



FACTS & FALLACIES of the RESURRECTION

DID JESUS REALLY DIE ON A FRIDAY AND RISE ON A SUNDAY?

An Investigation Into the Origins of Easter Traditions

&

Prevalent Myths Surrounding the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

By Albert James Dager

The churches have many traditions, the origins of which are veiled by time and rooted in human culture rather than in God's Word. A great number of these traditions find expression during certain seasons through appointed holidays.¹ Perhaps more than any other holidays, those of Christmas and Easter are replete with pagan traditions gleaned from the millennia-old Babylonian mystery religion.

It is from Rome especially that the churches have been influenced by these pagan traditions. The ancient Roman religious system was only a few steps removed from that of Babylon. Due to certain compromises many rituals and symbols of Roman paganism - and thus the Babylonian mystery religion - were adopted by the Roman church.

The major turning point in that process came in the early part of the fourth century when Roman emperor Constantine I (27 February ca. 272 - May 337) converted to Christianity and proclaimed Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Age-old traditions die hard, and people continued to cling to their idols and superstitions. Many among the Roman church's

hierarchy were themselves bound to those idols and superstitions. Although Constantine converted to Christianity he retained the title of *Pontifex Maximus*, borne by Roman emperors as heads of the pagan priesthood. The *Pontifex Maximus* was the high priest of the ancient Roman mystery religion. With Constantine as *Pontifex Maximus*, a title later adopted by Catholic popes, Jesus Christ became one among many gods in the Roman pantheon.

Because Constantine gave credit to the Most High God of Christianity for his success in conquering his foes, many of Rome's new priests were "converts" from the priesthood of the Roman pagan religious system. These were predisposed to incorporate their pagan traditions into the liturgy of their newly found "faith." As the ranks of the Roman church (particularly the ranks of clergy) became increasingly populated by converts from the Roman religious system, the Roman church found it expedient to accept their pagan customs. God's Word became the new "mystery" and was henceforth taught and interpreted by the church's developing papist hierarchical religious system. In essence, Christianity under the papacy became a homogenized Ro-

¹ "The word 'holidays' stems from the words 'holy' and 'days' (O.E. *haligdæg*, from *halig* 'holy' + *dæg* 'day' in 14c. meaning both 'religious festival' and 'day of recreation,' but pronunciation and sense diverged 16c." [*Online Etymology Dictionary*.] Some believe the word comes from the combining of "holly" and "days," holly being one of the plants used in pagan festivities around the winter solstice. I've not found any reliable etymological evidence for this latter understanding, although some use the term, "holly days" as a clever substitute for "holidays" for any number of reasons.

man- Christian mystery religion with only its initiates (priests) being privy to its esoteric approach to Scripture. Through Constantine the Roman church found within its grasp a formidable military power by which it sought to spread its authority throughout the known world.

But not all in the Roman church hierarchy were so ungodly. There arose a cry of protest from many in its ranks. These were effectively silenced by the more aggressive opportunists among them. Yet through the ages there have been those who have clung to the pure Word of God and, in spite of persecution, have spoken out against error. And there have been those who, after having attained knowledge, refused to acquiesce to the pagan traditions that compromised their faith.

With these truths in mind, we're going to look at some of those pagan traditions as they pertain to the celebration of Easter. And although you may attain certain knowledge about these traditions from this and other studies, the wisdom to know what to do with that knowledge you'll have to seek from God (James 1:5; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

THE NAME

The name "Easter" is foreign to faith in Jesus Christ. Although it does appear in the King James Version of the Bible (Acts 12:4), this is an inaccurate translation of the Greek *pascha*. In all other twenty-eight instances *pascha* is translated "Passover," which is what it actually means. It appears as if the translators, influenced by centuries of tradition, were unaware (or unconcerned) that "Easter" means something entirely different. Interestingly, the old Douay-Rheims English version of the Bible (the first English translation produced by the Roman Catholic Church), as well as modern Catholic versions, correctly translate *pascha* as "the Passover."²

The name "Easter" is derived from *Eostre*, or *Ostara*, the name of the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring to whom the fourth month - our April - was dedicated.³ *Ostara* was venerated as a deity of

the ancient Teutonic mythology. She had her origin in the Babylonian "Queen of Heaven," *Ishtar*, reputedly the most widely venerated of the Babylonian and Assyrian deities.⁴ *Ishtar* had counterparts in Egypt's *Isis*, Phoenicia's *Astarte*, Greece's *Aphrodite*, and Rome's *Venus* - all goddesses of fertility. Her name as recorded in the Bible is *Ashtoreth* (1 Kings 11:33).

According to Babylonian tradition, *Ishtar* was both the wife and mother of *Tammuz*.⁵ The legend of *Ishtar* and *Tammuz* grew from the lives of *Semiramis* and her son, *Nimrod*, founder of *Babylon* (Genesis 10:6-10). The legends of *Semiramis* abound with lewdness and sexual perversion.

As *Isis* in Egypt, this goddess bore several titles, among them: "Our Lady," "Star of the Sea," "Rose, Queen of Heaven," "Mother of God," "Intercessor" and "Immaculate Virgin."⁶ Roman Catholics will recognize these titles as those their church transferred to *Mary*, *Jesus'* earthly mother. The Romans, familiar with *Ishtar* as the goddess *Venus*, attributed to her many of the characteristics and titles similar to those their predecessors attributed to their female deities. When Constantine, as *Pontifex Maximus*, made Christianity one of the sanctioned religions in the Roman Empire, he brought many of his pagan traditions into the Roman church. Included in these were pagan deities, clerical vestments, and most especially sun worship. The titles and attributes of *Venus* were transferred to *Mary*

Ishtar in Roman Catholicism

For centuries the Roman Catholic Church has portrayed *Mary* as a sinless, perpetual virgin. It was only as lately as December 8, 1854, that Pope Pius IX declared her alleged "Immaculate Conception" (conceived without sin) a doctrine essential for belief. Even today Roman Catholicism considers the conjugal relationship of marriage unworthy of the woman who bore *Christ's* body, teaching that she remained a virgin even after her marriage to *Joseph*. This, of course, is based on Catholic tradition and is found nowhere in Scripture where



ISIS, Egypt's goddess of fertility. Her veneration was characteristic of that bestowed upon female deities which were in many cultures supreme. She had her origins in *Ishtar*, the Babylonians' "Queen of Heaven."

2 "The **Douay-Rheims Bible**, also known as the **Rheims-Douai Bible** or **Douai Bible** and abbreviated as **D-R**, is a translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into English. The New Testament was published in one volume with extensive commentary and notes in 1582. The Old Testament followed in 1609-10 in two volumes, also extensively annotated. The notes took up the bulk of the volumes and had a strong polemic and patristic character. They also offered insights on issues of translation, and on the Hebrew and Greek source texts of the Vulgate. The purpose of the version, both the text and notes, was to uphold Catholic tradition in the face of the Protestant Reformation which was heavily influencing England. As such it was an impressive effort by English Catholics to support the Counter-Reformation. (*Wikipedia*, s.v. "Douay Bible.")

3 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9th ed., s.v. "Easter."

4 Manley Palmer Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Qabbalistic, and Rosecrucian Symbolical Philosophy; Being an Interpretation of the Secret Teachings Concealed within the Rituals, Allegories and Mysteries of all Ages*, 13th ed. Reduced facsimile (Los Angeles: The Theosophical Research Society, Inc. 1962), p. XXXV.

5 *Ibid.*

6 G. de Purucker, *The Esoteric Tradition*, (Point Loma, CA: Theosophical University Press, 1935), Volume 2, pgs. 1103-1104.

Jesus is said to be Mary's "first-born" son. There are also verses that indicate He had brothers and sisters (these the Catholic Church insists were "cousins," but without any supporting evidence). Still, Mary's alleged perpetual virginity is held by Roman Catholicism to be essential for true faith in Christ. Yet our faith does not rest on whether or not Mary remained a virgin or was even conceived without sin; what does that have to do with our salvation? For that matter, what has it to do with our sanctification or even the performance of works of righteousness? No, our faith does not rest in any part on Mary; it rests only on Christ's finished work of atonement for our sins through His death and resurrection. To add to that work is to say that His death was not sufficient to take away our sins. Mary herself called God her Savior (Luke 1:47). If she had no sin she needed no savior.

The pagan Romans' penchant for creating gods and goddesses for every purpose was pandered to by clerics who devised the concept of "patron saints" to whom one may pray for specific needs. It also laid the foundation for Mary's special veneration as "Co-Redemptrix, the Mediatrix of all Graces."⁷ Yet nowhere in Scripture is the idea of a "Queen of Heaven," "Mother of God," or any "Co-Redemptrix" or "Mediatrix" even hinted at. God's Word says, "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men: the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). This means that Jesus alone is the mediator of our salvation. As for petitions to God for all needs and wants, Jesus tells us to pray to the Father directly:

"At that day you shall ask in My name. And I do not say to you that I will ask the Father for you. For the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." (John 16:26-27)

Those who tell us we need to go through Mary or other dead saints in order to reach the Father are trying to repair the veil of the temple which was torn apart, revealing the Holy of Holies, when Jesus died on the cross. They are interfering in the relationship of our heavenly Father and His children, turning the faith into religion.

Placing Scripture aside and wedging its pagan philosophy into the relationship of our heavenly Father and His children, the Roman Catholic Church attributes these doctrines regarding Mary and the dead saints to "tradition." The Catholic Church teaches that its tradition and its authority (*Magisterium*) are equal to the Scriptures⁸ for determining all truth of faith in Jesus Christ.

Although it is true that tradition is the basis for many of the myths about Mary, it is not biblical or Christian tradition, but tradition based on the myths of Ishtar.

THE EASTER SEASON

How did the timing of the Christian celebration of Jesus' resurrection come to coincide with Easter, the commemoration in honor of Ishtar, the Babylonians' "Queen of Heaven"?

As the benefactress of fertility, the goddess Ishtar, by her various names in diverse cultures, was associated with the rejuvenation of the earth during the vernal equinox. With the coming of spring all nature, seemingly dead, came to life. It was common during that time of year for pagans of all cultures to worship certain deities considered benefactors of fertility.

The Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) decreed that the Easter season be the time to observe Christ's resurrection, and established Easter day as the first Sunday after the vernal equinox. Due to the imprecise nature of astrological charting in relation to our current Gregorian calendar (established by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582), the vernal equinox falls on different dates from year to year. It usually occurs between the end of March and the latter part of April. Thus Easter is a moveable feast falling on different Sundays within a twelve-year cycle.⁹ Yet the Council's action was merely an official decree of a practice that had been a custom of the Roman church for some time.

As far back as the middle of the second century there arose a dispute in the churches over when Christ's resurrection should be observed. The elders in the Asiatic churches protested against the Roman custom of celebrating Christ's resurrection on the first Sunday after the vernal equinox instead of on 14 Nisan (formerly the month Aviv according to the old Hebrew calendar). Fourteen Nisan is Passover day – the preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since Jesus died on 14 Nisan He was resurrected on 17 Nisan, which would really be the appropriate day for celebration (although God's Word nowhere suggests such a celebration should be observed). There was at that time an anti-Semitic sentiment in the Roman church, prompting it to align its festivals with those of the pagan Romans rather than with the days established by God in His Word.¹⁰

Easter Sunday is only one of many such festivals – "holy days of obligation" – instituted by the Roman Catholic Church. During holy days of obligation Roman Catholics, under threat of mortal sin (a sin worthy of eternal damnation), must perform certain oblations according to prescribed church laws.¹¹ Among these "holy days," those designated as "solemnities" are the most important and begin with the first vespers of the previous evening.

"The Solemnity of the Resurrection of Christ," (Easter) carries with it what the Roman Catholic Church calls "Easter Duty" –

7 Robert C. Broderick, ed., *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1976), s.v. "Mary, Virgin Mother of God."

8 Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Co., 1975), DV 10.

9 *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Easter."

10 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols., (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), Vol. 2, pages 206-217.

11 *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Holy Days" and "Mortal Sin."

the requirement under penalty of mortal sin to receive the “Eucharist” at least once annually during the Easter season. Many Catholics use this time to fulfill another obligation to at least once annually confess their sins to a “priest.”

The apostle Paul had this to say about the practice of imposing the observance of special days:

Indeed, when you did not know God you did service to them which by nature are no gods. But now, after you have known God – or rather are known by God – how do you turn back to the impotent and worthless things to which you again desire to be in bondage?

You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain. (Galatians 4:8-11)

Even that early in the history of faith in Jesus Christ, Paul found it necessary to chastise the Galatians for imposing religious ritualism and laws similar to those they held as pagans. Their laws regarding special days infringed upon the freedom of the believer in Christ, and glorified pagan “holy” days. To this day many churches continue to impose Rome’s man-made laws relative to the celebration of “days, and months, and times, and years.” Yet they ignore God’s chosen feasts which are rich in their prophetic revelation of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The Observance of Lent

The forty days preceding Easter Sunday is known as “Lent,” from the Old High German word *lenzen*, meaning spring (the season).¹² Lent was established by the Roman Catholic Church as a period of penitence and fasting called originally in the Latin, *Quadragesima* (“Fortieth”).¹³ During Lent fasting and abstinence are required – or at least practiced – by some churches. Though these restrictions originated in Roman Catholicism they have filtered into certain Protestant churches in a less binding manner. Of course, there is nothing wrong with fasting or abstinence, but for a church to impose these practices as a required religious observance is contrary to our freedom in Christ (Colossians 2:16). *The Catholic Encyclopedia* says this about its rules for abstinence:

The law of abstinence is binding to all over 14 years of age; the obligation to abstain, to fast, i.e., limiting oneself to but one full meal and two lighter meals in a full day is binding on all Catholics from the age of 21 to 59 years. It forbids the eating of meat and soups of meat stock, gravy and sauces of meat. On days of complete abstinence, these foods may not be eaten at all. On days of partial abstinence, these foods may be eaten at the principal meal.¹⁴

Because the Roman Catholic Church does not believe that Jesus’ death on the cross completely eliminates the penalty for sin,¹⁵ penance (self-mortification through acts of piety or self-denial) is especially practiced during Lent. Another prohibition among Roman Catholics during Lent is that they may not marry, but must mourn in remembrance of Christ’s death.

The Roman Catholic Church states that its reasons for imposing Lenten restrictions are to observe the Lord’s unbroken forty-day fast (Matthew 4:3-4) and to prepare for the celebration of the “paschal mystery.”¹⁶ But since Jesus’ forty-day fast is nowhere connected with His resurrection in Scripture, one may rightly assume that the observance of Lent has deeper roots.

Early in the history of the Faith there was no required forty-day Lenten preparation, although there remained the practice of observing the Christian Pasch coinciding with the Jewish Passover. It wasn’t until the sixth century that the Roman Catholic Church imposed this time of fasting and abstinence upon its members. It is not surprising that we find a similar forty-day period of self-immolation at the onset of spring a common pagan practice.

