







MYTHS  
*about*  
*Jesus Christ*



## Three Myths *About Jesus Christ*

Do you know Jesus? That is the question many Christians will ask when attempting to engage an unbeliever in conversation. Referring to Jesus Christ on a first name basis indicates a certain level of intimacy with Him. Yet is that really true for the average believer in modern Christianity? How well does the Christian today know Jesus?

Suppose you met an individual in your life who has since died and whose name was Fred. Because Fred was an interesting person you have decided to dedicate yourself to studying his life in an attempt to better understand who he was. After years of study you have formed certain conclusions about Fred, namely when he was born, when he died and what he believed. All of which are basic facts that one would expect a person who speaks authoritatively about Fred to know. Unfortunately, however, you're proven wrong on all three counts. How well then did you know Fred?

Nobody who would make such errors could claim to know Fred very well. Strangely, millions of sincere Christians make the same mistake every year about the person they claim to know best, Jesus Christ. For some reason, while accepting the fact that Jesus Christ is real, most modern Christians choose to believe a number of myths about His life. It is a lapse in logic that goes to the heart of modern Christianity.

The truth is what separates facts from fables, and a serious Christian should desire to know the truth about his or her Savior. This booklet will examine three basic myths that many in Christianity either believe sincerely or have decided to accept as part of the story of Christ. Hopefully, this will help you to better understand who Jesus Christ really is.

---

## MYTH #1

*Christmas is a day for celebrating Christ's birth.*

---

If you were to close your eyes and imagine the perfect Christmas scene, would it involve two travel-weary people in a cave struggling to bring a new child into the world beneath a clear fall sky? Or would your picture bring on a winter scene that would fit into a Norman Rockwell painting with small children building snowmen, images of Santa Claus decorating yards and doorways, strings of various colored lights burning brightly, twinkling from neighborhood houses, and perhaps a manger scene prominently displayed with the child Jesus surrounded by Mary in her elegant robe, not a hair out of place, Joseph sitting calmly by, and three worshipping wise men. Jesus, who sacrificed Himself in the greatest expression of love toward mankind...isn't He the reason for the season after all...or is He?

So is there anything wrong with the Norman Rockwell version of the day of Christ's birth? Let's examine some of the details of the traditional Christmas scene and see where it all goes wrong.

Three Wise Men? Most Christians believe the typical manger scene is taken from the Bible. While the book of Luke, chapter 2, does describe the events surrounding Christ's birth, stating that, in fact, Joseph and Mary were visited by shepherds who saw Jesus lying in a manger, there is no mention of three wise men visiting them until the young family was residing in a house:

*“And when they were COME INTO THE HOUSE, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:11)*

The exact number of wise men isn't given, only that they bore three types of gifts proper for a king: gold, frankincense and myrrh. The exact date isn't given either, or the time of year when this visit took place.

Was the fateful day of Christ's birth in the winter -- December 25th -- as is so commonly believed? Scholars have taken clues from Luke 1:5 and Luke 1:24-45 together with Jewish sources such as the Mishnah and Talmud to approximate Christ's actual date of birth relative to the birth of His cousin, John the Baptist. As it happens, John's birth is estimated to have occurred in the spring of the year and Jesus, being about 6 months younger, is believed to have been born in the fall.

If Christ was most likely born in the fall and not winter, then why do Christians celebrate Christmas -- Christ's Mass -- on the 25th of December each year? Many people all over the globe who have no connection whatsoever to Christianity know the answer to this provocative question.

## The History Behind December 25th

December 25 has a very interesting history. It is a date that caused great anxiety for ancient people who associated it with the sun's ebbing to its lowest point in the sky. Appearing to stand still, the sun shone weakly on agrarian people who depended upon it for sustenance...to them, the sun was the great life-giver. Therefore, ancient people, full of superstition and lacking the knowledge of the true God, developed rituals to encourage the sun to come back to its full strength. These rituals dealt with the concepts of birth and resurrection, not of our Savior, but of the sun, the object and god they worshipped. The rituals themselves have been called by various names in various cultures; however, they always occurred at the time of our modern-day Christmas celebration -- the time of the winter solstice.

