

"We do not err because truth is difficult to see. It is visible at a glance. We err because this is more comfortable."

—Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

11-Jul-14

Did Christ's Resurrection Change the Day of Worship? (Part Two)

As we saw in Part One, the seventh day of the week—the Sabbath—was set apart at creation as being blessed, sanctified, and holy. It was given to Israel prior to the Old Covenant, and confirmed within a separate perpetual covenant. It was observed by God's people throughout biblical history, and transgressed by the disobedient. [Jesus](#) kept the seventh-day [Sabbath](#), as did the apostles and early church after His death. Prophecies show that it will continue to be kept when He returns to establish His [Kingdom on earth](#).

In the face of the Bible's consistent teaching, though, Protestant theologians justify their breaking of the [fourth commandment](#) and their worship on the [first day of the week](#) by saying that they are honoring the day of Christ's resurrection. They offer this reason despite there being absolutely no indication that [God](#) intended such a change, nor is there any explanation from an apostle, prophet, or other messenger after the fact to reveal such a doctrinal deviation—one that would have lit an unthinkable doctrinal firestorm in the first century.

CGG Weekly: Did Christ's Resurrection Change the Day of Worship? (Part Two) (11-Jul-14)

Their inadequate reasoning contains more holes. While the day and time of Christ's resurrection are critical to our salvation, they are central for a different reason than the one given by the theologians. Notice Jesus' explanation 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*. [Emphasis ours.]

By Jesus' own testimony, the true significance of the day and time of His resurrection is that it proves that He was whom He claimed to be: the Son of Man, the Messiah. He gave only one sign that He was the Messiah: He would be in the grave three days and three nights (that is, 72 hours), and then God would resurrect Him. Therefore, the timing of His resurrection has *nothing* to do with establishing which day God set apart and made holy, and *everything* to do with whether He was and is the Messiah. The day and time of His resurrection either prove or disprove His Messiahship—in Christ's words, the [holiness](#) of the day is nowhere in view. Followers of Christ should be keen, then, on understanding how long He was in the grave and when He was resurrected, for if the Father did not resurrect Jesus when He foretold, we have no Savior.

Now we arrive at a poignant irony: The same theologians that justify Sunday-observance (on the basis of Christ's resurrection) also claim that He died on a Friday afternoon and was resurrected on a Sunday morning. If this is correct, then Jesus *did not* fulfill the sign of Jonah. Notice He did not foretell "parts of three days" or even just "three days" but "three days *and three nights*." It is simply not possible to fit three days and three nights between a Friday afternoon and a Sunday morning. These theologians have a couple of serious problems on their hands and heads, not only in justifying a change to Sunday, but also by invalidating the very sign Jesus gave to prove who He was!

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Reconciling the correct timing of Jesus's burial and resurrection takes some deeper study, but it is not difficult. We know that He was killed on the day of [Passover](#) and that His body was put into the grave before sunset (compare [Mark 15:42](#); [Luke 23:54](#); [John 19:14](#)). His burial needed to take place before sunset because that marked the end of the day of Passover (a preparation day) and the beginning of a Sabbath. That Sabbath was not a weekly Sabbath, though, but rather an annual one, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. John confirms this by recording that "that Sabbath was a high day" ([John 19:31](#)).

What this means is that there are *two* Sabbaths involved in the timing—an annual Sabbath of the first day of Unleavened Bread and a weekly Sabbath. Jesus suffered crucifixion on the preparation day for an annual Sabbath rather than the weekly Sabbath, thus He did not die on a Friday, as is commonly believed. In the year of His crucifixion, Passover was on a Wednesday. His body was put into the grave late Wednesday afternoon before the high-day Sabbath began. He was in the grave three days and three nights (Wednesday night through Saturday; 72 hours), and He arose on Sabbath afternoon before sunset.

As 'After Three Days' explains, Sabbath afternoon is the only time when Jesus could have been resurrected after being killed on Passover afternoon and lying in the grave three days and three nights. Yet, His resurrection on the Sabbath is not what makes it holy and set apart. Rather, He was resurrected by God on the day that was *already* holy and set apart. So, the day of Christ's resurrection does not establish the day of worship—yet, even if it did, it would still be on the seventh day!

Whether by assumed church authority or by carelessly handling the Word of God, Sunday-keeping is a tradition of men rather than an ordinance of God. Jesus says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" ([John 14:15](#)), including the ten He gave at Mount Sinai. The apostle John concurs: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" ([I John 5:2-3](#)). Yet, church leaders for centuries, like the Pharisees before them, have led millions into error by making "the commandment of God of no effect by [their] tradition" ([Matthew 15:6](#)).

Returning to our original question, Jesus' resurrection made no change in the day of worship; men took it upon themselves to change it without respect to God's Word. In the near future, however, when Christ returns, all who claim Him as King will once again hallow the Sabbath.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[The Fourth Commandment: Idolatry](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The Catholic Church readily admits to changing the Sabbath to Sunday, yet God has determined what and how we worship. The world's religions, in this context, can be considered an outright curse, because they have exchanged the truth of God for the lie. We cannot exchange anything God has given to us for something else, or it becomes idolatry. While the first three commandments focus on what, how, and the quality of our worship, the fourth commandment was provided for mankind as a means of unified instruction to initiate a spiritual creation. God Almighty, not man, created, sanctified and memorialized the seventh day Sabbath from the time of creation, intending that man use this holy time to worship God. The Sabbath is the very crown of the creation week, when God shifted from a physical to a spiritual mode of creation, a time when God commenced reproducing Himself. Mankind cannot make the Sabbath holy, but man can keep the Sabbath holy. If we want to be in God's presence, we must meet at the time God has appointed. The Sabbath must be kept in the manner God has prescribed in order for this day to be properly sanctified. God uses the Sabbath to educate His children in His ways. To use the Sabbath in any other way is an abomination to God. Sabbath breaking and idolatry go hand in hand; the best protection against idolatry is to keep God's Sabbath.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Fourth Commandment \(Part Two\): Christ's Attitude Toward the Sabbath](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Most are not aware that in the Gospels, questions about the Sabbath center on how to keep it, not whether it should be kept. John Ritenbaugh explains how Jesus approached the Sabbath as an example to us.

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