The ancient Egyptians held a forty-day Lenten fast in commemoration of Osiris who was said to be the husband/son of Isis.¹⁷

A notable forty-day period of mourning was held by the Greeks for Proserpine, daughter of Ceres, who was carried away by Pluto, the god of Hades. This Greek mythology parallels that of Ishtar who, in search of a sacred elixir which would restore Tammuz to life, descends into Hades. Imprisoned by the mistress of the underworld, Ishtar’s loss to the earth is symbolized by the dead of winter. The gods, realizing that Ishtar’s absence is detrimental to nature, send messengers to the mistress of Hades demanding Ishtar’s release. She must comply, and Ishtar is restored to the earth to bring again the abundance of spring.¹⁸

Hislop points out that, “Such a Lent of forty days ‘in the spring of the year,’ is still observed by the Yezidis or pagan devil-worshippers of Koordistan, who have inherited it from their early masters, the Babylonians.”¹⁹

We see then that the modern Lenten observance prior to the celebration of the spring equinox was recorded worldwide long before the Christian era. Just preceding this pagan “Lent” was a time of revelry incorporating the grossest hedonistic practices. Carnivals were conducted in which people paraded in costumes representing various deities, and took license to openly engage in sexual perversions. Today’s counterpart is Shrovetide, the days (usually three) just prior to Ash Wednesday and the real beginning of the Lenten season. Shrovetide culminates in various festivities, the most notable being Mardi Gras (Fr., lit., “Fat Tuesday”), a time of drunken revelry before the abstinence of Lent

12 *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. “Lent.”

13 *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Quadragesima.”

14 *Ibid.*, s.v. “Abstinence.”

15 *Ibid.*, s.v. “Purgatory” and “Penance.”

16 *Ibid.*, s.v. “Lent.”

17 Manley Palmer Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*, *Op. Cit.*, p. XLV

18 *Ibid.*, p. XXXV.

19 Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons: or The Papal Worship Proved to be the Worship of Nimrod and His Wife* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959), pp. 104-105.

EASTER EGGS

Of all the symbols for Easter the egg is the most notable. People dye them various colors, decorate them with elaborate and often expensive materials, fashion their shapes in chocolate, devise games around them – the list is seemingly endless. Why all this fuss over the egg? What do eggs have to do with the resurrection of Jesus anyway?

Although some consider the egg symbolic of resurrection (life coming from a seemingly dead object), the egg is, in truth, the ultimate fertility symbol. To many pagan cultures it represents the generative forces of nature, the yolk symbolizing the sun.

The Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Mexicans, Indians, all gave – and many still give – the egg a place of special honor in their worship. The granddaddy of all eggs is the “cosmic egg,” a concept which sprang from the Babylonian mystery religion and spread through Egypt and subsequent civilizations.

Jewish Qabbalists brought to Israel the teachings of Egypt’s mystery religion. Through the blending of those teachings with God’s revealed truth they produced a perverted religious system which morphed into rabbinical Judaism. The Qabbalists speak of AIN SOPH, “The Most Ancient of all Ancients,” infinite in being and the cause of all things. The nature of AIN SOPH was symbolized by a circle, itself emblematic of eternity. The circle signified the Qabbalists’ belief that space is hypothetically enclosed within a great crystal ball. Outside not even a vacuum exists.

Within this globe – symbolic of AIN SOPH – creation and dissolution take place. Every element and principle that will ever be used in the eternities of Kosmic birth, growth, and decay is within the transparent substance of this intangible sphere. It is the Kosmic Egg which is not broken till the great day “Be With Us,” which is the end of the Cycle of Necessity, when all things return to their ultimate cause.²⁰

In East Indian lore separate elements came together at the beginning of time through “Fate” and formed an egg in the waters of creation.²¹ The first deity sat within this egg for a thousand years. Then a great, shining lotus sprang from his navel. From this lotus was born Brahma, the creator god of the Hindu sacred triad.



The Cosmic Egg entwined by a serpent, an ancient symbol of the Orphic Mysteries. The egg represents the cosmos, the serpent the fiery Creative Spirit. The egg also represents the soul of the philosopher, and the serpent the ancient mysteries which imparted knowledge through initiation.



Madonna and Child beneath a suspended egg representative of regeneration. The egg imparts power to the Madonna who has brought forth the Sun.

The Madonna and Child theme has for centuries been a favorite of artists who took its symbolism from the ancient pagan mystery religions of which they had knowledge. In Babylon and Egypt the mother goddess and her son were depicted in much the same way. (Montefeltro Altarpiece, 1465, Milan, Italy. By Piero della Francesca.)

An important myth of the egg as a symbol of Easter is the egg’s connection with Venus, who was believed to have been hatched from a heavenly egg. Hyginus, the Egyptian keeper of the Palatine Library at Rome during the first century B.C., tells of the birth of Venus:

An egg of wondrous size is said to have fallen from heaven into the river Euphrates. The fishes rolled it to the bank, where the doves having settled upon it, and hatched it, out came Venus, who afterwards was called the Syrian Goddess.²²

This Syrian goddess is Astarte – the same goddess as the Babylonians’ Ishtar.

Colored Eggs

When and where the custom of dyeing Easter eggs originated no one knows. What is known is that the practice is common to almost all cultures. In primitive societies dyeing eggs is associated with good or bad luck, depending upon particular colors and designs, as well as how the eggs are used in ceremonies. In countries where Roman Catholicism dominates, colored eggs are used in connection with images of Christ, Mary, and saints.

Throughout Europe red is by far the most usual color for Easter eggs, as red is believed to possess magical powers. Irish poet William Butler Yeats wrote in *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry*, “Red is the colour of magic in every country, and has been so from the very earliest times.”²³

In old Rumania red eggs were known as love apples, symbolizing the desire of young girls. For the Slavs they were emblems of fervent passion; in some parts, in order for a girl to secure a man’s love she would boil eggs in red dye heated over a fire that had been blessed by a Roman Catholic priest.²⁴

20 *The Secret Teachings of All Ages, Op. Cit.*, p. CXVII.

21 Venetia Newall, *An Egg at Easter: A Folklore Study* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1971), p. 12.

22 *The Two Babylons, Op. Cit.*, p. 109.

23 *An Egg At Easter, Op. Cit.*, p. 207.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 208.

THE EASTER BUNNY

Although most games associated with Easter in times past have disappeared, a few remain to this day. The basis for most of these games is found in the fertility cults of ancient religions. The adoption of the rabbit and the egg as fertility symbols gave rise to many pastimes steeped in magic. The most notable remaining today is the Easter egg hunt.

In this game children are told that the “Easter Bunny” has laid eggs in various places and that it’s up to the children to find them. Sometimes prizes are awarded for certain eggs or for numbers of eggs found. Variations abound.

The significance of a rabbit laying eggs lies in both being symbols of fertility. The custom of hunting these eggs was a spring ritual involving magic and promising a good year for hunters.²⁵ The rabbit was a logical symbol for these magical rites because of its ability to reproduce rapidly and in abundance.

HOT CROSS BUNS

The traditional hot cross buns of Easter are one variation of many special cakes baked during the Easter season. They have been around since as early as 1500 B.C. For example, certain cakes baked in honor of the Queen of Heaven are mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah:

“Therefore do not pray for these people. Neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me, for I will not hear you.

“Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to other gods, so that they may provoke Me to anger.

“Do they provoke Me to anger?” says YHWH. “Do they not provoke themselves to their own confusion?” (Jeremiah 7:16-19)

Of these special cakes baked during the Easter season, perhaps the most familiar are hot cross buns. Additionally, cakes are often baked in the shape of rabbits, some with eggs inserted in a manner suggestive of the rabbit laying the egg.²⁶ Since rabbits do not lay eggs it is obvious that there is an esoteric fertility symbolism attached to these things.

THE EASTER LILY

Every Easter, women the world over receive white lilies as gifts, and church “altars” are bedecked with these beautiful flowers as symbols of the season. The origins of these

practices are perhaps among the most obscure of those pertaining to the Easter celebration.

There are few references to the lily in Scripture, and none that pertain to Jesus symbolically. The “lily of the valleys” in the Song of Solomon (verse 2:1) has often been taken to refer to Jesus. But in truth it is the bride referring to herself as “the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.” In verse 2 the groom concurs: “As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.”

We might allow for the lily to represent the bride of the Lamb (Revelation 21:9-10), but the flower recognized as the “Easter lily” is not the lily spoken of in Scripture inasmuch as it is not indigenous to the land of Israel.

There are several varieties that have been given the name, “Easter lily,” but the most common is *lilium longiflorum*. It is this particular flower that pagans of various lands have long revered as a holy symbol associated with the reproductive organs. Two of the more renowned flowers so venerated are the lotus of India and Egypt in the East, and the rose of the Rosicrucians in the West; both are yonic emblems suggestive of the mysterious female creative powers.

What most recognize today as the Easter lily was long ago considered a phallic symbol.²⁷ The Greeks believed that it sprang from the milk of Hera (their “Queen of Heaven”) whose Roman counterpart was Juno.²⁸

This particular lily was subsequently adopted by the Roman Catholic Church as a symbol of chastity and of Mary because of belief in her perpetual virginity.²⁹ Thus the worship of Ishtar, through Hera, through Juno, found its Roman Catholic expression in the veneration of Mary. As a result, the Easter lily is found in almost all artistic representations of the Annunciation.

Merrill F. Unger sheds more light on the lily’s place in worship with his comment on Asherah, another name for Ashtoreth:

Frequently represented as a nude woman bestride a lion with a lily in one hand and a serpent on the other, and styled Qudshu “the Holiness,” that is, “the Holy One” in a perverted moral sense, she was a divine courtesan. In the same sense the male prostitutes consecrated to the cult of the Qudshu and prostituting themselves to her honor were styled *qedishim*, “sodomites.”...Characteristically Canaanite the lily symbolizes grace and sex appeal and the serpent fecundity.... She and her colleagues specialized in sex and war and her shrines were temples of legalized vice. Her degraded cult offered a perpetual danger...to Israel and must have sunk to sordid depths as lust and murder were glamorized in Canaanite religion.³⁰

A plaque from Tell Beit Mirsim (ca. 1450 B.C.) shows Astarte holding in both hands staffs crowned with lilies.³¹

25 *Ibid.*, p. 323.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 324-325.

27 *The Secret Teachings of All Ages, Op. Cit.*, p. XCIII.

28 *The Two Babylons, Op. Cit.*, p. 20.

29 *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Lily.”

30 Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), s.v. “Asherah,” p. 412.

31 *Ibid.*

DID JESUS REALLY DIE ON A FRIDAY AND RISE ON A SUNDAY?

(READ THIS PORTION IN CONNECTION WITH THE ACCOMPANYING CHART ON PAGE 14)

With the Protestant Reformation came much freedom from the bondage of Rome. However, the Protestant sects that developed during and since that time, having come out of Roman Catholicism, had been so traditionalized that many of the Vatican's teachings were retained without investigation. Even some of the most notable Bible commentaries have been influenced by Roman Catholic tradition rather than by objective study of God's Word (though the authors would be horrified to think so). Catholic tradition has influenced most Christians' thinking about "Good Friday" and "Easter Sunday."

It is commonly assumed that Jesus died on a Friday and rose early on a Sunday morning. This belief has been passed down through the centuries as a result of Roman Catholic tradition. It is based on the interpretation of all four Gospel narratives of the women visiting Jesus' tomb after His resurrection to mean that He rose on a Sunday. It also interpreted Mark 15:42-46 to mean that He died and was buried on a Friday:

And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. (KJV)

Both suppositions are the result of faulty interpretation and lack of understanding about Hebrew history. Both are unsupported by Scripture or any reliable historical evidence.

Is It Important?

At first it may seem unimportant which day Jesus died or which day He rose. But skeptics who seek to find fault with Scripture note a discrepancy between these traditional interpretations and Jesus' words that He would be in the tomb for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:38-40). How could Jesus be buried on a Friday and rise on a Sunday, and yet be in the tomb for three days and three nights?

We need to answer the skeptics not by theory or tradition, but by the clear teaching of God's Word. A good defense of the Faith requires a reasoned explanation, not just a stock answer. The validity of Jesus' claim to be the Messiah and, consequently, the entire truth of the Gospel, rest on His prophecy regarding these days. Was it true or not?

As we seek the answer to this question we will consult the King James Version of the Bible since it is the basis for many misunderstandings. This is not to fault the KJV, but to point out certain erroneous interpretations of Scripture based upon the KJV (as well as other translations). I also do not wish to give rise to speculation that any restating of these verses using modern American English synonyms and rules of grammar and punctuation might be prejudicial.

THE CENTRAL PROPHECY

In order to reach the truth we must begin with Jesus' prophecy regarding His death and resurrection. This prophecy is essential to understanding the time of Jesus' resurrection. While Jesus was healing the sick on a Sabbath He was verbally attacked by Pharisees who questioned His practices (Matthew 12:1-15). His answers could not be disputed, so His detractors insisted that He give them a sign to prove He was from God.

But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:39-40 KJV)

This prophecy is also reiterated in Matthew 16:4, emphasizing that the only sign Jesus would give to prove He is the Messiah is not only His resurrection, but His three days and three nights in the tomb as well. His prophecy had to prove true, for any part of the prophecy that failed would indict Him as a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). And we would be found false witnesses of a resurrection that never occurred. For no false prophet would be resurrected by God.

Also, there would be no hope of a resurrection for mankind. We would still be in our sins:

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen then our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up if it be that the dead do not rise.

For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not raised. And if Christ is not raised your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hope in Christ in this life only we are the most miserable of all men.

But now Christ is risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then will come the end when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:13-26)

If Jesus was in the tomb for more or for less than three days and three nights (72 hours, or very close to that time) then His prophecy was false, and He was a deceiver as His enemies claimed (Matthew 27:63). Yet according to Roman Catholic and most Protestant tradition He was in the tomb from sunset Friday until sunrise Sunday – only half the time He prophesied!

Rationalizations of the Prophecy

Proponents of the Friday burial-Sunday resurrection theory cite a number of Scriptures where Jesus spoke of “three days” or “the third day” in relation to His resurrection. Thus they suggest that the reference to three days was an idiomatic expression; the Jewish interpretation of a “day” could mean any *part* of a day. In this case, for example, “three days” could have meant part of Friday, all day Saturday, and part of Sunday. This might be a valid argument except for the Lord’s specific mention of “three days and three nights,” in which case no stretch of linguistic idiosyncrasy can accommodate a Friday burial followed by a Sunday resurrection. Jesus’ words express no other idea than that He would be in the tomb for three full days and three full nights, or 72 hours.

One critic said to me that Jesus mentioned three days and three nights only once. I asked him, “How many times did Jesus have to say it for it to be true?”

End of discussion.

But what about Luke 24:21 which records the Lord’s encounter on the first day of the week with two disciples after His resurrection? After telling Jesus (whom they did not recognize) about the events of His crucifixion they said, “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done” (KJV).

If the first day of the week was the third day since these things were done, couldn’t He have died on a Friday?

Number Friday was only two days prior. This scripture records only what the two disciples said. It doesn’t say they reckoned properly. However, we cannot dismiss this with a cavalier approach. The literal Greek reads, “But then with all these things third this day brings today since these things came to pass.”

Considering Jesus’ words about being three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, this passage could mean that three days had passed before “today.”

Should we question Jesus’ clear words, or these disciples’ account which is stated in a rather unclear manner? Did Jesus *mean* three days and three nights, or was He careless in His prophecy? I’ll trust the Lord’s clear words.