Winter solstice is a term we don't use much today. The term solstice is derived from the Latin words *sol* meaning sun, and *sistere* meaning to stand still. The sun's waning each December was of great importance to people in Egypt, Greece, Rome, China, and Mexico, as well as to many other cultures. Their pagan cultures had these things in common: they feared the weakening of the sun's strength, worshipped the creation instead of the Creator, and were pagan in practice, as well as belief.

Today, modern pagans calling themselves "Neo-pagans" are often the most knowledgeable when it comes to winter solstice rituals, calling their pagan celebration "Yule". They observe the festival close to its original form. Not surprisingly, they are only too happy to herald that Christmas is simply the winter solstice celebration of old, with blended customs and symbols from many pagan

cultures. Neo-pagans argue that Christians cleaned up the holiday by stamping Christ's name on it, but that it is simply a pagan holiday renamed. Both pagans and self-proclaimed Christians erect evergreen trees trimmed in tinsel and ornaments while attending prayer services and announcing the re-birth, or birth, of the sun, or Son.

The decorated evergreen tree is unarguably the most widespread, well-known symbol associated with Christmas: it has also been a central part of pagan worship for thousands of years. Back in the time of the prophet Jeremiah, people were already worshipping false deities, using decorated trees in their worship. The green tree, thought to have magical powers because it remained alive when other vegetation went into hibernation, was a symbol of hope for ancient people. Jeremiah 10:2-4 describes the fear associated with the winter solstice and God's admonition concerning this pagan practice:

*“Thus says the LORD: Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple.”*

Tree worship appears in every major ancient culture. The Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, Druids, and countless others decorated trees around the time of the winter solstice from approximately December 22nd thru the 25th of each year. Today, Europeans and Americans can be added to the list. If tree worship is pagan, it is not surprising to discover that other Christmas symbols such as the holly wreath, mistletoe, Yule log, Christmas lights, gift giving, and Santa Claus are

also pagan in origin, and are closely associated with the festival of the winter solstice.

The word pagan doesn't carry a lot of meaning for people living in our modern world. Some individuals, when confronted with the well-documented pagan roots of Christmas, say, "What does it matter? We use these symbols and customs now to worship God, not pagan idols and deities." Christmas has been so "christianized" by our culture that most people don't realize its pagan origins are a serious matter with God. So we ask: Is it really acceptable to take a tradition or symbol of pagan origin and seek to honor God with it? Read Deuteronomy 12:30-32:

*"Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods.... Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."*

These verses clearly show that God does not delight in the "christianizing" of pagan customs on His behalf. He looks upon these traditions and symbols with disgust, as a reminder of men's foolishness and disobedience to Him and of their base and evil behavior toward one-another.

## Does God Change?

The Bible says that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8): He does not change. His wrath

has always been kindled against people who turn from worshipping Him in the specific ways that He requires (see Leviticus 23 for a list of the festivals God has commanded) to adopting foreign practices and customs of the nations around them. Much of the Bible addresses God's anger toward individuals and nations who forfeit a relationship with Him for the empty and depraved practices of pagan worship. Even the Apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was vexed at how the people of Athens were completely given over to pagan idols (see Acts 17:16).

To follow God, a person must be willing to meet God's standard of worship. That standard is found in John 4:23 where true followers are described as worshipping God "in spirit and in truth." To worship God in truth means that each of us must be willing to see things from God's point of view -- for what they truly are -- not from what we have been conditioned by society or our families to believe. Truth touches every subject, every area of life, even customs that are deeply entrenched in our culture -- customs most people might consider normal for the times in which we live. Idol worship, however, has always been "normal" for the people of this world, other than God's called-out people; but God has never condoned such worship. In fact, He always required His people to come out of and away from the sinful practices of those around them. (Deuteronomy 4:19; 1 Corinthians 10:20-22; Romans 1:25)

The Christmas holiday is one of the easiest modern-day festivals to trace back to its pagan origins. It becomes a mystery, then, why Bible-believing Christians participate in it.

