



April 1, 2022

Christ Was Resurrected When?

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that your week has been blessed.

We'll soon be observing the Days of Unleavened Bread. I pray you are continuing in the process of examining where you are in your relationship with God and will be enjoying removing sin from your lives. May it be inspiring and encouraging, as well as reflective for us all.

Just prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread, we'll observe the annual Passover ceremony, then the Night to Be Much Observed, which actually begins at sunset the First Day of Unleavened Bread. What a privilege and honor to be called to understand the plan of God to add to His family. What a rare privilege to understand the importance of celebrating the appointed times of the Eternal and especially the New Covenant Passover. What a gift from our heavenly Father who reveals the understanding and the symbolism and meaning of this important ceremony. May you be blessed with deeper understanding and appreciation of this celebration as we come together to observe the Passover on Thursday evening, April 14.

Every year when the spring Holy Days arrive, I can't help but reflect back on my wife and my multiple pastoral visits to those we pastored in Colombia. During one trip to Cúcuta, most stores and regular work places were closed. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday are very "Holy" days there! "Easter Sunday" for them is on a Sunday, supposedly the day Christ was resurrected.

As I think about those visits, I'd like to continue to examine the events that took place during the week in which Jesus was crucified. We discussed the "two Sabbaths" last time.

A vital text proving that there were two Sabbaths during that week is revealed in Matthew 28:1 "*Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.*" That there were two Sabbaths in that week has been obscured by almost every translation into English including the NKJV above. Only Ferrar Fenton's version has this point correct. Fenton renders it correctly by saying, "After the SABBATHS. . ." In a footnote to this text, he says, "The Greek original is in the plural, 'Sabbaths.'" You may consult an interlinear to verify this. So, there was the First Day of Unleavened Bread (a high Sabbath or Holy Day) *and* the regular weekly Sabbath.

But, when did the two Marys come to the tomb?

Did they come at sunset at the beginning of the first day or in early morning of the first day?

The Greek word translated "dawn" is #2020 *epiphosko* and the Online Bible Greek Lexicon says it means "to grow light, to dawn." Just as there is a period of twilight following sunset there is a period of twilight that precedes the actual sunrise. These two times of the day are my favorite times to sit on my back porch and relax a bit.

John's gospel sheds further light on the time of day when Mary came to the tomb. "*Now on 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.*" (John 20:1) It appears that Mary Magdalene came earlier than the other Mary. It was still dark and the actual sunrise had not yet taken place. Returning to Matthew 28 we find that an angel rolled the stone away from the entrance of the tomb. It is not clear if the two Marys were there when that happened or arrived soon after. They were informed by the angel "that Jesus was not there and had risen and were invited to see where the body of Jesus had lain".

So, Jesus had been resurrected and had left the tomb *before* sunrise of the morning of the first day of the week. A fair question would be, when was He resurrected then?

We must go back to the statement of Jesus when asked about giving a sign. "*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.*" (Matthew 12:40) Jesus also stated "*that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.*" (Matthew 16:21) Putting the pieces together that are congruous with scripture, Jesus was killed on a Wednesday. Three days later would be a Saturday, (the Sabbath). Since Jesus was placed in the tomb (the heart of the earth) just before sunset on Wednesday, three nights and three days would end just before sunset *late Saturday*.

Jesus then was resurrected late Saturday afternoon, just before sunset. He had to be resurrected some time during the daylight portion of Saturday, (the Sabbath), to fulfill all the requirements He Himself laid down! He was not resurrected Sunday morning at sunrise. We simply can't make that fit with scripture.

The stone blocking the entrance to the tomb was removed before sunrise Sunday morning while it was still dark. The entrance to the tomb was made open so the women and later the disciples could observe that it was empty. Jesus did not need to have the tomb opened. His physical body disappeared as he was resurrected to have a spirit body, not bound by physical limitations. Jesus was *already resurrected* by Sunday morning.

The truth is, there was no "Easter Sunday" sunrise resurrection! The rationale for celebrating Sunday then crumbles and one must accept that the day of worship of the true God continues to be the seventh day Sabbath.

Okay, you might ask then, when did the celebration of Sunday become so widely established in the Christian world? The late Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi earned his doctorate in Church History at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and he wrote his dissertation "From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity."

"The Church of the capital of the empire, whose authority was already felt far and wide in the second century, appears to be the most likely birthplace of Sunday

observance," he writes. Bacchiocchi stated "Anti-Judaism caused the abandonment of the Sabbath, and pagan sun worship influenced the adoption of Sunday. Evidence of anti-Judaism is found in the writings of Christian leaders such as Ignatius, Barnabas and Justin in the second century and they participated in the process of separation from Judaism which led the majority of the Christians to abandon the Sabbath and adopt Sunday as the new day of worship."

He also explained that "the influence of pagan sun worship provides a "plausible explanation for the Christian choice of Sunday" over the day of Saturn. Its effect wasn't just limited to Sunday. It apparently led to the placement of Jesus' birth in late December. The adoption of the 25th of December for the celebration of Christmas is perhaps the most explicit example of sun worship's influence on the Christian liturgical calendar," Bacchiocchi writes. "It is a known fact that the pagan feast of the Dies Natalis Solis Invicti - the birthday of the Invincible Sun, was held on that date."

One of the Roman names for this "Invincible Sun" god in the days of the apostles was Mithra. There are striking similarities between the ancient worship of Mithra and today's Christianity. Mithraism's sacred day of Sunday was said to be called "the Lord's Day." Donald Morse, a retired professor at Temple University, wrote a 1999 essay comparing the tenets of Mithraism to modern Christianity, explaining Mithra was worshipped on Sunday; was born of a virgin known as the "mother of God" on Dec. 25; was part of a holy trinity; and had a "Last Supper" with his 12 followers before his death and resurrection at Easter time near the spring equinox. Mithraists were also taught they had immortal souls that went to a celestial heaven or an infernal hell at death.

Sunday observance received a historic boost when Constantine – (himself a pagan who is said to have adopted Christianity at least nominally) - established Sunday as the first day of the week in the Roman calendar and issued a mandatory order prohibiting work on that day, in honor of the sun god.

On March 7, 321, he decreed, "On the venerable Day of the Sun, let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed." Farmers were given an exception. At the Council of Laodicea in 363, the Church of

Rome declared: "Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord's Day [Sunday]; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ."

I know this may be a lot to digest, especially if it's the first time you've looked closely at what many professing "Christians" carefully adhere to. May it be helpful in your walk and desire to worship Him in spirit and truth.

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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