Also, Jonah 1:17, to which Jesus referred in His prophecy, clearly states that Jonah was in the belly of the fish for “*three days and three nights.*” Jesus Himself defined a day (i.e., daytime) as having twelve hours:

Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.

But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. (John 11:9-10 KJV)

According to biblical reckoning a complete day (day and night portions combined) lasted from sundown-to-sundown regardless of the hour, whereas we moderns base our reckoning on the

Gregorian calendar which counts a day from midnight to midnight. The Hebrew calendar was discarded by the Roman Catholic Church which followed the Julian calendar adopted by Rome under Julius Caesar. It was later recalculated under Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. The Gregorian calendar is a solar calendar. The Hebrew calendar, originally given by God to Israel, and referred to by Jesus, is a lunar calendar. The Hebrew calendar divided the *night* portion of a day (from sunset to sunrise) into four “watches” of three hours each (For easier understanding I am stating the approximate times according to our modern hours):

First Watch: 6PM to 9PM

Second Watch 9PM to 12M

Third Watch 12M to 3AM

Fourth Watch 3AM to 6AM

The daylight portion (from sunrise to sunset) was divided into twelve “hours” (for brevity I am mentioning only four):

Third Hour: 8AM to 9AM

Sixth Hour 11AM to 12N

Ninth Hour 2PM to 3PM

Twelfth Hour 5PM to 6PM

We know from Matthew 27:45-50 that Jesus died during the ninth hour (between 2:00 PM and 3:00 PM). Luke 23:54 and John 19:42 state that He was placed in the tomb just prior to sunset the same day. Therefore, if He died and was buried on a Friday, He could not have risen on a Sunday and remained true to His word. Conversely, if He rose on a Sunday He could not have died and been buried on a Friday.

But don’t the Scriptures say that Jesus rose on the first day of the week – our Sunday?

No. Contrary to popular teaching and belief, there are no Scriptures that tell us which day Jesus rose from the tomb. All they tell us is when the women came to the tomb to anoint His body with spices. Let’s look at all four Gospel texts that are used to “prove” Jesus rose on a Sunday:

Matthew 28:1:

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. (KJV)

Mark 16:1-2:

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. (KJV)

Luke 24:1

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. (KJV)

John 20:1:

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. (KJV)

In reading the *entire narrative* of every account we find that the stone was already rolled away by the time the women arrived.

Matthew 28:24 mentions certain events (the earthquake, the angel descending and rolling away the stone, etc.), making them appear as if all took place simultaneously. However, this would not fit the other narratives. Matthew's version is an overview account of a more complex series of events, with verses 2-4 being parenthetical. This is better understood if we quote the entire passage using current grammar, punctuation and words:

Now late on Sabbath, as it was getting dusk [sundown] toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the sepulcher.

(And, look! There was a great earthquake. For the angel of the Lord descended from Heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his garment white as snow. And for fear of him, the guards shook and became like dead men.)

And the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not fear, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for He has risen as He said. Come look at the place where the Lord lay." (Matthew 28:1-6)

In any case, whether the angel arrived just as the women came to the tomb or beforehand, even the KJV of Matthew states that these events transpired "In the end of the Sabbath [near sundown our Saturday] as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." According to Arndt and Gingrich, Matthew's words translated "dawn toward" (Gr., *te epiphoskouse eis*) are more correctly translated "drawing on toward," not the rising of the sun as we have taken it to mean today.³² "Approaching" may be an appropriate synonym. The same word is used in Luke 23:54: "...and the sabbath drew on" (lit., "was coming on"). The only other New Testament Scripture in which the English word "dawn" appears is 2 Peter 1:19: "until the day dawn." Here the Greek word is *diaugazo*, which specifically means "sunrise." Thus "sunrise" is not the proper interpretation for when the women came to the tomb. They came before sunrise.

Still, Mark 16:2 indicates that the sun was just rising or had already risen when the women came to the tomb. This apparent discrepancy still offers no leg upon which those who insist on a Sunday resurrection may stand. It merely states Mark's account of when the women arrived, not when Jesus rose. Without impugning Mark's account, as some have done, we must let the matter lie for now as one of those minor dichotomies that do not really affect the truth of the Gospel.

Lending further weight to the idea that the women came just toward the end of the Sabbath is Berry's *Interlinear-Greek-English New Testament* which renders Matthew 28:1: "Now late (Grk., *opse*) on Sabbath, as it was getting dusk [sundown] toward..."³³

There are instances in Classical Greek where *opse* ("late") has been translated "after." Some of the best references state that this *could* be the case here. But the most regular usage - particularly in Scripture (which was written in Koine Greek) - is "late."

Matthew in particular always uses the word *meta* to denote an occurrence following after another. Regardless of what secular writers may have done, Matthew would have been inconsistent to use *opse* in this instance alone to mean "after." Thus Matthew 28:1 indicates that as it was "drawing on toward" (or approaching) the first day of the week, Jesus had already risen. What can this mean except that Jesus did not rise on a Sunday, but on the Sabbath?

Luke's and John's narratives tell us that the women came to the tomb "very early in the morning," and "when it was yet dark," respectively. They do not set a specific time. On the other hand, Mark says that the women "came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun" (Gr., *anateilantos tou heliou*: "rising the sun").

But even if the women had come to the tomb *after* sunrise on our Sunday, the truth remains that Jesus had already risen. Again, the Scriptures do not state that He rose on the first day of the week. They tell us only when the women came to the tomb and (depending on how you translate them) that was either at the close of the Sabbath, or at the beginning of the first day of the week.

But doesn't Mark 16:9 say, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene...?"

Yes, it does.

But the comma placement is uncertain. Should it have been placed after the word "week" as the translators have done? Or should it have been placed elsewhere? There is no punctuation in the Greek, but the placement of the comma in the English translation makes a tremendous difference in the meaning. Suppose the comma were placed after the word "risen"?

Now after Jesus had risen, early the first day of the week
He appeared first to Mary Magdalene...

Were the translators of the KJV (and subsequent English translations) influenced by church tradition, thus assuming that Jesus rose on a Sunday? It appears so, because otherwise this one verse would be in conflict with all the other narratives of the resurrection, including Mark's.

According to certain Greek scholars today, syntax (sentence structure) indicates that a comma should be placed after the word "week," as did the KJV translators. But the KJV translators also placed a comma after the word "early" in their original 1611 edition which reads:

32 William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A translation and adaptation of the fourth revised and augmented edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur*, 2nd e. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), pps. 190; 304.

33 George Ricker Berry, Ph.D., *The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament With the Authorized Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971, p. 86.

Now when Iefus was rifen early, the firft day of the weeke, he appeared firft to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had caft feven devils.³⁴

But again, the original Greek text has no punctuation, and not all Greek scholars are agreed on the proper syntax. Therefore, this verse cannot be used either way, to prove beyond any doubt that Jesus rose on a Sunday or that He didn't rise on a Sunday. We are left with the four Gospel narratives alone which state only that the women arrived at the tomb as the Sabbath drew on toward the first day of the week, and Jesus had already risen.

Now, it is suggested by some modern scholars that Mark 16:19-20 are not found in the earlier manuscripts, suggesting a later interpolation. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* says:

These verses constitute the longer of two alternative endings found in some MSS. In an Armenian text (of A.D. 986) the longer ending is attributed to Ariston, the Presbyter.... In style and vocabulary it is distinct from the rest of the Gospel.³⁵

Even the Roman Catholic *Saint Joseph's Edition of The New American Bible* has this footnote about Mark 16:9-20:

Early citations of it by the Fathers indicate that it was composed in the first century, although vocabulary and style argue strongly that it was written by someone other than Mark.³⁶

Should we rely on Roman Catholic scholarship? Since the theory that Jesus rose on a Sunday began with Roman Catholicism it seems only right to cite its scholarship on this verse.

Roman Catholic scholarship is generally reliable on translation; it is the interpretation of Scripture that is often faulty. And it's not unlikely that the tradition of a Sunday resurrection by Jesus would grow out of the women's testimony of seeing Him "early on the first day of the week."

No doubt the tradition may be traced to the latter part of the first century or the early part of the second century because of this. But antiquity does not guarantee truth. That which is false today will be false 2,000 years from now. By the same token, that which was false 2,000 years ago is false today.

Also, should we rely on modern scholarship when it calls into question verses found in the venerable King James Version of the Bible? I don't believe we should. Modern English translations are all based upon the Westcott-Hort compilation of Greek Manuscripts from the Alexandrian and other questionable texts in which thousands of variances appear. That's not to say they are entirely false; in some instances, particularly in the use of current syntax and punctuation as well as properly translated words they are accurate. But modern scholarship has virtually rejected the time-honored and proven texts which form the basis for the *Textus Receptus* and the King James Version.

Still, these facts do not really affect the question under consideration. It still remains that Mark 16:9 does not effectively prove

one way or the other whether Jesus rose on a Sunday or not, both older and modern scholarship aside. Yet it was necessary that we address these considerations in order to leave no stone unturned.

CALCULATING THE PROPER DAY

Regardless of how one wishes to view Mark 16:9-20, the fact remains that neither it nor any other Scripture verse gives conclusive evidence that Jesus rose on a Sunday. When taken in total, the Scriptures indicate otherwise.

Because the original Scriptures are silent on when Jesus rose we must go back to Jesus' prophecy that His body would be in the tomb very close to - if not precisely - 72 hours. Since He was entombed just prior to sunset (approximately 6:00 PM) on the day of His death (Mark 15:42-47), we merely need count three full days and three full nights to determine that He must have risen at about that same hour on the day of His resurrection.

Even if Jesus' resurrection had occurred after sundown on the Sabbath and on the first day of the week, the corresponding time today would be *Saturday evening*, not Sunday morning.

Considering all the scriptural evidence and the truth that Jesus was seen early the first day of the week, the only logical time He could have been raised was just before sundown on the Sabbath. Counting backwards three days and three nights from just before sundown on the Sabbath we find that He died and was buried on a Wednesday according to our present calendar.

Which Sabbath?

But what about the Scriptures that tell us the Sabbath was about to begin just a few hours after Jesus' death? How could He have been buried the day before the Sabbath, rise at the end of the Sabbath, and still be three days and three nights in the tomb? Part of the answer is found in John 19:31:

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (KJV)

Notice that John calls the approaching Sabbath a "high day." The first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are "high Sabbaths" - two of seven yearly high Sabbaths. High Sabbaths are special days of rest commensurate with certain feasts established by God. They may fall on any day of the week. This passage indicates that the Sabbath day after Jesus' crucifixion was not the weekly Sabbath but the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

John 19:14 states that Jesus was crucified on "the preparation of the Passover." The day of preparation was Passover day, the day prior to the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and actually the first day of unleavened bread itself (Matthew 16:17).

34 *The Holy Bible, King James Version, 1611*, Mark 16:9.

35 Arthur S. Peake, *Peake's Commentary On The Bible* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1952), see notes, "Mark 16:19-20."

36 *Saint Joseph Edition of The New American Bible* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1970), see notes, "Mark 16:1-20."

A day of “unleavened bread” is a time that all leavened bread was to be removed from the house according to the Law given by God to Moses. It applied not only to the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but also to Passover day – the day of preparation. Thus there were eight days of “unleavened bread.” Passover day may or may not be included in the term “the Feast of Unleavened Bread.”

Jesus’ Passover Meal

Due to lack of understanding the Law of Moses and biblical history, some confusion exists among Christians pertaining to the Jewish feasts. For example, why does it seem as if the Gospel of John has Jesus dying while the Passover lambs were being slain, and the Synoptic Gospels have Him eating the Passover meal with His disciples? This apparent discrepancy is due to a misunderstanding of the texts that address the Last Supper.

The term, “first day of unleavened bread,” indicating the time the disciples asked Jesus where they should prepare the Passover meal, contrasts with the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread – a high Sabbath and the day after Passover day.

Also, since the biblical day begins at sundown, Passover day was not only the day on which Jesus died in the afternoon, but also the day He ate the Passover meal during the previous evening. Remember, there are two evenings to each day: the evening beginning the day at sundown, and the evening ending the day at the next sundown. It is necessary to examine the Scriptures in which the Greek texts use “the first of unleavened bread” to set the time of the Last Supper.

Matthew 26:17:

Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? (KJV) (Gr., *Te de prote ton asumon...* – “Now on the first of unleavened bread...” Note that the word “feast” is not there.)

Mark 14:12:

And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? (KJV) (Gr., *Kai te prote hemera ton asumon ote to pascha ethuon* – “And on the first day of unleavened bread, when the Passover they sacrificed”)...” Note that the word “feast” is not there.)

Luke 22:7:

Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. (KJV) (Gr., *Helthen de he hemera ton azumon he edei thuesthai to pascha* – “And came the day of unleavened bread, in which was needful to be killed the Passover.” Again, the word “feast” is not there.

John’s Gospel mentions the feast, but places the Last Supper “before” the feast of the Passover:

John 13:1:

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. (KJV) (Gr., *Pro de tos*

eortos tou pascha...kai deipnonu... – “Now before the feast of the Passover...And supper taking place...”)

Notice that none of the Greek texts say, “the first day of the feast of unleavened bread” as some English translations do. They merely say, “the first of unleavened bread,” or, “the first day of unleavened bread,” or, “the day of unleavened bread.” The word “feast” is not found in the Greek texts, so this cannot be “the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.” It was the first day (in eight) of unleavened bread – Passover day – the preparation day for the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Was the Last Supper eaten before the Feast of the Passover (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) as John says, or was it held on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as some believe the Synoptic Gospels indicate? It appears as if we are dealing with three possible scenarios:

- Jesus ate the Passover on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 15 Nisan – the day after Passover day. But then He would have had to be crucified on 16 Nisan, the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This cannot be, because we know He was crucified on the day of preparation.
- Jesus ate the Passover late on Passover day, 14 Nisan. Then He would have been crucified on 15 Nisan, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But then He would have been crucified during the high Sabbath, which was forbidden by Jewish law.
- Jesus ate the Passover on the *first* evening of 14 Nisan just after sundown ending 13 Nisan. He was crucified later that same day in the afternoon at the same time the lambs were being slain. He would then be placed in the tomb on the second evening of 14 Nisan, just prior to the start of 15 Nisan, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and a Sabbath.

Since there are two evenings to a biblical day (the evening beginning the day at sundown, and the evening ending the day at the next sundown), which scenario is correct and allows for the Gospels to remain in perfect harmony?

There is no possibility other than the third scenario unless the Scriptures are contradictory and/or Jesus died on some day other than Passover day. Neither of the first two scenarios is acceptable to any believer in Jesus, let alone any Bible scholar.

That Jesus died on the day the sacrificial lambs were killed is not a problem if we see that, due to the enormity of the task of offering the Passover lambs for every household, the priests began performing that duty early on 14 Nisan, most probably right after sunset beginning the day. The Law of Moses states only that the sacrifice must be killed on 14 Nisan. It does not prescribe any particular time of day.

By beginning to offer the sacrifices after sundown ending 13 Nisan and beginning 14 Nisan the priests would have an early start for a long and arduous task, and they would still fulfill the Law requiring them to offer the sacrifices on 14 Nisan (Exodus 12:1-20).