The truth is, Christians of the New Testament did not participate in the celebration of Christ's birthday at any time of the year. They memorialized his death and resurrection instead. It is no secret that the Christian church was not quick to adopt Christmas. The Catholic Encyclopedia explains: "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church.....the first evidence of the feast is from Egypt." In England, Oliver Cromwell preached against "the heathen traditions" of Christmas carols and decorated trees. The English Parliament abolished Christmas in 1644 calling traditional holiday foods like plum pudding and mincemeat pie heathen, and compelled shops to be open on Christmas day. Throughout the first two centuries of American history, the Puritans and their descendants forbade Christmas. They condemned many Christmas customs such as the use of Yule logs, mistletoe, and holly; and at one time fined people for participating in Christmas rituals. It wasn't until the early nineteenth century that the celebration of Christmas gained some acceptance in American culture. Today, Christmas is widely celebrated in America; yet it took approximately fourteen centuries -- from about 375 to 1820 A.D. -- to gain near-universal acceptance.

Today, the emphasis in Christmas celebration appears to have passed from religion to commercialism involving Christmas gift-giving, holiday special events, movies and the like. Many retailers base the success of their financial year on how Christmas shopping goes. There is a movement, however, to "put Christ back in Christmas." The question is: How can we put Christ back into something He never had a part in? Jesus appears NOT to be the "reason for the season" after all.

---

## MYTH #2

*Christ came to do away with God's Law.*

---

Many Christians today believe that the Ten Commandments were done away with, and literally “nailed to the cross” along with the beaten and wounded body of Jesus Christ. This idea is one that is persuasive to those who see the Bible as divided between a mean, harsh and disciplinarian God of the Old Testament, and a loving, kind and soft Jesus Christ of the New Testament. Is this characterization true? Is the Bible a story of two Gods who treat mankind differently?

The truth is that at the outset of the narrative about Jesus Christ we are told the following, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) The love for humanity is at the heart of the Bible’s explanation of who God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ are. Where error enters into the picture is when Christians today misunderstand what true godly love is, and the relevance of the Ten Commandments in a modern Christian’s expression of that love for God. Christians today need to understand the relationship between the law and love.

Furthermore, we must also look to the example of Christ Himself in order to understand how the principle of love and the keeping of the commandments intertwine. Would Christ spend his entire life upholding principles He did not believe were worthy, or which he wanted to destroy? An examination of Christ's life shows that He himself understood the importance of keeping the Law of God, and that He intended for us to keep it as well.

## Are The Concepts Of Love And Law Opposites?

The Ten Commandments were one of the first gifts God gave to the nation of Israel when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. After Israel had left Egypt, they gathered together at Mount Sinai to assemble before God. It was at this time that God offered them the opportunity to become His nation by their entering into a covenant with Him (Exodus 19:5-8). The covenant was simple: God would bless and separate Israel out from among the other nations as His Holy Nation, as his beloved people, if they would obey Him. Once that covenant was accepted by Israel, God gave to them a set of laws that were to govern this relationship that included the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-18).

The Ten Commandments included among other things a command to observe a day of rest and worship that was to be dedicated to God. This day of rest was known as the Sabbath and is established by the Fourth Commandment. The observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, however, actually predated the event at Sinai, as is clearly stated in the second chapter of Genesis wherein God rested on the seventh day of the creation week, both blessing and sanctifying it (Genesis 2:2). Sanctify means to set something apart for holy use.

Why then did God decide to include the Ten Commandments in his covenant with Israel? The answer is that God was calling out a special people to establish a nation that would maintain a close relationship with Him (Exodus 19:5). In order to do this, He gave them a set of laws that would govern their relationship. By following His law, their lives both as a nation and as individuals would follow a moral, righteous path that would enable Him to bless them and show His love toward them. The nation of Israel was to be a model for the rest of the world to follow, and had they fulfilled their part of the covenant, the other nations of the world would have come to know their God as well.

