



"The most dangerous fault in American life today is the lack of interest in truth."

—Henry Luce

14-Apr-06

## *Bucking Tradition*

For most people, it is a difficult undertaking to buck tradition.

There is perhaps no clearer illustration of just how hard it is to throw off the habitual practices of our families and fellow countrymen than in our holiday celebrations. This is doubly true when speaking about religious holidays, such as [Easter](#) and [Christmas](#). As often and as forcefully as one might try to proclaim the truth about the paganism and inaccuracies inherent in Easter and Christmas, the words seem to fall on deaf ears. No one wants to have his treasured fantasies burst.

The attitude of many supposed Christians these days concerning these holidays is similar to what [God](#) saw in Israel during the ministry of Isaiah:

For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD; who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel." ([Isaiah 30:9-11](#), *English Standard Version*)

What is so difficult is that the truth sets up an uncomfortable proposition: Either we can

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ignore it and continue blithely in our deceitful, ungodly ways (risking, of course, God's condemnation), or we can accept it and change our lives to conform to it (endangering our relationships with family, friends, and society). It *seems* to be a no-win situation, each choice fraught with troubles. Most people, despite their purported status as believers, prefer to shrug off the inconvenient truth so as not to rock the boat in the here-and-now. They will worry about what God thinks about their decision later.

Yet, to a Christian, there should be no dithering about a choice like this. [Jesus](#) tells us in [Luke 12:4-5](#), "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into [hell](#); yes, I say to you, fear Him!"

When a real Christian is presented with truth, he embraces it out of reverence for God. As Christ also says, "He who is of God hears God's words" ([John 8:47](#)). He later said to His disciples, "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. . . He who does not love Me does not keep My words" ([John 14:21](#), 24). It is as simple as that.

Since today is Good Friday to most of the Christian world, perhaps we should consider one of these stubborn truths that exposes perhaps the most glaring inconsistency of the entire Easter scenario. Jesus Himself says in [Matthew 12:38-40](#):

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was [three days and three nights](#) in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

This is not a difficult concept. Jesus says quite plainly that He would be buried for three days and three nights, just as Jonah languished three days and three nights in the great fish's belly ([Jonah 1:17](#)). Jesus says elsewhere, "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" ([John 11:9](#)), and He obviously knew that nighttime also covered twelve hours. Since a full day is made up of twelve hours of day and twelve hours of night (see [Genesis 1:5](#), 8, 13, etc.), doing the simple math brings us to the unassailable conclusion that Jesus prophesied, as the only sign of His Messiahship, that He would be buried for 72 hours.

Now, try to cram 72 hours - three days and three nights - between about sundown on

Friday and sunrise on Sunday. Not even Superman could do it. In fact, it comes out to about half that time. Hmm.

So, let us consider this logically. If Jesus Himself said He would be in the grave for 72 hours, but He was actually "[in the heart of the earth](#)" only 36 hours, then Jesus was a liar, guilty of [sin](#), and His sacrifice to take the sins of [the world](#) upon Himself was useless. We have no Savior.

However, through the [resurrection from the dead](#), Jesus did live again and ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven. This means that He did not lie. He was in the grave for exactly three days and three nights, and then the Father returned Him to life in glory. He lives now as our High Priest and soon-coming King.

Thus, the Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition is a bald-faced lie. It is a chronological impossibility. Even the traditional Easter text of [John 20:1](#) says plainly that, when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb "while it was still dark" on that Sunday morning, the tomb was *already* empty. Easter sunrise services have no biblical basis - in fact, since Jesus was put into the tomb just about at sunset, He would have been resurrected at that same time (see [Matthew 27:57-60](#); [Mark 15:42-46](#); [Luke 23:50-54](#); [John 19:38-42](#)).

Will this truth change any minds? Has it changed yours?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### [Christ Our Passover](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

In this pre-Passover sermon, John Ritenbaugh compares God's flawless works to the imperfect works of mankind. In addition to being flawless, God's works have a multiplicity of purposes, while man's works have limited utility and many flaws. Like air, having multiple uses, God's Word also has many uses; any one scripture can be used in dozens of different applications. The closer one looks at the multifaceted aspects of Christ's offices (Creator, King, Redeemer, High Priest, Savior, etc.) the more we realize the preciousness of His life and the high cost of the sacrifice for our sins. The focus of our self-examination should not be self-centered or comparing ourselves with others, but on the awesome significance of His sacrifice.

## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### [Joseph of Arimathea](#)

by Mike Ford

Joseph of Arimathea has always been a shadowy figure among the well-known personages of the Bible. Mike Ford helps to dispel the shadows with this sketch of this disciple's life.

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