Jesus and His disciples had their sacrifice slain and then ate the Passover meal on the first evening of 14 Nisan. That night He was taken to Caiaphas and then to Pilate during the daytime;

He was crucified in the afternoon and laid in the tomb on the second evening of 14 Nisan.

All would have taken place on the day prescribed by the Law of Moses. Jesus would have eaten His Passover meal earlier than was customary, but since He was going to be God's Passover sacrifice for all mankind it was certainly His prerogative to do so.

This scenario harmonizes all the Gospels because 14 Nisan – Passover day – is the first day of unleavened bread, and 15 Nisan is the first day of the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, a high Sabbath.

Most importantly, all the Gospels tell us that Jesus died on the day of preparation, which is always 14 Nisan – Passover day.

Therefore, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which follows Passover day, is the Sabbath spoken of in John 19:31. Mark 16:1-2 indicates that there were two Sabbaths in the same week that Jesus died and rose: the Passover high Sabbath and the regular weekly Sabbath.

After which Sabbath did the Women come?

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. (Mark 16:1-2 KJV)

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The women could not have gone to the tomb at “the end of the Sabbath (Matthew 21:8), or “very early in the morning the first day of the week” (Mark 16:2), and still bought and prepared the spices after the Sabbath (Mark 16:1), unless these verses are speaking of two distinct Sabbaths. The women must have bought the spices after the high Sabbath (the first Sabbath of that week) had passed.

Again, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a high Sabbath. It is impossible that Mark would separate “when the sabbath was past” from “very early in the morning the first day of the week” in the same passage unless he was speaking of two different events.

The phrase, “had bought spices” in the King James Version indicates that the women already had the spices on hand. However, the Greek *egorasan aromata* is more correctly rendered “bought spices,” omitting the word “had.” Therefore, the women must have bought the spices after the first Sabbath (the high Sabbath) was past, and prepared them the day before the weekly Sabbath.

Notice, also, that in Mark 16:1 the singular *sabbatou* is used for the Sabbath after which the women bought the spices (*Kai diagenomenou tou sabbatou*: “And passing the Sabbath”). But in verse 2 Mark uses the plural form *sabbaton* for the Sabbath at the end of which they came to the tomb (*mia ton sabbaton*: “the first from the Sabbaths” or, “the first day of the week”).

While the singular and plural forms may be used interchangeably for “the Sabbath” among *different* writers, it is unlikely that the *same* writer (Mark) would use both the singular and the plural in the *same* passage referring to the *same* day. He must have been referring to two different Sabbath days.

Thus, the women bought the spices after the first Sabbath (the Passover high Sabbath) which is rendered in the singular, and went to the tomb at the end of the second Sabbath (the regular weekly Sabbath) rendered in the plural.

First Fruits

One of the most important elements in considering the day of Jesus' resurrection is the Feast of First Fruits. Briefly, this was the day the Israelites were to bring a wave offering of first fruits before YHWH. They were to shake their first-fruit offering vigorously before YHWH as a foreshadowing of the Messiah as the first fruits of the Resurrection. They did not necessarily understand this prophetic element to the feast day, but God established it as such. Although Jews today celebrate this feast at a different time, in Jesus' day it was celebrated on the first day of the week after the first weekly Sabbath following the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Because of this it is assumed that Jesus, as the first fruits of the Resurrection, must have been raised on the first day of the week. Again, a misunderstanding.

The Feast of First Fruits is not the day of harvest, but the day the first fruit of the harvest is waved before YHWH. The harvest would have taken place before Passover; Passover day was the day the lambs were slain and eaten; the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the time to celebrate the harvest; First Fruits was the time to wave the first portion of the harvest before YHWH.

Remember what Jesus said to Mary Magdalene when He first appeared to her after His resurrection:

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God, and your God. (John 20:17 KJV)

Jesus had been raised from the dead as the first fruits of the Resurrection, but He had not yet presented Himself before the Father as such. This is why He wanted no one to touch Him as yet. But when He later appeared to His disciples He told Thomas to put his finger into the wound in His hand and his hand into His side. Therefore He must have gone to the Father on the first day of the week (First Fruits), presented Himself before Him, then returned for His final instructions to His disciples.

God's prophetic timing of the appointed feasts is revealed in the sequence of Jesus' death and resurrection, both of which had to take place during one particular year. In order for Him to die and be resurrected three days and three nights later, then appear before the Father on the first day of the week, the first day after the weekly Sabbath following the first day of Passover would have to occur on 18 Nisan. During any other year it could occur on other dates; this particular year it had to be 18 Nisan or Jesus could not be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth as prophesied. If, for example, 14 Nisan occurred on the first day of the week, the Feast of First Fruits would be three days further out from the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus would have had to be in the tomb for six days and six nights.

Since these events took place during the week of Passover, and the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a high Sabbath, it is perfectly in line with God's Word – and logical – to accept the following order of events:

- Jesus ate the Passover after sundown ending 13 Nisan, during the *first* evening of 14 Nisan;
- In the middle of the night of 14 Nisan He went with His disciples to Gethsemane where He was taken captive;
- While it was still dark He was taken for interrogation before the high priest, Caiaphas, who, along with the scribes and elders of the Jews, sought for an excuse to have Him put to death:
- He was delivered to Pontius Pilate for judgment in the early daylight hours of 14 Nisan and was given over to be crucified later that same day;
- Jesus was buried during the *second* evening of 14 Nisan – Passover day, the Preparation day for the Feast of Unleavened Bread (our Wednesday);
- Everyone rested on the high Sabbath – the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (our Thursday);
- The women bought and prepared the spices the day after the high Sabbath (our Friday);
- Everyone rested during the regular weekly Sabbath (our Saturday);
- Three days and three nights after His burial Jesus rose before sundown on the weekly Sabbath, 17 Nisan (our Saturday evening);
- The women went to the tomb sometime between sundown on the Sabbath (Matthew 28:1) and sunrise on the first day of the week, 18 Nisan (our Sunday morning);
- Jesus ascended to the Father on 18 Nisan, the Feast of First Fruits, to present Himself before the Father as the First Fruits of the Resurrection; He then returned to His disciples for awhile before He would again be taken up to Heaven until the time of His coming to restore the Kingdom to Israel during His millennial reign.

One more thing to consider: If Jesus rose on a Sunday morning then He would have been in the heart of the earth for three days and four nights. Even if He rose after midnight on Sunday He would have been three days and three-and-a-half nights in the heart of the earth. Had He risen before midnight, that would be on the first day of the Jewish week, but on our Saturday, not Sunday. All this refutes the “Good Friday” – “Easter Sunday” myth.

THE LORD’S DAY

There must be some basis for the fact that the vast majority of Christians observe Sunday instead of the seventh-day Sabbath. Didn’t the early “Church” discard the Sabbath in favor of the Sunday “Lord’s Day?”

Because Jesus rose from the dead on the day we call “Saturday” rather than on Sunday, it is important that we examine the reasons why most churches observe Sunday as “the Lord’s Day.”

There are two (and only two) sources we may go to that can shed light on this question. Those two sources – witnesses if you will – are Scripture and history. (A third – what some call tradition – is covered by history since history reveals the origins of tradition.) We will first consider what history has to say on the subject.

History

It has been taught that Jesus’ apostles observed Sunday in place of the seventh-day Sabbath, and that the tradition is as old as the Faith. But this is not as certain as we have been led to believe. In truth, there is no substantive history to indicate this.

As we examine the evidence offered by Christian historians we will find that the authorities cited are questionable at best.

Philip Schaff, in his *History of the Christian Church*, cites Barnabas, Ignatius, and Justin Martyr as evidence that the first (or eighth) day of the week was observed by first-century believers in commemoration of our Lord’s resurrection:

Barnabas

Schaff states, “The celebration of the Lord’s Day in memory of the resurrection of Christ dates undoubtedly from the apostolic age.” In his footnote to this statement he says “Barnabas calls it the eighth day, in contrast to the Jewish Sabbath.” In another footnote he quotes from the “Epistle of Barnabas”:

We celebrate the eighth day with joy, on which Jesus rose from the dead, and, after having appeared [to his disciples], ascended to heaven.³⁷

This appears to be solid proof that Barnabas, one of Paul’s most notable companions, recognized Sunday as the day of Jesus’ resurrection as well as the day of worship for Christians. However, Schaff later discounts his own reference to Barnabas by stating:

This epistle is altogether too fierce in its polemics against Judaism to be the production of the apostolic Barnabas.³⁸

What kind of scholarship is this? Schaff cites a source to prove a point. Then later discredits that source as unreliable.

Further, this “epistle,” allegedly written by Barnabas, is universally regarded as a forgery by historians. Its dating is uncertain, but it could have been written as late as the middle of the second century as one among many Gnostic texts that promote a humanistic philosophy contrary to the Scriptures.

Yet in spite of these facts numerous expositors besides Schaff cite this letter as evidence that Barnabas endorsed Sunday in place of the seventh-day Sabbath. Such “scholarship” lacks academic integrity. How can they cite “Barnabas’ epistle” to justify Sunday replacing the Sabbath, then discard that same “epistle” as a forgery?

Although the dating of this forgery indicates that the tradition of a Sunday resurrection was a late first- or early second-century fixture, this is still uncertain. And even if it were a first-century tradition (developed apart from apostolic authority) it cannot take precedence over Scripture.

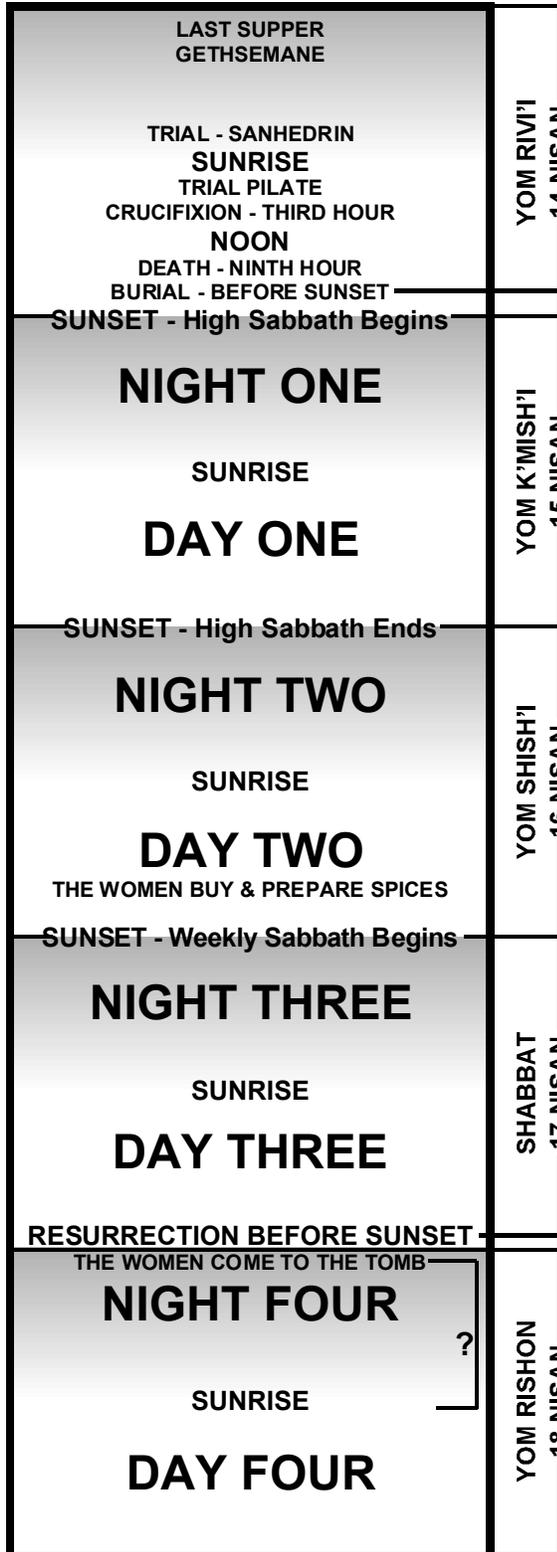
37 *History of the Christian Church, Op. Cit.*, 2:202.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

THE WEEK OF OUR LORD'S TRIUMPH

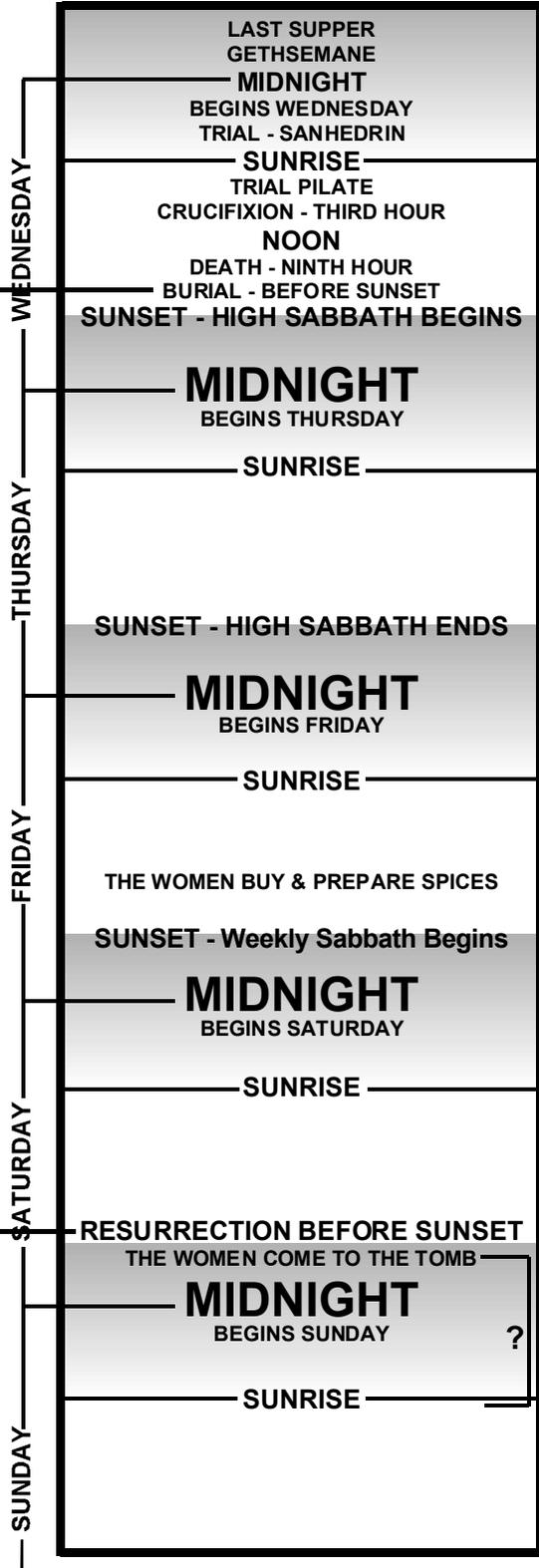
HEBREW CALENDAR

INSTITUTED BY YHWH GOD



GREGORIAN CALENDAR

INSTITUTED BY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



The author of this alleged epistle from Barnabas also reinterpreted the Sabbath commandment as commanding holiness rather than physical rest.³⁹

Ignatius

The next earliest historical reference to a Sunday “Lord’s Day” is attributed by most historians to the second-century Bishop of Antioch, Ignatius (c. 117). Schaff points out that Ignatius’ alleged comment about the Sabbath being done away with is found only in the shorter Greek rescension of his letter, but is missing from the more ancient Syriac edition.⁴⁰ The comment to which Schaff alludes is in the Greek version of Ignatius’ *Magnesian* 9:1:

“...no longer sabbatizing but living according to the Lord’s Day on which also our life arose through him and through his death.”⁴¹

One of the more scholarly works on the Sabbath-to-Sunday controversy produced by pro-Sunday advocates is a compilation of papers which grew out of a research project sponsored by the Tyndale Fellowship for Biblical Research in Cambridge, England. The study was begun in 1973, and the results were published in 1982 by Zondervan Publishing House under the editorial auspices of D.A. Carson. Referring to the quote attributed to Ignatius, Richard J. Bauckham, lecturer in the Department of Theology at the University of Manchester, Manchester, England, states:

This passage has provoked textual debate since the only Greek manuscript extant reads [kata kuriaken dzoen dzontes], which could be translated “living according to the Lord’s life.” Most scholars, however, have followed the Latin text (secundum dominicam), omitting [dzoen] and translating “living according to the Lord’s Day.”...Of course it is true that the real contrast Ignatius intends to draw is not between days as such but between ways of life, between “sabbatizing” (i.e., living according to Jewish legalism) and living according to the resurrection life of Christ. But the text becomes most easily intelligible if we understand him to be symbolizing this contrast by means of a contrast of days, the Sabbath as the distinguishing characteristic of Judaism and the new Christian observance of the day of resurrection as symbolizing the new life which Christians enjoy through Christ....Reference to a weekly Lord’s Day would seem more natural, but on the evidence of this text alone we cannot be quite sure.⁴²

Bauckham’s argument, as do all the arguments in favor of discarding the Sabbath, rests on the assumption that Jesus rose on a Sunday. Lacking that position, there is no other basis upon

which any such argument may rest, scholarly or otherwise. And even this pro-Sunday scholarship recognizes that this “proof” of Ignatius’ support for a Sunday “Lord’s Day” is no proof at all.