Today, just as in ancient times, when God enters into a relationship with human beings, it is His law that governs that relationship, teaching us how we are to behave in relationship to Him and to one-another. If we love God, we must demonstrate that love toward Him in His, not our, prescribed manner. True love, therefore, is more than a show of mere emotion; it is a way of conducting oneself vis-à-vis another person and toward God. This is why the apostle Paul when writing to the church in Rome explained that in keeping the Ten Commandments they were in fact exercising true godly love (Romans 13:8-10):

*Romans 13:8-10: 8 Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law. ASV*

From this scripture we can extrapolate that to behave

in the opposite manner, that is to break the law, would mean failure to act in a loving way toward each other and toward God. The Bible tells us that lawlessness, in fact, leads to coldness or hardheartedness in society and in one's relationship with God: "and because lawlessness will abound the love of many will grow cold" (Mathew 24:30).

God has defined His loving relationship with His people from the very beginning in terms of obedience to His law (Deuteronomy 5: 9-10, 1 John 5:1-2). Love and the law are interlinked, and cannot be separated.

## Did Christ Do Away With The Law Including The Sabbath Day?

Would it surprise you to know that as late as the writing of the Book of Revelation (around the year 95 A.D.) the New Testament Church (both Jewish and Gentile congregations) were observing the Law, that is the civil code of laws set forth from Mount Sinai? Perhaps the most distinct of the Ten Commandments in terms of outward observance is the fourth commandment: "Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy as the Lord your God commanded you." (Deuteronomy 5:12, Exodus 20:8). If one is a believer in this commandment, and follows it, then it is an outward sign that this person keeps the Law of God.

We know that Jesus Christ was a Sabbath keeper based upon the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Yet some believe He minimized the Sabbath commandment because he healed people on the Sabbath. Others believe Christ changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. There is also

the belief that Christ willfully broke the fourth commandment to let the Jews know that the Sabbath command and the Law in general was now abolished. What did Jesus believe about the seventh day Sabbath and in turn the Law?

## Christ's Custom

By a person's actions you can discern what he or she believes. If we want to understand Jesus' teaching on the Law and the Sabbath question, we need to examine His actions. One of Christ's earliest sermons confirms that He kept the Sabbath. Notice what Jesus' CUSTOM was as stated in Luke 4:14-16:

*“Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out throughout all the surrounding region. And he taught in their synagogues being glorified by all. So he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. AND AS HIS CUSTOM WAS, He went into the synagogue on the SABBATH DAY, and stood up to read.*

What was the first action Jesus took publicly after his temptation by Satan and his 40-day fast that followed? He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day “AS HIS CUSTOM WAS...” Keeping the Sabbath Holy -- going to the synagogue on that day -- was the habit (CUSTOM) of Christ. All his life He kept the Sabbath day on the seventh day of the week (our Saturday). He never once kept the weekly Sabbath on Sunday—not once! It was on the Sabbath day that He said Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled as He began His public ministry (Luke 4:17-19).

If changing the Sabbath to Sunday was on Jesus' agenda, He would have certainly prepared the disciples for such a change. Such a drastic alteration of one of the Ten Commandments would have taken a lot of explanation on the part of Jesus. Isn't it reasonable to conclude that if Christ changed the Sabbath from Saturday -- the seventh day of the week, to Sunday -- the first day of the week, that He would have had many discussions with his disciples concerning such a major change?

But the Bible is totally silent on this matter. Why? It may surprise you to know that this change simply never took place. Had Christ made the announcement that the Sabbath was now to be kept on Sunday the Jewish community would have viciously attacked him, and we would have an ample number of scriptures to turn to that would show us this change took place under Christ's direction. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John would have recorded the disciples' reaction to this amendment to the law of God, because it was the Law of God that defined the Jewish nation. The silence of the scriptures on this matter is overwhelming—Christ did not change the Sabbath day to Sunday.

## Did Christ Abolish The Law?

Many sincere Sunday keepers believe Christ actually nailed the seventh-day Sabbath along with all the other commandments to the cross, thus abolishing the need to observe the Sabbath. On the contrary, Jesus Himself clearly stated that He did not come to abolish the Law. Christ actually came to magnify and bring out the spiritual

meaning of the commandments of God. Jesus' own words were: *“Do not think that I have I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law...”* (Matthew 5:17-18).

