

# *The Resurrection Was Not On Sunday!*

Authored by  
The Eternal Church of God

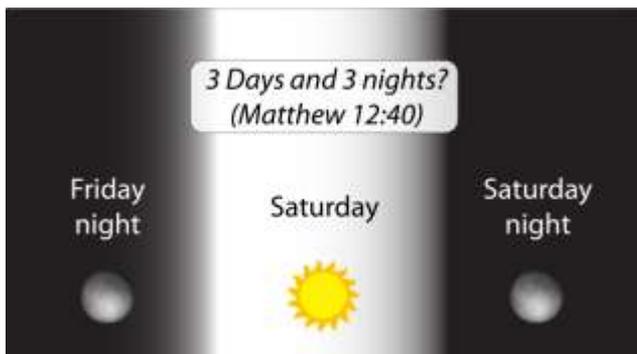
This booklet is offered free of charge by the authors and publisher as an educational service in the public interest. All Scriptures are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

© 2000, 2013, 2017, 2019 the Eternal Church of God



# *The Resurrection Was Not On Sunday!*

Each spring millions of churchgoers gather on Easter Sunday morning to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. This tradition is so widely accepted that few ever question the observance. However, do the Scriptures validate a Friday crucifixion and Sunday morning resurrection? Could the traditional observance be contrary to the Biblical account? If Christ did not rise from the grave on Sunday, when was He resurrected? Where did the assumption of Sunday morning come from? Could it be that most churches are entirely wrong about Easter? Christ warned His disciples saying that “many false prophets shall rise and deceive many” (Mat. 24:11). Is it possible that you may be one of the many who have been deceived about Christ’s resurrection?



Christ's resurrection is of the utmost importance because the events surrounding it are inextricably tied to much deeper spiritual principles—truths that all Christians need to understand. Before deciding that all modern churches who teach a Sunday resurrection cannot be wrong, consider the facts. Compare what you read in this booklet to the pages of your Bible. Prove it for yourself! When you do, you are going to realize that Christ could not have been crucified Friday afternoon and resurrected Sunday morning.

### ***Christ Promised a Sign***

Several religious leaders of Christ's day demanded that He show them a sign proving He was the Messiah. As if the miracles He performed were not enough, Christ replied that He would give them a unique sign. The Savior said that He would be in the grave three days and nights. Matthew recorded His words:

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 (Matthew 12:39-40).

This was the sign Christ would give proving that He was the Messiah. As Jonah was dead in the belly of a great fish for three days and nights, Christ would die and be in the grave for three days and three nights. By His own admission, if Christ was not in the grave three full days and three full nights then He was not the Messiah! So important was this sign that He spoke of it on several occasions. Mark recorded Christ's teaching, stating:

He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and **after three days rise again** (Mark 8:31).

The demand for a sign was not the first time Christ had been challenged to prove that He was the Savior. Earlier in His ministry, the Jewish leaders had raised this question. As the Apostle John wrote:

The Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?” (John 2:18).

Christ gave His critics the answer and they promptly, and completely, misunderstood Him:

Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple, and **in three days I will raise it up.**” Then the Jews said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” (John 2:19-20).

What Christ’s antagonists did not realize is that He spoke of His own resurrection. As John explained:

But He was speaking of the temple of His body. Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said (John 2:21-22).

Although His antagonists did not understand at first, by the end of His ministry they were acutely aware of Christ’s claim that He would rise from the dead after three days. The following verses show just how cognizant they were of this fact. Speaking of the day after Christ’s crucifixion, Matthew wrote:

On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him *away*, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first” (Matthew 27:62-64).

Christ made it clear that he would be three days and three nights in the grave. It was all the evidence needed to prove that He was the Messiah. Either He was truly three days and three nights in the grave, or He lied and was not our Savior.

***No Three Days and Nights in the Easter Tradition***

Take a moment to count the days and nights using the Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection theory. Can this truly be considered three nights and three days? If Christ was crucified Friday, put in the grave at sunset that evening, and resurrected Sunday morning, He would have only been in the tomb two nights and one day.

<b>Friday night</b>	<b>Saturday day</b>	<b>Saturday night</b>	<b>Sunday morning</b>
Night one	Day one	Night two	

***God’s Word or the Tradition of Men?***

In spite of the obvious conflict between Christ’s words and the Easter celebration, many attempt to squeeze three days and three nights between Friday evening and Sunday morning. They invent convoluted arguments that interpret Christ’s words to mean something other than what He literally said. However, their arguments are nothing

more than an attempt to force the Bible to conform to a man-made tradition.

Preferring their personal tradition over Biblical truth is a fundamental flaw found in much of professing Christianity. Read God's indictment of religious leaders who teach traditions of men in their religion:

Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men" (Isaiah 29:13).