Since there are no other references attributable to Ignatius, which may support the observance of Sunday in place of the seventh-day Sabbath, any citation of Ignatius must be discarded.

Justin Martyr

With the writings of Justin Martyr (c. 100-166?) we are still early in Christian history, this time closer to the middle of the second century. Historically there is little known of this Christian apologist aside from his own writings, and the authenticity of about half of those attributed to him are doubtful.⁴³ In *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*, ascribed to Justin Martyr, the writer makes a case for a perpetual Sabbath and, in particular, a Sunday Sabbath. Of this discourse Schaff states:

He assigns as a reason for the selection of the first day for the purposes of Christian worship, because on that day God dispelled the darkness and the chaos, and because Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to his assembled disciples, but makes no allusion to the fourth commandment.⁴⁴

Justin Martyr’s authorship of this writing is considered doubtful by several eminent historians, though the writing itself is generally considered historical.⁴⁵

(We should also note that Justin Martyr was the first to ascribe to the burgeoning hierarchical institution the designation “catholic,” i.e., “universal.” By his time much of Christianity had begun to develop into an organization of clerics who intended to spread the Roman church’s authority over all the world’s churches. Many in Rome’s Imperial Palace had been converted to Christianity, at least nominally, as had leaders in commerce, Roman religion, the arts and sciences. These gave support to the institution. They were the “movers and shakers” whose political influence eventually molded the Roman Catholic Church into a formidable world power. This is an example of how the more worldly-wise and eminent those with influence in an assembly are, the further away from God’s truth that assembly strays.)

As with Barnabas and Ignatius, we find historical evidence is lacking to conclusively point to Justine Martyr as a proponent of replacing the Sabbath with a Sunday “Lord’s Day.” The only writing to which that position is attributed is *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*, and it is of questionable authorship.

If one wonders how *anyone* in the second century might err on so important a point we need only consider how today’s historians are divided on issues relating to mere decades ago, in spite of the preponderance of historical data – let alone the communications technology – at their disposal. Could Justin Martyr or any-

39 R.J. Bauckham, *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, D.A. Carson, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), p. 265.

40 *History of the Christian Church, Op. Cit.*, 2:203.

41 *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day, Op. Cit.*, p. 228.

42 *Ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

43 *Encyclopedia Britannica, Op. Cit.*, s.v. “Justin.”

44 *History of the Christian Church, Op. Cit.*, 2:203.

45 *Encyclopedia Britannica, Op. Cit.*, s.v. “Justin.”

one else in his time have misinterpreted events of a century or more earlier? This is almost certain. And given the lack of any concrete evidence to support such an important variance from Scripture, it behooves believers in Jesus to base our practices on more than possibilities. Thus – as with the alleged attributions of Sunday observance to Barnabas and Ignatius – any citation of Justin Martyr to prove a Sunday Sabbath must be discarded.

Tertullian

Though the dubious character of these early writings is in itself no reason to reject the idea that Christians had at an early stage adopted Sunday as their day of worship, the “first express evidence of cessation from labor on Sunday among Christians” is attributed to Tertullian around the start of the third century.⁴⁶

In his earlier days Tertullian was closely aligned with the Roman Catholic Church and gave it much of its literature and liturgy in Latin. It was during his association with Rome that he wrote his *De Oratione*, in which he made his case for Sunday worship in place of the seventh-day Sabbath.⁴⁷

So from all the evidence, we see that the discarding of the seventh-day Sabbath in favor of Sunday observance has no conclusive historical precedent any time prior to at least the third century, and was uniquely Roman Catholic. There is no reliable first- or second-century apostolic evidence that Christians during that time observed Sunday in place of the seventh-day Sabbath. If there are, the best pro-Sunday scholars have failed to cite them in any work extant. Therefore, lacking any other ante-Nicene sources, there is insufficient historical evidence to support the idea that the post-apostolic Christians observed Sunday as “the Lord’s Day.”

Anti-Semitism

History does reveal a bitter dispute that arose in the Roman Church between Christians who wished to retain the seventh-day Sabbath and those who, because of their aversion toward the faith’s Hebrew roots, wished to discard it. That dispute was largely between the Eastern churches which retained the seventh-day Sabbath, and the Latin church in Rome which discarded it.⁴⁸

The Roman church’s motive was not so much one of desiring to adhere to Sunday as the alleged day of our Lord’s resurrection as it was to divest itself of anything it perceived to have its roots in Israel.⁴⁹ Replacement Theology had taken root in the minds of the Roman clergy, and they believed that the “Church” (specifically, the Roman Catholic Church) had replaced Israel; God would no longer have anything to do with the nation, and neither should they.

This was an extremely flimsy reason to change what God instituted and sanctified for man’s good (Isaiah 58:13-14). But it has contributed to the establishment of Sunday as a mandatory day

of worship called “the Lord’s Day” in place of the seventh-day Sabbath.

“The Lord’s Day” was instituted by Rome to draw attention away from the Jewish Sabbath and the Passover feast.⁵⁰ The Roman church’s position was not motivated by love, which should be the primary motive for any action taken by those who call themselves Christians (1 Corinthians 13). Nor was it motivated by Scripture or by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Rather it was motivated by anti-Semitism (and a politically pragmatic concession to the papal veneration of the Sun which continued to be worshipped by Constantine).

Regardless of motives, by the time the Roman church had actually begun even sporadically to throw off the Sabbath, at least one hundred years of Christian history had passed. Compared with the nearly two millennia which bring us to today, that seems like a small passing of time. But one hundred years is ample time for mischief to be devised by men bent on power (2 Thessalonians 2:7). The apostles who gave the Scriptures to us lamented that the apostasy had already begun in their day.

The Day Of The Sun

By the fourth century the Roman church was well on its way to becoming a powerful political force. With the support of Roman emperor Constantine, Sunday worship was legislated; the seventh-day Sabbath was for all intents and purposes eradicated in the Roman Empire. Constantine’s proclamation was not enjoined under the name of the Sabbath or even the “Lord’s Day,” but under its pagan name of *Dies Solis* – “the Day of the Sun”:

On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.⁵¹

Thus “the venerable Day of the Sun” was adopted by the Roman church in conformity to the pagan Roman custom of honoring the sun with special veneration on the first day of the week. It is not surprising then that the bread of the Roman Catholic Church’s Eucharist took on the appearance of a round disk similar to that used by the ancient Egyptians in worshiping their sun god Osiris.⁵² No longer were the bread and wine considered merely symbolic of the Lord’s body and blood; through magical incantations, these elements allegedly become His *literal* body and blood, and thus are to be worshiped as God:

46 *History of the Christian Church, Op. Cit.*, 2:204.

47 *Encyclopedia Britannica, Op. Cit.*, s.v. “Tertullian.”

48 *History of the Christian Church, Op. Cit.*, 2:202-204.

49 *Ibid.*, 2:203-204.

50 *Ibid.*, 2:202-203.

51 *Ibid.*, 3:380.

52 *The Two Babylons, Op. Cit.*, pp. 160-161.

Responding to the claims of merely symbolic or spiritual presence, the Church condemned “anyone who denies that the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, but says that Christ is present in the sacrament only as a sign, or figure, or by his power.” ...

Thus one cannot say that the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are “present only in the use of the sacrament while it is being received, and not before or after, and that the true body of the Lord does not remain in the consecrated hosts or particles that are left over after Communion.”

Given this perdurance of Christ’s presence as long as the species remain, it was only logical for the Church to worship the Blessed Sacrament [the wafer] as it would the person of Jesus himself. As a result, he is to be adored “in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist with the worship of latria, including the external worship.” Concretely this means that the Blessed Sacrament is to be “honored with extraordinary festive celebrations” and “solemnly carried from place to place” and “is to be publicly exposed for the people’s adoration.”⁵³

Reaffirming the Council of Trent (Session 13: *Decree on the Eucharist*, ch. 5; *Denz.* 878 [1648]), Vatican II, in 1972, stated:

There should be no doubt in anyone’s mind “that all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament [the “consecrated” wafer] the worship which is due to the true God, as has always been the custom of the Catholic church. Nor is it to be adored any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten.”⁵⁴

These doctrinal corruptions developed over time, to be sure, but they are all outgrowths of the “Sun”-day “Lord’s Day” instituted by Rome – a far departure from the legacy of the Sabbath God instituted as a means for His people to draw closer to Him. In truth, under Roman authority Sunday worship became as much a bondage as Jewish interpretation of the Sabbath ever was. In both cases it was not a God of love to whom the people answered, but a wrathful hierarchy that threatened eternal damnation for anyone who did not conform to its dictates.

But beyond the requirements to attend mass and give offerings, there was little responsibility for the believer on Sunday. He could spend most of the day as he pleased. By the fifth century many in the Roman church lamented the worldliness of believers and their penchant for theatrical and other entertainments on that day.⁵⁵

Through the centuries this condition has remained. Now the worldliness of the churches – Catholic and Protestant – is more pronounced than ever. By no stretch of the imagination can Sunday be called the Sabbath. It is a special day of worship during which Christians gather for a few hours, but for most Christians it is by and large a day of worldly entertainment and

seeking after personal pleasure – just the opposite of the Lord’s definition of the Sabbath in Isaiah 58:13-14.

Almost two thousand years of history fraught with legalism, bloodshed, and the pursuit of worldly pleasure separate us from the obscure circumstances regarding the change from Sabbath to “Lord’s Day.” The only supports for Sunday replacing the Sabbath are fragmented historical writings, the majority of which are either doubtful or were influenced by Rome and written centuries after the apostles’ tenure. Lacking any concrete historical evidence, there is no justification for substituting the Sunday “Lord’s Day” for the seventh-day Sabbath.

But isn’t there a scriptural basis for observing Sunday? Didn’t the Apostles gather on Sunday to break bread?

This brings us to our next (and most important) “witness” in determining if there is any justification for substituting Sunday for the seventh-day Sabbath.

The Scriptures

As with history, the interpretation of Scripture is often based upon preconceived notions gleaned from religious traditions. Were we to take the Scriptures at their face value, putting aside the teachings of men, we would often deduce something entirely different from what we have been taught. Sadly, many teachers in the churches base their interpretation of Scripture upon commentaries rather than upon individual, in-depth study.

It is most important that the Body of Christ receive instruction from men who, through diligent study, have come to understand the Scriptures. Yet it is the duty of each believer to test the words of every teacher (Acts 17:11). There is no excuse for the believer who refuses to study the Scriptures on his own and seek diligently to verify that what he hears is true.

In our search we must objectively sort out those opinions which may be biased interpretations stemming from religious training in particular theological studies, and test them against the whole of God’s Word to make sure they harmonize. The reader is encouraged to take that kind of objective approach to this study, especially as we deal with those Scriptures that have been thought to support the replacing of the seventh-day Sabbath with the Sunday “Lord’s Day.”

A Scripture verse that is often used in an attempt to prove that Jesus’ apostles gathered on Sunday instead of on the Sabbath is Acts 20:7:

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow and continued his speech until midnight. (KJV)

It is assumed that “the first day of the week” in this verse is our Sunday. But remember that the Jews did not think in terms of “Sunday” or week days according to the Roman calendar. Inasmuch as Paul preached until midnight, which may have begun our Sunday, the gathering may have begun on our Saturday.

53 John A. Hardon, S.J., *The Catholic Catechism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), pp. 462-463.

54 *Vatican II, Op. Cit.*, EM 3f.

55 *History of the Christian Church, Op. Cit.*, 3:381.

Now, it is possible that the gathering began on our Sunday and continued until midnight beginning our Monday. But since we are not sure of exactly when it began one cannot be dogmatic about it one way or the other. This verse offers no solid proof that first-century Christians were gathering on Sundays exclusively. So, again, we must go back to Jesus' words about being in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. Thus, we must rule out Sunday as the day of His resurrection, negating the idea of a Sunday "Lord's Day" based upon the erroneous teaching that He rose on a Sunday.

It is also assumed that the phrase "came together to break bread" in this Scripture means to share the Lord's Supper. Thus, it is reasoned, this was the day that the apostolic assemblies gathered to worship. However, there are sixteen references to breaking bread in the writings of the apostles, and *none* mean anything other than eating a meal. The only exceptions are references to the Lord breaking the bread at the "Last Supper" (Mt.26:26; Mk.14:22; Lk.22:19; I Cor. 10:16; 11:24). And even the Last Supper was a meal. The "Communion" element was part of the meal during which Jesus revealed the meaning of the bread and the cup of wine to be representative of His body and blood. In fact, many scholars feel that Luke never mentions Communion in the Book of Acts.

Yet whether or not the phrase, "to break bread," meant to share Communion or a common meal, the question we need to ask is whether or not the first day of the week held any special significance to the apostles and their disciples.

Elsewhere regarding the gathering of the disciples to break bread we read:

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. (Acts 2:46 KJV)

According to this passage the disciples broke bread together every day. Just because "the first day of the week" is mentioned in Acts 20:7 doesn't mean that that particular day was any different from the others. The writer, Luke, was merely setting the time for Paul's departure.