The Greek word translated fulfill (pleroo) means to fill to the full such as filling up a glass to the very top with water. It means to make totally complete. Christ came to show the full meaning of the law so we would not only live by the letter of the law, but would strive to live by the spirit of the law. There are those who seek to twist this scripture by saying that since Christ came there is no longer a need to live by the law of God since He fulfills the law for us. But this cannot be the explanation of this passage, because the rest of the chapter (Matthew 5) gives us example after example of how we are to live by not only the letter but the spirit of the law. For example a man must not only refrain from committing physical adultery, he must also control his mind so as not to look upon a women with lust in his heart (verse 27-28). Isaiah prophesied Christ would come to magnify the law and make it honorable (Isaiah 42:21) not to minimize it.

## Keeping The Law Is A Moral Issue

Many professing Christians fall for another poisonous argument that the law of God was merely a ritualistic law that was done away with at the cross; but this line of thinking is blatantly wrong. It is true that continuing in the ceremonial law of sacrifices was no longer necessary after Christ's death, since Christ's ultimate sacrifice did away with the need for animal sacrifices that pointed to him. Yet, Christ never said that when He died, the civil Law would

end. Understanding that the law of sacrifices was separate from the civil law is important in avoiding the confusion as to what was “done away with.”

Breaking God’s civil Law involves far more than breaking physical rules. The Commandments are spiritual in intent and purpose, and are not a ceremonial law that could be cast aside as being no longer necessary. They not only define right from wrong, they also teach humans the need to express honor toward God. Honoring or not honoring the Creator of the whole universe by obeying his moral law is a serious moral decision.

We would never think of missing an important anniversary date, ignoring a loved father on Father’s day, or missing an important social function. But many people ignore God when He tells them to obey His laws. For example, God considers violating the Sabbath command a blatant action of dishonor. Turn to Isaiah 58:13-14. How does God tell us to honor Him? This passage makes it plain:

*“If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord HONORABLE; if you HONOR it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”*

If you have been told that the Sabbath is not part of the “Moral law” think again! Morality concerns itself with

behavior. Practicing honor toward your Creator is a moral act. We learn to honor God on the seventh day of every week by ceasing from our physical labors, and spending time studying His word, going to Church and fellowshiping with those whom God has called (Hebrews 10:25). Ignoring the Sabbath command is tantamount to saying to God, “I choose not to respect and revere You!”

Let’s not underestimate the weight of God’s Law in the lives of Jesus and the disciples—Christ said they were to live by EVERY word of God (Matthew 4:4). Since the New Testament did not exist at the time He said this, it is obvious He was referring to the Old Testament scriptures. Doing away with God’s Law, then, would be tantamount to worshipping a different God, and thus tampering with the scriptures Christ was referring to. It is also important to remember that the Commandments came from the mouth of God, not from the mouth of men (See Exodus 20). And it is also important to understand that Christ actually was the one who gave the Ten Commandments to ancient Israel, for he was the spiritual Rock that sustained the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:4).

## Breaking Just One Law Brought On National Captivity

Jesus and the disciples understood that the Sabbath command was essential to worshipping the TRUE God. He and the disciples were well aware of Israel’s history. In Israel’s past the pagan nations surrounding Israel worshipped various gods such as Baal, Chemosh, Ashtoreth and Molech. In time the Israelites contaminated themselves with the worship

of these very same gods and violating God's Holy Sabbath. Ignoring the holiness of the Sabbath was considered to be no small offense to God. Israel's breaking of His Holy Sabbath so angered God that He thrust that Israel and Judah into national captivity. We read of God's fury and punishment of His people in Ezekiel 20:12-13, 18-20:

*“Moreover I gave them my sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, so that they might know that I the Lord sanctify them. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not observe my statutes but rejected my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live; and my sabbaths they greatly profaned.*