All too often the reverence of God, the way we worship Him, is taught by the precepts and traditions of men. Such precepts and traditions are actually irreverent because they presumptuously disregard God's instructions. Christ repeated these words to the religious leaders of His day, and we would do well to apply His words (Mark 7:6-7).

There is no question that most theologians view the Bible through a lens of traditions handed down from teachings of their particular denomination. As a result, the errors and misconceptions of each generation are passed along to the next. Something most fail to recognize is that the early New Testament Church stands in stark contrast to what most denominations practice today. The apostles boldly proclaimed the rule for all Christians:

Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Christ stated that He would be in the grave three days and three nights. Little could be as important as our assurance that what He said was absolutely true! So how can we know the truth?

It's time for all of us to stop taking our religious beliefs for granted. It's time to stop simply going along with the error we have been taught by the traditions of men. It's time to look into the Bible itself, and verify the truth for certain. So important is this axiom that the Apostle Paul recorded:

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good  
(KJV, 1 Thessalonians 5:21).

### ***The Bible Interprets Itself***

Making the determination to believe what the Bible says is the first step toward discovering the truth. But how does one go about studying the Scriptures? The prophet Isaiah explained this very important principle:

Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those *just* weaned from milk? Those *just* drawn from the breasts? For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little (Isaiah 28:9-10).

The truth regarding a subject is not always confirmed by a single scripture. We must search the Scriptures and assemble all the information to form a true image. Like a jigsaw puzzle, we cannot see the whole picture until all the pieces are fitted together. Therefore, we must put the pieces of each subject together in order for our vision to become clear.

The Apostle Peter conveyed another important principle all Bible students must understand and abide by. We cannot apply our own thoughts and interpretations to God's Word. Peter wrote:

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed,  
which you do well to heed as a light that shines

in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that **no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation** (2 Peter 1:19-20).

Understand what Peter said! The Bible is not to be interpreted by men. This is one of the great truths required to properly understand the Scriptures. The Bible interprets itself. Therefore, if we want to know what Christ meant by three days and three nights, we must let the Bible explain its own terms.

That is exactly what this booklet does. It searches the Scriptures to find all the pieces of the puzzle. Then, by allowing the Bible to define its own terms, we can discover the truth.

### ***How Long Are Three Days and Nights?***

The Bible is not ambiguous regarding its meaning and intent. For example, the Scriptures define the terms “day” and “night.” In the very first chapter of the book of Genesis, the inspired author recorded:

Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw the light, that *it was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night (Genesis 1:3-5).

This simple statement defines “day” as the daylight portion of a 24-hour period, and “night” as the dark portion of the same 24-hour period. Though they are both included to form a single day, they are separate periods of time when spoken of in the context of day and night. How then does Christ define the terms “day” and “night” in the New Testament? Is it the same definition used in the Old Testament? Considering that Christ is the God of the Old Covenant, the definition did not change

(John 8:58; Eph. 3:9). He is the one who said He would be in the earth three days and three nights. What few realize is that Christ previously defined the length of daytime with the following words:

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. But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him (John 11:9-10).

The Bible defines its own terms. In Genesis we are told that a complete day is comprised of two parts—night and day. Later Christ defined the daytime as 12 hours of daylight where one can walk without stumbling, and night as the darkness that fulfills half of a 24-hour period. In that context, Christ said:

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).

Christ would be in the grave the same amount of time that Jonah was in the fish's belly. Many commentators attempt to wrest this clear statement by arguing that three days and nights is only a Hebrew idiom and can mean any portion of three days and nights. Regarding this view, famous Bible commentator E.W. Bullinger wrote in *The Companion Bible*:

The fact that “three days” is used by Hebrew idiom for any part of three days and three nights is not disputed; because that was the common way of reckoning, just as it was when used of years. Three or any number of years was used inclusively of any part of those years, as may be seen in the reckoning of the reigns of any of the

kings of Israel and Judah. But, when the number of “nights” is stated as well as the number of “days,” then the expression ceases to be an idiom, and becomes a literal statement of fact, ... it means exactly what it says, and this can be the only meaning of the expression in Matthew 12:40 (Appendix, 144).

Bullinger is not ambiguous concerning the definition of Christ’s terms. When referring to Christ’s use of the expression “three days and three nights,” there can be one, and only one, meaning. Both the accounts of Jesus and Jonah refer to the days in terms of their respective nights, and therefore Christ was in the grave a full 72 hours—no more and no less.