Aside from Acts 20:7, the only other reference that even suggests that Sunday was observed as a special day by the apostolic brethren in place of the seventh-day Sabbath concerns the day Paul instructed the Corinthian believers to set aside a collection for the saints:

Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (I Corinthians 16:2)

This verse tells us nothing more than that the Corinthian believers were to set aside within their own possessions ("lay by him in store") offerings to be sent to the saints in distress in Jerusalem. It doesn't state that the first day of the week was for gathering together in place of the Sabbath, or even in addition to the Sabbath. For that matter, if they were meeting daily, the request

to set money aside on any day would be like any other day. Why the first day of the week? Because Jews were forbidden to engage in commerce or even service to others on the Sabbath. To request that the offerings be taken up on the Sabbath would scandalize the Jews, making it more difficult to witness to them of Jesus as their Messiah.

There are several recorded instances where the apostles worshiped and taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath. Of course, this was the Jewish custom so it is discounted by some as merely an attempt to witness to the Jews. Yet Acts 13:14-44 records that on two particular Sabbaths, Paul preached to the Gentiles in Antioch. Why does this not carry at least as much weight for retaining the Sabbath as do a couple of questionable and unclear references to gathering on the first day of the week?

In the final analysis there is no solid biblical evidence that the apostles substituted the first day of the week for the Sabbath.

The Lord's Day

So then how did Sunday come to be called "the Lord's Day"? The term is based upon John the Revelator's phrase in Revelation 1:10:

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. (KJV)

This is the only place that the term, "the Lord's day," is found in Scripture. Because of Catholic Church tradition it is believed by most Christians that John is referring to Sunday. But is it referring to Sunday, the first day of the week according to the Gregorian calendar, or to something entirely different? If John was referring to a particular day of the week he would think in terms of the Hebrew calendar, not the Gregorian calendar of late.

The Greek words translated "the Lord's day," are *te kuriake hemera*: literally, "the imperial day."⁵⁶ Translating the *adjective kuriake* as "Lord's" is unique to this instance. All other words rendered "Lord's" are from the *possessive noun kurios*, with the exception of *kuriakon* in 1 Corinthians 11:20 which is used for "the Lord's supper."

Revelation 1:10 is a departure from the norm, the phrase *te kuriake hemera* not being found in any other Scripture. Thus there is no other biblical source for comparison.

Tradition is the basis for the assumption that "the imperial day" in Revelation 1:10 means "the first day of the week," or Sunday. However, a close study of the context in which the phrase occurs indicates that John was saying that he was transported in the spirit to a future time: "the imperial day," or "the Day of the Lord," in which the final events of this present age take place.

"The Day of the Lord" - or "the imperial day" as a literal rendering would have it - is not a twenty-four-hour period. Rather, it is a span of time during which God's final judgments upon the earth and mankind take place.

Although *Arndt and Gingrich* states that in Revelation 1:10 this imperial day "is certainly Sunday,"⁵⁷ this is merely conjecture.

56 *Arndt & Gingrich, Op. Cit.*, p. 458.

57 *Ibid.*,

Only tradition can account for this statement, because there is no supporting evidence that it means “Sunday.” In other words, “Sunday” is not the translation of *kuriake hemera*.

The assumption that “the Lord’s day” in Revelation 1:10 means “Sunday” is based upon circular reasoning: Jesus rose on Sunday, so Sunday must be the Lord’s Day referred to by John; John mentions “the Lord’s day” so he must have meant “Sunday,” which is proof that Jesus rose on a Sunday.

The truth remains that there are no Scriptures which indicate that the apostles observed Sunday in place of the seventh-day Sabbath. For that matter, if John was speaking about a specific day on which he saw the heavens opened, that particular “Lord’s Day” would have been the Sabbath, because Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).

But does it really matter? What about Acts 15:19-21, Romans 14:4-6, and Colossians 2:16-17? Don’t these Scriptures indicate that there is no difference between the Sabbath and any other day?

Let’s look at them one at a time. The first, Acts 15:19-20, reveals that James is addressing the apostles and elders at Jerusalem:

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. (KJV)

Here James urged the apostles and elders not to lay any burden on the Gentile believers other than to refrain from certain customs that were part of their pagan heritage. These he enumerated so that there would be no mistake on the part of the Gentile believers.

If we assume that, because he omitted mention of the Sabbath, the Fourth Commandment is voided, then we must logically assume that all the Commandments other than the one dealing with idols are voided because they weren’t mentioned either. Therefore, the Gentile believers would be free to murder, to steal, to curse father and mother, and so on.

The truth is that these verses must be taken out of context if they are to be used to justify discarding the Sabbath. Verse 21, immediately following, clarifies James’ position:

For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. (KJV)

James was reminding the others that the Law of Moses was readily available for the *Gentile* believers to hear in the synagogues on every Sabbath. He was merely pointing out that abstinence from their pagan traditions was an *additional* requirement for the Gentiles to be in conformity to their new faith. Rather than being evidence that the Sabbath was voided, these verses taken together indicate that the believers were expected to observe the Sabbath and to come together for teaching on that day.

We know from other Scriptures that the Law of Moses relative to sacrifices and oblations reserved for ancient Israel was fulfilled in Christ. Believers in Jesus were purposely protected from “the circumcision” (Jewish believers who wanted to keep them under those Mosaic Laws that had been done away). But the moral Law is reiterated often by the apostles, and the Sabbath, although not able to be kept as before, was never said to be done away. Or was it?

This question will be answered by the second passage of Scripture we must consider, which is Romans 14:4-6:

Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. (KJV)

Paul was writing in regard to those who were weak or new in the faith (vss. 1-3). He stated that they should not be despised or rejected because they attach importance to eating or drinking certain things, or to one day above another. He doesn’t mention the Sabbath. Inasmuch as there are no other Scriptures which conclusively support the contention that Paul discarded the Sabbath, we cannot arbitrarily assume that this passage voids the Sabbath. As the one commandment God stressed as important to prove whether His people would obey the rest of His Law (Exodus 16:4), and, therefore, whether they love Him or not, it cannot be so lightly tossed out.

For that matter, why is the same argument not used in regard to keeping Sunday as “the Lord’s Day”? Why is it acceptable to esteem Sunday above all other days, but when it comes to esteeming the Sabbath, there are objections? Particularly when there is no Scriptural or historical support for keeping Sunday in place of the seventh-day Sabbath?

It is far more reasonable to assume that Romans 14:4-6 refers to the keeping of holidays much as some Christians today observe Christmas and Easter, and others don’t. If these Scriptures do refer to the Sabbath, then the words, “another esteemeth every day alike” (vs. 5) would logically mean that some people refrain from labor every day. While there are some who would love to do that, it certainly isn’t practical or productive – let alone Scriptural. We cannot regard every day as a Sabbath day.

The third passage of Scripture to consider is found in Colossians 2:16-17:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (KJV)

This is the only Scripture reference that could possibly be taken to mean that the seventh-day Sabbath has been voided. Those who reject the Sabbath, interpret this narrowly to mean that they should not be judged for not keeping the Sabbath. But it would just as well mean that no one should be judged for keeping the Sabbath.

Paul was saying that since God had made those who were dead in their sins alive in Christ and had blotted out the handwritten ordinances (vss. 13-14), they were not to let anyone judge them in regard to the keeping of the Law as it pertained to Jewish festivals, new moon celebrations, or special Sabbaths. This is why

Paul used the plural *sabbaton*, and not the singular *sabbato* for the Sabbath days mentioned here.

It has been suggested that the singular and plural forms are used interchangeably, for instance Matthew 12:2 and Mark 2:24 where the same events are being spoken of. This is true. However, Mark's use of the singular and plural forms is consistent. And never is *sabbaton* used for the singular. Rather, *sabbasin* is the form used interchangeably for singular or plural.

The plural, *sabbaton*, is used in reference to the particular week of Christ's death and resurrection when two Sabbaths occurred (Matthew 28:1; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54 & 56). The only exception is John 5:9-10. In Acts 13:14; 27; 16:13; and 18:4, in which we find the phrases "on every sabbath," and "on the day of the sabbaths," which refer to more than one Sabbath.

Only the singular form, *sabbasin*, is used interchangeably on a regular basis, and not once in reference to the two Sabbaths which occurred during the week of the Lord's death.

There is a difference between the Jewish ceremonial law which was a shadow of Christ's coming, and the laws of God which pertain to our obedience to Him. The Ten Commandments were never voided. They were not "handwritten ordinances," but were written by God Himself on tablets of stone – the stone signifying their permanency. Who today makes reference to "the Nine Commandments?"

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* says:

In the Ten Commandments, or, more properly, Ten Words...they are reduced to a few all-comprehensive precepts of permanent validity, upon which every duty required of man is based. Certain prescriptions of temporary force, as those of the ceremonial and forensic laws, are applications of these "Words" to transient circumstances, and, for the time for which they were enacted, demanded perfect and unconditional obedience.⁵⁸

Notice the words, "permanent validity" in reference to the Ten Commandments, as distinguished from the temporary ordinances "for the time for which they were enacted."

No honest Christian would be so audacious as to suggest that he could willfully transgress God's Commandments with impunity. Yet many are persuaded that the Fourth Commandment is of little or no consequence.

The "Sabbaths" – those special ceremonial days of which Paul spoke in Colossians 2:16-17, were observances which foreshadowed the Messiah's coming. Therefore, Paul told the brethren not to let anyone condemn them for observing or not observing them because they were fulfilled in Christ and are no longer binding.

The Lord's seventh-day Sabbath was never considered a shadow of the Messiah's coming until interpreted as such by post-apostolic theologians to justify discarding it. Rather, God sanctified the seventh day in commemoration of the Creation (Genesis 2:3). He *later* designated that the Sabbath also be kept

as an observance of Israel's Exodus from Egypt as well (Deuteronomy 5:15).

The Body of Christ is a joint-heir with Jesus Christ to the Kingdom of God. Except for the specifics relating to the Land of Israel which God promised to Abraham and his descendants through Jacob, we also inherit the blessings that were promised to Israel (Romans 9:24-26). This inheritance is the continuation of God's redemptive plan. Through faith in Jesus Christ we have received the adoption of sons into the family of God (Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5). But along with the blessings inherent to that position also come the responsibilities. Many Christians want to claim all the blessings of the Old Testament, but when it comes to obeying God's commands as a condition to those blessings they plead New Testament immunity.

And while some teachers disdain what they consider the "burden" of the Sabbath as part of a "Law" they claim they are not under, they are not hesitant to impose guilt upon those who don't tithe to their coffers. God won't bless us if we don't keep *that* Old Testament law.

There is no solid scriptural ground for dispensing with the seventh-day Sabbath in favor of Sunday. The only reason for that practice – the *tradition* that Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday – is invalid. In truth, if He rose toward the end of the Sabbath (whether before or after sundown) as the Scriptures demonstrate, then He rose not on our Sunday, but on a Saturday evening. So those who wish to discard the Sabbath in favor of another day based on the time of the Lord's resurrection, should call Saturday, not Sunday, "the Lord's Day."

The dispute between those who observe Sunday as "the Lord's Day" and those who observe the Sabbath is based more on tradition than on scriptural authority. Many Sunday proponents derogatorily point at seventh-day Sabbath keepers and accuse them of legalism known as "sabbatarianism." Many seventh-day Sabbath keepers point to those who worship on Sunday as having taken the Mark of the Beast because of Sunday observance being inherited from Roman Catholicism.

Both accusations miss the mark and serve only to cloud the issue.

To decide what our position should be we must first understand just what the Sabbath is – and what it isn't.

What Is The Sabbath?

The word "Sabbath" (Heb., *Shabbath* or *Shabbat*; Gk., *Sabbatou*) means literally, "to desist," "cease," "rest."⁵⁹ The first occurrence of the word in Scripture is found in Exodus 16:23 in reference to the gathering of manna by the Israelites:

And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

58 *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, James Orr, M.A., D.D. Gen. Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), s.v. "Commandments."

59 *Ibid.*, s.v. "Sabbath."

And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.

And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field.

Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.

And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.

So the people rested on the seventh day. (Exodus 16:23-30 KJV)

This, we should note, was *before* the Ten Commandments and the entire Mosaic Law were given. Previous to this the Lord told Moses that He would rain manna from the heavens for the people to gather every day except the seventh, “that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or no” (Exodus 16:4 KJV).

Exodus 16:28, above, indicates that Israel had established a pattern of disobeying God’s laws. But to which law was the Lord referring? The Mosaic Law would not be given until almost a month later when Israel camped in the wilderness of Sinai (Exodus 19:20 - 24:3).

God’s laws must have been revealed long before Moses, for it was the breaking of His laws that caused His judgment upon the earth through Noah’s flood (Genesis 6:5 - 7:24), and upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah during Abraham’s time (Genesis 18:20-23; 19:24-25).

And it was Abraham’s keeping of God’s laws that demonstrated his righteousness (Genesis 17:1-19; 18:1-3; 26:5). Yet it was by faith that he and all the ancient saints were justified (Genesis 15:6; Hebrews 11).

So again, to what law was God referring in Exodus 16:4? It was, of course, the law written upon the heart (Psalms 37:30-31; 40:8; Romans 1:18-25; 2:15). But there is no reason to believe that God’s laws were not also revealed at least in oral form prior to Moses. Scriptural evidence seems to point to this.

Later, when God wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone, He placed the Sabbath law in the fourth position - directly between the first three laws dealing with duties to God, and the last six laws dealing with duties to men. The Sabbath, we could say, is the link between God and man, as well as between man and man. The latter link was embodied in the rest commanded for employers to grant their employees.

The Law, particularly the Ten Commandments, proved God’s love for man. For contained in the Law are warnings meant to safeguard against the suffering that sin brings upon us. The Law teaches us how to enjoy fellowship with God and a life filled with blessings.

The Sabbath gives us the rest and refreshing we need after a week of toiling. Man has suffered under the curse of sin since Adam’s disobedience. Part of that curse was that the earth would not yield its fruit easily; man would work six days to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow (Genesis 3:17-19). But even before man sinned, God blessed and sanctified the seventh day as a memorial to His loving work of creation (Genesis 2:2-3). Historical evidence indicates that from the earliest time man has observed a seventh-day rest from labor. Even in ancient pagan civilizations this carryover from God’s first dealings with man remained.⁶⁰

The Sabbath as ordained by God is a reminder that His people are called to a special purpose. The keeping of the Sabbath by faith is evidence of their obedience and, thus, their love.

There is a special significance in this. Knowing the rebelliousness of man’s heart, God appointed a special time to be set apart for Him. He knew that if Israel truly loved Him they would honor the Sabbath in the manner He prescribed. They would, in fact, love the Sabbath and delight themselves in it:

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. (Isa 58:13-14 KJV)

The Sabbath separates the believer from the influences of the world. Six days of the week are spent for our own work and for our own pleasure, whereas the Sabbath is one day to be kept for the Lord’s pleasure.

Of course, we should distinguish between the Sabbath as God intended it and the Sabbath as the Jewish leaders had corrupted it. God established the Sabbath as a time for refreshing the body and the soul - not burdensome, but a delight. He also used it as a means to distinguish Israel from the other nations.