*I said to their children in the wilderness, Do not follow the statutes of your parents, nor observe their ordinances, nor defile yourselves with their idols. I the Lord am your God; follow my statutes, and be careful to observe my ordinances, and hallow my sabbaths that they may be a sign between me and you, so that you may know that I the Lord am your God. But the children rebelled against me; they did not follow my statutes, and were not careful to observe my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live; they profaned my sabbaths”.*

The Bible tells us God loves His creation, which means the whole of humanity. He has given us His Law so that we may learn righteous conduct, and learn to live in a loving and harmonious relationship with Him and our fellow man. It is an absolute, undeniable fact that if the world was governed by the Law of God today, we would live in a world free of evil! To deny the importance of the Law in a Christian's life is to misunderstand godly Love and the example of Christ Himself.

---

## MYTH #3

*Christ died on Good Friday and was  
resurrected on Sunday (Easter) morning.*

---

On one of the many occasions when Jesus was challenged by Scribes and Pharisees, He was asked to offer them proof of His Messiahship: they wanted him to show them a miraculous sign. Answering His critics, Jesus first chastised them, pointing out they were part of “an evil and adulterous generation” that required signs; and then He turned to them and said:

*“...no sign will be given to it (the present generation) except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so too will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth.”  
(Matthew 12:39-40)*

This was the sign Christ was willing to give the recalcitrant Pharisees: the sign involving His death, which they were seeking, and His resurrection -- something they would later deny. It was the true sign He was the Messiah, their Savior.

The miraculous healings they had already witnessed could be reasoned away, but His resurrection from the dead after three days and three nights in the tomb? Never! This was ultimately the proof Christ offered to those who doubted Him, and it was the evidence countless generations of Christians would point to as proof of His divinity. This was the sign Christ staked His Messiahship on.

Given the importance of the miracle of His resurrection, Christ prophesied using a precise timetable showing when He would rise from the dead. Strange as it may seem, however, modern Christianity commemorates this event on a day when it could not have happened, Easter SUNDAY! In their ignorance, Christians deny the very sign He gave them as evidence that He is their Messiah. They do not understand Christ could not have been resurrected on their popular holiday.

## How Long Was Christ In The Tomb?

No human witnessed Christ's resurrection. The only record we have of it is the one contained in the Bible. Thus, the answer to when Christ was resurrected must come from inspired scripture, otherwise we are simply speculating. A close look at Jonah's internment in the belly of the great fish should give us the answer.

Most would agree that the three days and three nights Jonah spent in the fish's belly constitute a period of seventy-two hours. The day-time period is generally understood to mean a twelve hour period of light, as confirmed by Christ in John 11:9-10:

9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." NKJV

If we accept that Christ was working from the principle of a day being twelve hours, and a night being twelve hours, then three days and three nights constitute a seventy-two hour period.

If one needs to find further evidence to this point, the account of Genesis 1:4-13 provides it. Here we see again, that God divided the day into two halves:

*"[God] divided the light from darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening [darkness] and the morning [light] were the first day .... And the evening [darkness] and the morning [light] were the second day .... And the evening [now three periods of darkness called night--three nights] and the morning [now three periods of light called day -- three days] were the third day" (Gen. 1:4-13)*

From this, one can see that three full days are equal to three night (darkness) periods and three (light) periods, constituting a full seventy-two hours.

It may seem a bit trivial to spend so much time defining a day and a night; nevertheless, proponents of an Easter resurrection have based the accuracy of their timeline on numerous and "innovative" ways of counting. The truth is, the three days and three nights Christ gave as evidence of His Messiahship are exactly what any rational person would believe them to be, a period of seventy-two hours.

## Good Friday To Easter Sunday

Since Christ was to be in the grave for seventy-two hours, it becomes immediately apparent that the Good Friday to Easter Sunday timeline celebrated by most Christians today is flawed. If Christ was killed in the afternoon of “Good Friday” as most Christians believe, there is no way he could have risen on the morning of Easter Sunday. It is impossible to squeeze seventy-two hours into that scenario when it was stated as:

“And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and AFTER three days rise again.” (Mark 8:16)

Any way you count it, Sunday morning cannot be three full days from Friday afternoon, unless you want to redefine a day and a night as “parts of three days and three nights”, which does not square at all with Christ’s clear teaching. However, this is the explanation and justification for celebrating Christ’s resurrection on Easter Sunday morning given by most theologians today.

