people latch onto as well to help with the Thursday view or the Wednesday view that there were two Sabbaths.

Shea Houmann

Again, I go back to the the Friday view and strength is. I suppose that's seems to be the view that Christians held even very early on. Christians started celebrating Jesus crucifixion resurrection on a Friday to Sunday. The weakness of it is that you can't get 3 literal days and three literal nights. And so a lot of Bible scholars I read in this research will even well, Jesus was basically saying in a few days I will rise again and using the English word few as if it communicates, typically about 3 days. But like no. But the fact that Jesus literally said three days and three nights if I were to say, hey Jeff, I'll see you in three days and three nights, at least in our culture we're going to interpret that as being 3 full days, approximately 72 hours from now. Do we have to be that literal and interpreting the passage? That's sort of the question. So if Jesus was just using a colloquialism of saying, I'll see you in about 3 days, well, then Friday is fine. Thursday is fine, even Wednesday is fine, but you're going to go, no, he literally mean 72 hours. Well, that's when things start to get complicated, so there's so much that goes into this and what makes it interesting is OK. How literally do we have to interpret it to Jesus words.

Shea Houmann

There's some scholars who believe forget to absolutely literal, other or no. He was just basically saying, hey, see you in a few days. Ah, which is correct? I don't know, but so it makes this very interesting to study because there's so many like cool little details in the Gospels. We even brought up in this conversation of huh? Yeah, that does seem kind of seem like there's two Sabbaths that week with this going on in between. And yeah, that makes sense, but there's no one of these years, whether it's Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday is completely free of difficulties, so interesting to study, but not something that we can dogmatically say it was absolutely Wednesday, Thursday or Friday.

Jeff Laird

I think the point that helps with where you're coming from on that avoiding dogmatism is to point out that as long as we want to take Scripture seriously, there are already references in scripture that suggest that the three days and three nights is not meant to be literal in the sense of 72 exact hours. Esther is an example in Esther 4:16 and 5:1 you see a contrast between something that's said to happen for three days and three nights and then Esther goes. And it says after that and she communicates. But when you look at the timeline, there isn't a literal 72 hours in there, so in that Old Testament passage there seems to be a a little bit of a figure of speech involved in that. It's also worth noting that Jesus, when he spoke, he very often quoted scriptures and when we quote scriptures we will use the phrasing that he's used in the Bible specifically to reference that particular idea.

Jeff Laird

So if Jesus said the words just as Jonah, three days and three nights, well, that's exactly what the book of Jonah says so he can be quoting the verse, making the reference, making the implication that that sign is meant to come from there without necessarily saying that he's going to follow that exact precise timeline. So just as you said in in modern speech, when we say those things, we would mean a certain thing behind it. But Jesus wasn't speaking in a modern context, and he wasn't speaking in modern speech.

Kevin Stone

Guys I just have to say that this whole thing makes my head spin with trying to figure out the the Wednesday, the Thursday, the Friday theories and some people put so much time and effort into promoting a particular day of the week that Jesus was crucified on and they come up with charts and cross references and some of them are very ornate and elaborate and colorful. You know they get everything color coded, Old Testament, New Testament linking back and forth. And it is, it is really a complex subject and a fascinating study. But I don't know how much time I would really want to devote to to try to search all this out.

Jeff Laird

I think a person would have to. You'd have to ask somebody if you were going to go back and somehow have a time machine and you were able to stand outside of Jesus tomb and you were running your stopwatch from whatever time it was supposed to start. If he came out of there six hours or 12 hours before or after the time that you were expected, are you going to come back and say, well I guess that's it? He fulfilled every other prophecy performed all these other miracles really did rise from the dead, but he was late when he was coming out of the tomb. So I guess I can't really believe it. Whichever view a person chooses to take is all well and good, but we just have to remember that even if there's a flexibility in that, even if there is some level of nuance or figure of speech or non literalism or hyper literalism involved in that it just does not mean something that we need to stake our faith on. He is risen, he is risen indeed, and that's the part that matters.

Shea Houmann

Amen Jeff. If I were to point one person away from not one person then like if I were to point people away from anything in this conversation it would be, being dogmatic on one of these views and at Got Questions we've received people who are wow like adamantly dogmatic about Wednesday or about Thursday or even about Friday and like you know whether you believe in a Friday crucifixion a Thursday crucifixion or Wednesday crucifixion all these views are well within the realm of Evangelical orthodoxy there's none of these views are heretical, and none of these views are so explicitly in Scripture. That's the only possible view.

Shea Houmann

So this is definitely something we need to show each other some grace yes, study these issues and come to the conclusion that you think is biblical, but don't make it a issue worth dividing over. In our culture and really, for Christian culture for nearly 2000 years we've celebrated Good Friday and resurrection Sunday. I see no reason to stop doing that.

Shea Houmann

I love attending a Good Friday service. It's a thing it's a good reminder of how the disciples and Jesus followers would have felt on Good Friday and then come to the celebration of Easter or Resurrection Sunday and just even the fact that every Sunday we worship is a celebration of Christ resurrection. And so while if I would try to nail down what my viewpoint is, Friday seems to have the least like explicit biblical support. But Thursday and Wednesday both seem equally valid, so I I don't know. I'm maybe I'm somewhere between Friday and Thursday, but all that doesn't matter.

Shea Houdmann

What we really want to focus on in this conversation, is as First Corinthians says Jesus died for our sins according to the scriptures he was buried. He was raised on the third day, according to scriptures, and he appeared to many witnesses, so that's what we should be focusing on proclaiming the meaning of Christ death and His victory in his resurrection and what that means for us to by faith in him by trusting in Christ alone we can have our sins forgiven. You promised in eternal home in heaven and resurrection bodies that were guaranteed by Christ's own resurrection.

Shea Houmann

So study these issues. Enjoy the study, but don't be dogmatic about it and don't make this something that you think is worth dividing over. Hope our conversation is encouraging and edifying to you, and encourage you study God's word. And there's we have a few articles on this issue if you want to learn more, dig into a little deeper. There's some good scriptures, some good content that you could begin your deep dig that way.

Shea Houmann

This has been the Got Questions podcast on what day was Jesus crucified? Got questions? The Bible has answers. And we'll help you find them.