The Jewish leaders made it a time of bondage to man-made restrictions. Jesus, while acknowledging the validity of the Sabbath, condemned those restrictions and demonstrated that even the Sabbath (as is the whole Law) is subject to the higher law of love and preservation of life (Matthew 12:1-13; Luke 6:1-10). In reality, the Sabbath, if observed as God intended, is evidence of the law of love. God loves His people enough that He made provision for our enjoyment and rest from our labors. And because of our disobedience to His laws, the giving of His Son was the consummate expression of His love.

Is the Sabbath For Today?

Even without the unscriptural restrictions, is the Sabbath for today’s believers in Christ? Some say we are under grace and not under the Law, so the Sabbath doesn’t apply to us. This neglects the truth of God’s grace - that all who have been saved through-

60 *Ibid.*

out the ages have been saved by grace through faith, not by the keeping of the Law (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16). All of God's covenants have been based upon His grace; the eleventh chapter of Hebrews confirms this.

In other words, the Law cannot save. Yet willful transgression of the Law can condemn (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31).

The Law is our schoolmaster which brings us to Christ (Galatians 3:24-25). When we come to God through faith in His Redeemer, Jesus Christ (the One to whom the ancient saints looked forward), the Law can no longer condemn us as long as we walk according to the Spirit of God (Romans 8:1). Yet the Law remains as a measure of our faith by showing us how to be obedient to our Savior.

James illustrates how grace and the Law work together to establish the believer in righteousness:

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:17-26 KJV)

And what does 1 John 3:4 say?

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law. (KJV)

Why did John speak of transgressing the Law if Christians are not required to keep the Law?

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1 KJV)

Sin still exists, and anyone who says he does not sin makes God a liar (1 John 1:10). And if sin exists, then the Law is still in effect:

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and

teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:18-20 KJV)

Being freed from the burden of the Law means that the Law cannot condemn us any more than it can justify us. We were already condemned without the Law until faith in Jesus freed us. Jesus explained that righteousness is not attained by keeping the letter of the Law, but by having a proper heart attitude. A proper attitude is possible only if we allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives. And what will the Holy Spirit do but lead us to keep the Law not by compulsion, but by faith?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Gal 5:22-26 KJV)

The Sabbath was instituted by God before Moses came. It is not a Jewish institution; it is God's institution (Exodus 20:8-10). And it will be observed in the New Earth (Isaiah 66:22-24).

But then there are those who say, "I don't need the Sabbath; I have complete rest in Jesus every day." This sounds good, but there are flaws in this reasoning that should be self-evident.

Although Scripture tells us that we have entered into Jesus' rest (Hebrews 4:1-11), it isn't suggesting that the Sabbath has been done away with. We have entered into His rest in the Spirit, but our bodies and minds are still occupied by the things of this world, not all of which are necessarily evil. We still have to work and have recreation, all of which should be done to the glory of God.

The Sabbath is the one day ordained by God in which we may cease from the cares of the world and rest our bodies and minds. It is a time for fellowship with God - a time we can study His Word uninterrupted by the demands of everyday life. If observed, we will be able to say with David, "I have hidden Your Word in my heart so that I might not sin against You" (Psalms 119:11).

For those who love God the Sabbath is a delight, a blessing, a time for refreshing the soul. It is also a time dreaded by some Christians who enjoy their work and play more than they enjoy delighting themselves in the Lord.

Those who love God will love His Sabbath as an opportunity to rest from their labors and seek a closer walk with Him. Those who don't love God will find the Sabbath burdensome - a "law" that interferes with their doing their own thing.

With knowledge comes responsibility. If we know God desires us to keep the Sabbath, then we have the responsibility to do so. Even those who regard Sunday as the Sabbath generally agree that it should be kept for God. The question therefore is not *should* we keep the Sabbath, but *how* and *when* should we keep it?

How Do We Keep The Sabbath?

The Sabbath is not kept by any particular ritual. Even so, there are certain things to consider should we desire to observe the Sabbath as God intended.

Jewish tradition may be of some value in determining how the Sabbath should be kept. But we must distinguish between tradition grounded in faith and supported by God's Word, and tradition foisted upon the Jews by their religious leaders as a means to keep the people under subjection. The Jewish lawyers erected fences around the Law to ensure that the people would not come close to breaking it. Thus they imposed rules and regulations that infringed upon the freedom of God's people.

In time these prohibitions became a means for the religious leaders to find fault with their enemies – most specifically Jesus – and to flaunt their own perceived righteousness. In order to avoid the same pitfalls of such human error we will use God's Word as the primary source for information on how the Sabbath should be kept.

God's Word gives three basic requirements for keeping the Sabbath. The first is to cease from all labor (Exodus 20:8-11). The second is to refrain from worldly pleasures (Isaiah 58:13). The third is to delight ourselves in God (Isaiah 58:14).

Some believe that there is a fourth – the Sabbath was to be a day of holy convocation or gathering together. However, with the possible exception of Leviticus 23:3, the Sabbaths with that requirement were those attached to the feasts of Israel such as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Jews did gather in the synagogues for teaching on the Sabbath, but there is no specific commandment to that effect.

Let's examine the three basic requirements, keeping in mind the purpose of the Sabbath: to draw close to God in order to please Him and to be equipped to serve Him.

Cease From Labor

To cease from labor means to refrain from gainful employment or work that detracts from our rest in the Lord. The Sabbath is not a time for earning money or taking on burdensome tasks. However, we may do what is necessary to minister to others or to maintain life. Jesus clarified this by stating that the Sabbath was made for man; man wasn't made for the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28). But we should avoid tasks that interfere with the main purpose of the Sabbath – to rest and be refreshed in the Lord.

Now, there are Christians who are gainfully employed by others whose businesses are open on the weekend. What are these Christians to do? First, they should seek God's direction, drawing closer to Him and relying on His strength. Second, they could request a change of work days based upon their conviction that the Sabbath is a day to be kept for God. Most employers will honor what they consider "religious" convictions, and will do what they can to accommodate their employees – especially those they value due to the quality of their work. And all believers in Jesus should be valued by their employers and have a good report among those outside the Body of Christ (1 Timothy 3:7).

Believers in Christ should be the most highly valued employees because we should be the best employees. If we are not highly valued we should ask ourselves if we are truly working as unto God and not as unto man. In any case, if employers will not accommodate us, perhaps we should be prepared to seek other employment.

Whatever conviction we feel the Lord has placed upon our conscience (whether regarding the Sabbath or any matter of faith) we should be willing to make the necessary sacrifices to be obedient. We must be willing to suffer at the hands of a world that hates God and is more concerned with the labor it can extract from us than it is with helping us in our commitment to Him.

Ultimately this is a matter of conscience. Jesus demonstrated that the Law is subservient to the need for sustaining life or for doing good (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-10).

Additionally, we should contrast the requirement for Israel to keep itself separate from the nations with the requirement for believers in Jesus to go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel.

In Israel's case God wanted to keep them spiritually separated from the other nations until Messiah came. In our case He wants us to impact the world with the Gospel. In the process we have the freedom to move and act in ways Israel did not have. But any digression from the Sabbath law must be with the higher law of love for God and for man behind it:

Who has also made us capable ministers of the New Covenant – not of the letter, but of the spirit. For the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:6)

In view of this, we should do all we can to change our circumstances to conform to God's calling. While having freedom in Christ to act according to our conscience, we should strive to uphold the optimum by seeking to be led by the Holy Spirit.

If we lack the faith to change our circumstances we may seek that faith from God. For the believer in Christ it isn't so much a matter of one's salvation as it is a matter of service to God and a desire to be an obedient child. Service, if performed in obedience to His Word, will produce gold, silver, and precious stones; if performed in the flesh it will produce wood, hay and stubble, even though built upon Christ as the foundation:

For we are laborers together with God. You are God's farm; you are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let every man take heed how he builds on it. For no man can lay any other foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire. And the fire shall test every man's work of what kind it is.

If any man's work that he has built thereupon abides, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved – yet as if by fire. (I Corinthians 3:9-15)

For Christians who own their own business and feel that the Sabbath is one of their most profitable days, I suggest they pray earnestly for strength from God to conform to His Word. In some cases perhaps a business owner could contribute his profits for that day to others in need. Let all be guided by their consciences.

Nor does it mean that a Christian employer may require others to work in his place even if his employees aren't Christians (Exodus 20:9-11). God expects us to live by faith. This often means going against what appears to be reason. If we place our security in the things we possess, then in reality, we don't possess them – they possess us. In either case, whether we work for others or are self-employed, we must trust God for our sustenance:

“Therefore, do not think about saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or, ‘What will we drink?’ or, ‘How will we be clothed?’ (for the Gentiles seek after all these things) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not think about tomorrow, for tomorrow will think about its own things. Each day's trouble is sufficient.” (Matthew 6:31-34)

It's really no different than having to face choices for moral reasons. If we are faithful, God will provide for us.

The apostle Paul exhorts us:

If then you are risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth, for you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

This is what Jesus meant when He told us to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, trusting that all we need will be given to us. (Matthew 6:33).

Refraining From Worldly Pleasures

Regarding the second Sabbath requirement – to refrain from worldly pleasures – a careful analysis will show that most Christians in the West spend more time watching television, going to movies and sporting events, and engaging in other forms of earthly pursuits than they do in fellowship with God and with their brethren in Christ. This is true on the Sabbath as well as every other day of the week.

Yet many of those same Christians complain of their lack of available time to study the Scriptures or to pray at length. If they will observe the Sabbath they will find that the other six days will be more productive and, similar to the rewards of giving their money to the Kingdom's work, they'll have the time they need for the necessities of life and for every good work.

It's not to say they are engaging in ungodly pleasures. There are those things which are not ungodly, yet are not godly either. For example, watching a baseball game is not ungodly. But neither is it godly. It's an earthly pleasure which we may enjoy without compromise of conscience. But even such “neutral” pleasures can distract us from our fellowship with God and should be avoided, at least to some large degree, if we choose to keep the Sabbath for Him.

But are there things we can enjoy and still keep the Sabbath as God intended? Given our freedom in Christ, we may choose to engage in recreation on occasion, provided that we do not detract from the purpose of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a good time for quality family time, and even some forms of recreation can be restful.

In ancient Israel recreation was not a large factor. Entertainment was often worldly and evil by nature. Such should be avoided now as it was then.

I don't wish to go into great detail. Again, one's conscience based upon knowledge of God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit should be one's guide.

Delighting Ourselves in God

With all this in mind, we should be careful not to use the Sabbath as a time for entertainment as an end in itself – not even “Christian entertainment.” Our primary motive should be to draw closer to God. This is best done through prayer and personal study of His Word, by gathering together with our brethren in Christ, and by ministering to others.

But we should also be careful not to get caught up in legalisms like those that were characteristic of Israel. Legalism only engenders strife. The intent of one's heart is of utmost importance. As with all service to God, this, too, must be entered into without compulsion.

Keeping the Sabbath isn't so much a matter of salvation as it is seeking a deeper walk with the Lord. It is, perhaps, more of an optimum way to delight in the Lord. Not all Christians will enter into it, but we must be careful not to judge them as ungodly or unsaved. Allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in His time.

But let us also not shrink from sharing this conviction with them. Today, more than ever, we should do all we can to develop a closer relationship with God. The Sabbath is a perfect opportunity to separate ourselves from the world and all its distractions while we seek that closer relationship.

Taking a strong stand may result in ridicule and even persecution for some. The world, our families and friends – perhaps even our assemblies, including the leadership – may not accept our commitment. The churches often shrink from what they call the “legalism” of too strong a commitment. And the world has all sorts of pleasures to keep us occupied – especially from sundown Friday until late into Sunday evening. We have the choice to resist these temptations and tell those who do not agree with us that the Sabbath is the Lord's, not theirs.

Jesus said:

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 15:18-19)

“In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

In a prayer to the Father, Jesus delineated between being *in* the world and being *of* the world:

“I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil.” (John 17:14-15)

Yes, it may mean ridicule and even persecution. It may mean loss of jobs and missing out on some “fun.” But Jesus said:

“If any man comes to Me and does not love less his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:26)

Imagine the spiritual strength that would enable the Body of Christ to resist evil if a substantial number of us determined to keep the Sabbath! Think of the spiritual power that could be ours if we would give one full day a week entirely to God! And not the day we choose, but the day He chose.

Do we love Him enough to do that? Each of us must answer this question for ourselves. I will say with Joshua:

Now therefore fear YHWH, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth. And put away the gods that your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, and you serve YHWH.

And if it seems bad to you to serve YHWH, you choose today whom you will serve, whether the gods that your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But as for me and my house, we will serve YHWH. (Joshua 24:14-15)

If we are to keep the Sabbath rest, on what day has God ordained for the Sabbath? Does it really matter?

When To Keep The Sabbath

In Genesis, chapter 1, each day of creation is defined as “the evening and the morning.” The Hebrew word for “evening” is *ereb* (eh’-reb), meaning “dusk,” the root of which is *arab* (aw-rab’), meaning to “grow dusky” at sundown.⁶¹

The Hebrew word for “morning” is *boqer* (bo’-ker), meaning “dawn” (as the break of day) or “morning,” and is rooted in *baqar* (baw’-kar), “to plough” or “break forth.”⁶²

The evening portion of the day preceded the morning or daylight portion. Each day thus began and ended at sunset rather than at midnight.

Leviticus 23:32 recognizes a Sabbath to be “from evening to evening.” The Jews, who were entrusted with the oracles of God, observed their days from sunset to sunset. This is God’s, not man’s, method of reckoning the day. Man changed the day to a midnight-to-midnight reckoning, probably as a convenience in accommodating his zodiacal observations.

Genesis 2:2-3 identifies God’s choice for the Sabbath rest:

And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.

Therefore, the Sabbath is the period of time after sundown at the end of the sixth day of the week until sundown at the end of the seventh day.

It has been argued that it doesn’t matter which day one keeps the Sabbath because we don’t know which day was originally the Sabbath anyway.

But God doesn’t neglect the details. Even though the Jewish nation has been partially blinded until the age of the Gentiles comes to an end, it has kept its calendar intact since ancient times. And from that day until this, the Sabbath has always begun at sundown coinciding with our Friday until sundown on our Saturday. It was the Roman Catholic Church that changed the calendar to suit the pagan Julian calendar, contrary to God’s timeline. The Roman Catholic Church also negated God’s laws and substituted its own laws. All was done in fulfillment of biblical prophecy:

And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws. (Daniel 7:25)

This relates to the Faith, not to the world. By changing times and laws, Daniel is speaking about changing God’s times and God’s laws, not the world’s times or laws.

While Daniel’s prophecy appears to relate specifically to an end-time anti-Christ who changes times and seasons, the original anti-Christ papacy committed that sin centuries ago. It is presumption to change what God instituted to what man prefers.

When God sanctifies someone or something, that person or thing is set apart for His purpose and pleasure. If He sanctified the seventh day, when did He desanctify it? When Christ came? Of course not. For Christ was always with God (John 1:1-3). The entire creation was by Christ’s hands as the living Word of God (John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:13-17). Therefore it was Christ Himself who, as the Lord of the Sabbath, sanctified the seventh day.