## When Was Christ Crucified?

In order to get this whole matter straightened out, it is perhaps best to begin first by determining when Christ was crucified. Scripture tells us that the crucifixion took place on the day referred to as “the preparation” day. According to Jewish practice this was the day preceding a “Sabbath”

(Matt. 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54). The Bible tells us that a day is counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32, Genesis 1:19), not from midnight to midnight as is common today.

The Bible tells us that Jesus cried out from the stake soon after “the ninth hour”. This would be three o’clock in the afternoon by modern reference. Christ was crucified on the “preparation day” before the ensuing High Sabbath that began the festival of Unleavened Bread (Matt. 27:46-50; Mark 15:34-37; Luke 23:44-46), which immediately followed the day of the Passover. By Jewish tradition, all criminals had to be taken down from the stake before the festival began, before the sun set signaling the High Day had begun (Matt. 27:57; Luke 23:52-54; John 19:42). We read in the book of John: “There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews’ preparation day for the sepulcher was nigh at hand”. According to the laws observed by the Jews, all dead bodies had to be buried before the beginning of a Sabbath or festival High Day. Hence Jesus was buried before sunset on the same day He died. It is clear that Christ’s body was buried in the late afternoon sometime between 3 p.m. and sunset on the preparation day preceding the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as these scriptures clearly indicate.

Many who know very little about “Judaism” are confused by the reference to a “preparation day”, believing it refers only to Friday when Jews traditionally prepare for the weekly Sabbath observance. Lacking knowledge of the Passover Feast of Unleavened Bread festival period, they do not make distinction between the “preparation day” of the weekly Sabbath and the preparation day, which precedes a Holy Day or a High Sabbath. It is important to understand the

Bible makes reference to two types of Sabbaths. The first is a weekly Sabbath, and the second is a Holy Day Sabbath or “High Sabbath” which occur annually and can fall on any day of the week in connection with the Festivals outlined in Leviticus 23 (See Leviticus 16:31; 23:24, 26-32,39).

The book of John gives us a clear reference to what kind of Sabbath followed the day of Christ’s crucifixion, “Now it was the Preparation day of the Passover (The whole period from Passover through the Festival of Unleavened Bread was referred to as the Passover, but the High Days occur at the beginning and the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread)...” (John 19:14 NKJ). It was the preparation day before a High Day, not the weekly Sabbath. Thus the crucifixion did not necessarily take place on a Friday.

---

*A brief review of the sequence of events concerning the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ:*

**TUESDAY:** Jesus washes the disciples feet (John 13:1-17) and incorporates the New Covenant symbols of the bread and wine (Matthew 26:26-28). Christ is betrayed that evening by Judas, arrested, and brought to the home of the High Priest (Luke 22:54).

**WEDNESDAY:** Christ is then crucified and finally dies at around 3 pm (Matthew 27:46-50). This was the preparation day for the 1st day of Unleavened Bread (not a weekly Sabbath day-- Leviticus 23:6-7), This approaching Sabbath, which fell on a Thursday of that week, was a ‘high’ Sabbath day or annual Sabbath (John 19:31). Jesus’ body was taken by Joseph of Arimathea and then placed in the tomb just before sunset on this day (Mark 15:42-46).

**THURSDAY:** This was the 1st day of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-7), a high Sabbath day (John 19:31) not to be confused with the weekly Sabbath (Saturday). The disciples did not visit the tomb on this Holy Day.

**FRIDAY:** The 1st day of unleavened bread had ended (Thursday); the women now bought spices in the market for anointing Jesus' body before resting on the weekly Sabbath day (Saturday), which began at sunset (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56).

**SATURDAY:** The women rested on the weekly Sabbath (Luke 23:56). Jesus rose near the time of sunset on Saturday, exactly three days and three nights (72 hours) after his burial--just as he said he would (Matthew 12:40).