Christ’s coming meant a world of change to man. But to God it was one phase – albeit the most important – in His eternal plan of redemption. Christ came to die for the sins of mankind. The breaking of the Sabbath was one of those sins. He came so that men’s hearts can be changed and their lives sanctified. He did not come to desanctify the Sabbath; He did not come to change the Law, but to change us. Christ’s coming did not make the seventh day any less sanctified. On the contrary, as the major step in reconciling His creation to Himself, and as the Lord of the Sabbath, it is only natural that His sanctification of the seventh day would be of even greater importance.

Will the Body of Christ as a whole ever again observe the seventh-day Sabbath? Although most Christians probably won’t, many – those who understand the Sabbath as a blessing and not a burden – will.

Perhaps the major reason most will not recognize the seventh-day Sabbath is because to their flesh the Sabbath and all that it entails is a burden. The Sunday “Sabbath” is not so “demanding.” Yet, deep within each of us we know that time spent with God in obedience to His will leads to great spiritual blessings.

61 *Gesenius’ Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, LL.D., Trans. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980), see Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, 6153, 6150, p. 91.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 137;

This is not to say that believers cannot attend Sunday services. But there is no legitimate reason for not observing the Sabbath also. The issue isn't whether or not one should worship in congregation on Sunday. The issue is whether or not one should keep the Sabbath.

There is much more to the Sabbath than attending an assembly. In truth, going to assembly need not be part of keeping the Sabbath. Yet, as true believers are driven from the establishment churches in the last days, will they find refuge in gathering together on the Sabbath? Will this turn out to be a distinguishing characteristic between the government-sanctioned churches and the God-anointed assemblies? This is merely speculation, but it seems reasonable that in the hearts of God's people His ordained day will take precedence over the days instituted by men.

The choice is ours. Will we usurp God's time for our own pleasures, or will we utilize it for His? When the final testing comes tomorrow, will we fail because we lacked the desire to draw from His strength today?

The Sabbath — Conclusion

When I began my study on the Sabbath, it was merely a logical step in my investigation into the origins of Easter traditions. Because I believed that Sunday was the day that Jesus rose from the dead I was not predisposed toward a seventh-day Sabbath. My entire Christian experience had me convinced that the Sunday "Lord's Day" had replaced the Sabbath. In previous times I've suggested renaming Easter as "Resurrection Sunday." Through my research I learned I was wrong.

This report was originally scheduled for release by Easter of 1982. As I became aware of certain truths it was necessarily delayed due to the enormity of the study required. Realizing the extent of tradition in the churches regarding "the Lord's Day," I decided to seek the truth with as few outside influences as possible until I had first drawn my conclusions from Scripture and from an impartial analysis of history. Therefore, during my research I purposely avoided writings that were pro-Sabbath, choosing to search only Scripture and mainstream Christian sources for conclusive historical evidence that would support discarding the Sabbath for a Sunday "Lord's Day." No evidence aside from that based on Roman Catholic tradition was found. My writing was with fear and trepidation that I might mishandle God's Word; I also knew that I was opening myself to rejection and perhaps even ridicule.

The Sabbath question is one of the most difficult with which to deal because of the interference of centuries of traditions that cloud the issue. Those who hold to either the seventh-day Sabbath position or the Sunday position can be equally convincing in their arguments. Only after drawing my conclusions from as objective a study as I could manage, did I go to seventh-day Sabbath writings and look even deeper into pro-Sunday material.

Yet the only pro-seventh-day-Sabbath writings I have read even until today are a few pamphlets. (Surprisingly, I found that Seventh-day Adventists believe Jesus rose on a Sunday. But they also believe the Sabbath is still ineffect.) In order to put my conclusions to the severest test, I did not concentrate nearly as much on the arguments from the pro-seventh-day-Sabbath side as I did on the pro-Sunday side.

All of the pro-Sunday writings were based on the same faulty suppositions – that Sunday is "the Lord's Day" and that the four Gospels "prove" that Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday.

Of course, all were written after the Roman church had declared that Sunday should be observed in lieu of the seventh-day Sabbath. And as I've shown, the four Gospel narratives tell us nothing except the approximate time that the women came to the tomb, which was either late on the Sabbath or early the first day of the week. The Scriptures do not actually state when Jesus rose.

Finding no Scriptural or historical justification for substituting the Sunday "Lord's Day" for the seventh-day Sabbath, I've concluded that observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is still one of God's commandments. It is, therefore, the more proper time for the Body of Christ to gather in worship (while at the same time not ignoring opportunities to gather at other times as well).

I recognize, however, that God has blessed His people regardless of whether or not they have kept the seventh-day Sabbath. In truth, many in the assemblies that observe Sunday are more zealous for God than many that observe the seventh-day Sabbath. This is probably because many seventh-day churches have quenched the Holy Spirit by denying the reality of His power today. They have the Sabbath law right, but they are neglecting the fullness of the Spirit-filled life. At the other extreme are those Sunday-keeping churches that concentrate almost exclusively on spiritual experience but neglect or downplay the teaching of obedience to God's laws for fear they will appear unloving or legalistic. They often allow their experiences rather than God's Word to dictate their actions, and will accept anything that makes them feel good.

Both are examples of an unbalanced Christian life. But God is merciful. He is always ready to forgive us as we act on the knowledge that leads us to repentance.

Now, I urge readers not to take my word alone for anything written herein, but to go to the Scriptures themselves with prayer and an open, honest heart. Set aside your "traditional" notions that are not conclusively supported by Scripture. Reread this report along with the Scriptures cited, and any other Scriptures you find that are pertinent to this subject.

Should you study other writings on the matter, understand that much of what you will read has been influenced by certain human factors such as:

- **Theological Biases** based upon particular teachings of the religious institution in which the author has been raised or in which he places his trust;
- **Tradition** gleaned from years of unchallenged assumptions and based upon human reasoning;
- **Human Error** which is part and parcel of every human being regardless of scholastic achievement;
- **Intimidation** by others who, because of position or relationship, cause researchers to "overlook" or deal less than honestly with certain facts;
- **The Desire to Please Others** by conforming without question to their teachings;
- **Compromise or Rationalization** of ideology for any reason whatsoever;

- **Jealousy** for not having discovered the truth for oneself, especially if one is a clergyman with oversight of the one bringing this truth.

We must ask ourselves *why* we believe what we believe, and what is the foundation upon which we base our beliefs. In any case, our final authority must be the written Word of God. Only an honest analysis of the Scriptures can lead us to the truth.

Yet many will choose not to study God's Word on the matter, preferring instead to vehemently oppose the truth and the facts. Even many "fundamentalists" will close their hearts to God's laws, choosing instead their church's traditions.

Some will refuse to even consider whether the seventh-day Sabbath is valid. They'll scurry to their commentaries for evidence to prove that my research is faulty. This is fine and I'm still open to correction if anyone can prove conclusively from Scripture or from history that Jesus was crucified and buried on a Friday and rose on a Sunday.

Lacking that proof, they will make their case on the preponderance of published opinions from reputable theologians. Regardless of their findings, they'll cry "legalism!" and accuse me of being a "sabbatarian" (that derogatory term that associates all seventh-day Sabbath proponents with Jewish legalism). No doubt I will be suspected of being a Seventh-day Adventist, and bundled with that church's unscriptural teachings. But it is not my intention to put anyone under bondage. I merely wish to point out a more excellent way of serving God based upon love for His Law out of love for Him.

Nor do I wish to appear cynical. But history has proven that religious men consistently oppose God's truth. The reasons may vary; their love of money, their love of men's praise, or their fear of men's rebukes cause them to compromise their love for God and His truth.

Perhaps they lack faith; or they do not respect the messenger; or they fear having been proven wrong. For whatever reason they reject the truth, the truth remains that they do so.

Jesus told us that the sum of the Law and the prophets is love – love of God and love of man (Mark 12:29-31). If we love the Lord we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). And though the world or even religious leaders would have us follow them to spiritual destruction, God tells us to "come out from among them, and be separate, and do not touch the unclean thing, and I will receive you." (2 Corinthians 6:17).

There are no valid reasons to continue in our traditions if they conflict with God's Word. It is only for the sake of the comfort or convenience such traditions provide that many people will refuse to hear what the Lord is saying to them.

"Convenience" is the reason for many things. It's the reason Christians cling to pagan traditions. It's the reason the seventh-day Sabbath will not be observed. It's the reason the churches are as weak and ineffective as they are.

Some wonder why carnality is rampant in the churches – why there are few Christians who desire anything more than a Sunday pew-warming religion. It's because so many leaders in the churches perpetuate man's traditions at the expense of obedience to God's laws.

"Full well they reject the commandment of God so that they may keep their own tradition.. (Mark 7:9)

Traditions are acceptable, but only if they are not contrary to God's Word (Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:8-13; Colossians. 2:8; 2 Thessalonians. 2:15).

Effective service for God and a victorious spiritual life rests in our obedience to God's Word. And the one commandment that gives us the opportunity to draw strength from God to obey all the others is, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

SUMMARY

Throughout this study certain conclusions have been drawn which do not agree with accepted tradition or the opinions of most expositors on the Scriptures. These conclusions are:

- Jesus was not crucified on a Friday, but on a Wednesday;
- He rose from the dead on a Sabbath evening, not a Sunday morning;
- Because Jesus was resurrected on the Sabbath, there is no valid reason to celebrate Sunday as "the Lord's Day";
- There are no *conclusive* Scriptures that state otherwise;
- There is no *conclusive* historical evidence to prove otherwise;
- The Roman Catholic "Sun"-day has usurped the place of the Sabbath and was a compromise with the Roman pagans who worshipped the sun on that day;
- An early apostasy resulted in the Roman church imposing its blend of "Christian paganism" upon all the assemblies in the Roman Empire, influencing a large segment of Christianity to accept certain unscriptural assumptions regarding the Sabbath and "the Lord's Day";
- Despite the Reformation, Protestant sects carried these false assumptions with them into the present age;
- The Fourth Commandment – "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" – is still part of God's Law and applies to us today;
- This is not a new revelation, but has been held by many true believers in Jesus throughout history in spite of Rome's persecution.

Each of us must seek the Lord in this matter and see if we are willing to accept the truth and give Him His day of honor as He has commanded, and through which He desires to bless us.

God is the final judge of us all, and though we can judge the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:12; 1 Peter 4:17), we must be careful not to judge from a self-righteous position or from outward appearance. We must judge righteous judgment (John 7:24). Should we feel led to exhort another brother in this or any other matter, we should do so with patience, making sure of our doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2) and recognizing our own sinfulness.

Let us examine our own hearts and seek God's grace to conform to His will. Only then may we be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Thus we will fulfill the entire Law through the singular law of love (Matthew 2:36-40).

Finally, I urge readers not to accept without question what I have stated in this writing without carefully examining their own hearts and studying to confirm the truth. Only then will they with confidence be able to encourage others in the truth.

May the Lord bless you in your quest for His truth. ❖

EPILOGUE

The Resurrection is the most vital factor of our faith. If in Christ's death only we place our trust, He is no more than any man who ever walked the earth. Without Christ's resurrection we would be without hope (1 Cor. 15:12-19). Yet many Christians' understanding of His resurrection is fraught with misconceptions, pagan influences, and theological biases.

When I first began to research this report in the fall of 1981, I intended to produce a two-page analysis of Easter traditions which really have nothing to do with our Lord's resurrection. I fully expected to have this completed in time for Easter of 1982.

In the process of my research I discovered that all my life I had been holding erroneous concepts about our Savior's resurrection.

This was not a gentle awakening, but the truth is the truth, and there are times when we must admit to God, and to others, that we've been believing and practicing some wrong things.

As the Lord opened the Scriptures to me the two pages grew to four, then to eight, then to sixteen. Now you have in your hands the result of three years of part-time but intense research, and much writing and rewriting.

I did not set out to "prove" anything except that we believers in Jesus should take care in how we express our faith through traditions (in this case the pagan traditions of Easter). But the more I delved into Scripture and objective, factual history, the more I realized that we have been misinformed by some among the Christian "intelligentsia" who, for whatever reason, have neglected true scholarly investigation. They have learned from each other errors that continue to be propagated without questioning. This is not to say that scholars are dishonest or are not seeking the truth. But they have little time during their schooling to do any original research independent of the learning aids promoted by their religious educational establishment. As a consequence, the less schooled among us have accepted unquestioned theory under the guise of "theological expertise."

Even so, I felt it was vitally important to allow the Christian scholarly community the opportunity to critique my findings by whatever scriptural or historical evidence it could garner.

I first approached three professors of Greek language at three different theological seminaries. They responded to my phone calls positively and agreed to critique my first draft. Two of them (Dr. Dennis Hutchison of Talbot Theological Seminary, and Dr. David Clark of Southern California College) actually returned their copies with corrections and comments. I am grateful to them for taking time from their busy schedules to help, even though neither agreed with my conclusions.

Because of their disagreement I was motivated to research more thoroughly, not to prove my thesis, but to really reach the truth. Using only Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical research materials, I believe I have established the truth.

To be as objective as possible and to allow for the correction of any potential error, I printed a limited edition of this report and sent copies to over 800 professors at more than 100 Christian universities, colleges, and theological seminaries. These were of varied denominational persuasions including Roman Catholic. Believing as I do that there are many within the Christian educational community who are honest seekers of truth, I included on the cover of the report the following letter:

Dear Brother in Christ,

This limited printing of "Facts & Fallacies of the Resurrection" is being submitted to you, as well as to various ministers, theologians, biblical language experts, and church historians of various denominations, with the request that this writing be carefully analyzed for possible inaccuracies. It is also being sent to those patient saints who have requested this writing, some as long as two years ago.

I realize that much of what is presented herein is unconventional. That is why it is imperative that it be put to the severest test. If my poor attempt at scholarship appalls you, please bear with me. I have made use of the best sources of information I could muster.

Should you have any thoughts which may either affirm, weaken, or destroy any argument, may I impose upon you to submit them to me, making note of the page and paragraph to which they pertain? Feel free to mark this copy and return it to me if that is more convenient. I should stress, also, that I am concerned with those statements which are supported by the clear teaching of Scripture, or which are historically provable. Conjecture or tradition based upon human reasoning do not qualify for either support or dismissal of anything of value.

Realizing that this is a great imposition upon the busy schedules of those to whom I am making this request, I would be most grateful for any replies received. Your earliest possible response would also be appreciated.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request. May the Lord bless you in your service to Him.

In His Name,

Albert James Dager, Editor & Publisher

By March, 1985 (7 months later) I had yet to hear from any of them. Nor have I ever to the date of this latest printing heard from them. After waiting a considerable time I decided after much prayer that if none of these professors would take the time or be able to offer sufficient evidence to refute this work in time to have it ready before Easter, 1985, I would let it stand and issue it to those who support this ministry, or who specifically request it. This was done in spite of warnings that Media Spotlight would lose financial support if it were published.

I suggest you read this entire report at least twice. Theological biases tend to put up defenses against the truth, and while reading a particular portion one may be concentrating on an argument to refute a previous point, unaware that the present material answers that argument.

It's also important for the reader to keep in mind that, in dealing with hard facts, it is often unavoidable that people become offended. They may feel that their church has been unjustly attacked. But I am not attacking any church; I am attempting to offer truth where truth has been lacking. Whichever particular church - Roman Catholic, Protestant, or other - originates or propagates error is not so important to God. He's more concerned with whether or not we allow the Holy Spirit to awaken us to the truth and, once awakened, follow it. ❖