**SUNDAY:** He did not rise on Sunday morning, but at around sunset on Saturday evening. The women brought the spices early on Sunday morning (first day of the week), while it was still dark (Luke 24:1; John 20:1). Jesus had already risen for some hours (Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:2-6; Luke 24:2-3;) by the time they arrived early in the morning.

---

## Putting The Story Together

What we do know is that Christ was crucified in the late afternoon and buried before the evening began. We also know that Christ had to be in the tomb for seventy-two hours, which is to say, three days and three nights; and thus He must have been resurrected immediately at the end of the seventy-two hours, which would have been in the late afternoon, before sunset. Finally, we know that the day He died was the day of preparation for the annual "High Day" which could have fallen on any day of the week.

If we carefully use these facts, we can clearly understand when Christ was crucified.

The first people to visit Christ's tomb and report He was resurrected were some of the women disciples including Mary Magdalene who showed up early on the FIRST day of the week, which according to the Jewish calendar would be Sunday (John 20:1). When Mary and the other women arrived, they saw a tomb that had already been opened (Mark 16:2-4). Many Christians today read into this account the false premise that this meant Christ was resurrected Sunday morning, but in fact that is impossible. For Christ to have been resurrected on Sunday, he would have had to rise in the late afternoon in order to complete the seventy-two hour time cycle (Remember, since he was buried just before sunset, he would have to rise at the same time seventy-two hours later). John 20:1 only tells us that by Sunday morning he had already risen:

*John 20:1: Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. NKJV*

What Mary Magdalene and the others found was a tomb that was already empty. Since we know Christ had to be resurrected before sunset (72 hours after He was buried), it is clear that the end of the seventy-two hour period came BEFORE Sunday even began, before the sun set on the preceding Sabbath day. This means He rose late Saturday which fulfilled perfectly the sign He gave the recalcitrant Pharisees: the sign of Jonah's literal three days and three nights in the belly of the fish!

## What Day Of The Week Did The Crucifixion Fall On?

In order to discover the actual day of the week Christ was crucified on, we must count back seventy-two hours from just before the sunset ending the Saturday Sabbath observance. Counting backward we come to Wednesday just before sunset! This means that Christ died on a Wednesday afternoon, the preparation day for that year's High Sabbath that began the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He was placed in the tomb just before the sun set.

There are numerous other biblical scriptures, even prophetic points, that support this time-line. However, many will wonder why it matters at all. The short answer to this is that the true timeline of Christ's death shows that the celebration of Good Friday and Easter Sunday do not have any basis in historical fact, and are in no way connected to Christ's true sacrifice. Moreover, understanding the truth regarding Christ's resurrection reassures us that His proof of His being the Messiah was true. Christ does not require us to understand complex mathematical formulas or reason around the obvious in order for us to prove who He was. In fact, all we have to do is read the four separate accounts that tell us when and how it happened (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), count three days and three nights, and understand the resurrection occurred when and how Christ told us it would.

We have presented three myths about Jesus Christ that are commonly misunderstood by Christians today. But they are only the tip of the iceberg. Many who have read this booklet will go on to ask questions like, If Christ was not resurrected on Sunday morning, then why do we celebrate Easter? There is much more about Christ and the Bible that needs to be revealed if we are to live lives pleasing to Christ and His Father. Here are just a few publications we suggest you order to follow up on what you have read in this booklet. They are:

### **God's Holy Sabbath**

#### **Should a Christian Celebrate Easter**

#### **Bible Study series on God's Holy Days**

You may order your literature by visiting our website at:  
**Wonderfulworldtomorrow.org**

Or call us using our toll free number—**1-877-449-6753**.

This booklet is offered as a free,  
educational service by

The Church of God - eim  
P.O. Box 3332  
Modesto, CA 95353

Visit us on the Worldwide Web  
at [wonderfulworldtomorrow.org](http://wonderfulworldtomorrow.org)

Book Design:  
Roy Ellis Design, Inc.

(2007)