### ***Was The Crucifixion On A Friday?***

Another mistake Bible students commonly make involves the day of Christ’s death. Many have thought the day of His crucifixion was a Friday because the Bible states that it was the day before a Sabbath. As Luke wrote:

**That day was the Preparation,** and the Sabbath drew near (Luke 23:54).

Most people understand that, since no work was to be done on a Sabbath, God instituted the day before a Sabbath as a preparation day (Exo. 16:5). The mistake occurs in assuming that this particular day was a preparation for a weekly Sabbath. Actually, this was the preparation day for one of the annual Sabbath days outlined in Leviticus 23. John made this clear when he wrote about the day of Christ’s crucifixion and described it as:

The Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour (John 19:14).

The preparation day that coincided with the day of Christ's death was the preparation for the High Holy Day marking the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6). This particular feast is also called the Days of Unleavened Bread, the Passover, or simply the Feast (Luke 22:1; Acts 12:3; 1Cor. 5:8). The literal Passover ceremony in which the lamb was killed is connected to this feast, but it is not a high day. It is occurs on the preparation day for the first high day of the festival (Mat. 26:17). As John indicated:

Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day*, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (**for that Sabbath was a high day**), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away (John 19:31).

A high day refers to an annual Sabbath and not the weekly Sabbath. So we see that the day after Christ's crucifixion was indeed a Sabbath, but not the weekly Sabbath. It was a high day, an annual Sabbath, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

### ***Two Sabbaths While Christ Was in the Grave***

There were actually two Sabbaths during the 72 hours Christ was in the grave: The annual Sabbath or high day which was the first Holy Day of the Feast, but also the weekly Sabbath. Translators have glossed over this truth in which Matthew recorded:

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 (Matthew 28:1).

While appearing singular in this verse, the word translated as "Sabbath" is *sabbaton* in the original Greek. It is the plural form of Sabbath (*Strong's Exhaustive*

*Concordance of the Bible*, G4521). Though the King James translators missed the point regarding the two Sabbaths in this verse, the meaning is unmistakable. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament* explains *Sabbaton* the following way:

More than one Sabbath, Matt. 28:1 meaning at the end of the **Sabbaths**... (p. 1270).

Correctly understanding the plurality of this word, *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* translated Matthew 28:1 as “After the Sabbaths” (p. 90).

Matthew used the plural form of Sabbath precisely because there were two Sabbaths that occurred during the 72 hours Christ was in the grave. For this reason Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, came to the grave before dawn Sunday morning—the morning after a weekly Sabbath. But another Sabbath had also passed since His death. Christ was crucified on the Passover, the day before an annual Sabbath; the High Holy Day that marked the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The fact that Christ was crucified on the eve of this annual festival holds tremendous significance for all of us. The first Passover ceremony was kept by the ancient Israelites on the eve of their Exodus from Egypt. The ceremony included sacrificing an unblemished lamb and putting some of the lamb’s blood on the doorframe of each home. Moses recorded the God’s instructions regarding this sacred ceremony:

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take *some* of the blood and put *it* on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it (Exodus 12:5-7).

The death angel passed through Egypt killing the first born of every creature. But those who obeyed the Almighty by putting the blood on their threshold protected their firstborn. They were safe inside their homes. As God's words rang out:

Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:13).

The sacrificial Passover lamb that saved the lives of the Israelites was a type that foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ—the Savior of the whole world. The death of many firstborn enabled the Israelites to escape the slavery of Egypt. And the death of Christ, God's firstborn, is what enables us to escape the slavery of sin. Notice what Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth regarding this truth:

For indeed **Christ, our Passover**, was sacrificed for us. Therefore **let us keep the feast**... (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

Christ was the Passover lamb that was slain for all mankind! His sacrifice was the fulfillment of what the sacrificial Passover lamb pictured.

The Passover lamb was to be killed the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month. The high day, marking the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was on the 15<sup>th</sup> which began at sunset on the close of the 14<sup>th</sup> (Lev. 23:5-6). It had become a Jewish custom for priests to kill Passover lambs at 3:00 p.m. on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> instead of the evening prior. This was the exact time that the Savior—the Lamb of God—was crucified. As Luke recorded:

Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth **until the ninth hour**. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last (Luke 23:44-46).

Counting daytime hours traditionally began at 6:00 A.M. Therefore, the sixth hour would have been Noon. Christ died at the ninth hour, exactly 3:00 P.M., the same time it was customary to kill the Passover lamb.

### ***What Time Of Day Was Christ Buried?***

Knowing the time of day Christ was placed in the tomb is another key to knowing the time of day He was resurrected. Because of His declaration that He would be in belly of the earth for three days and three nights, whatever time the sepulcher was sealed, 72 hours would pass bringing Him to the same time of day exactly three days and three nights later.

Understanding that Christ died at three o'clock in the afternoon, and reading the events that followed, we find that He was buried that same day just before sunset and the beginning of the first high day of Passover. Matthew documented the burial by explaining:

Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed (Matthew 27:57-60).

Israelite law required that the body of anyone killed because of sin was not to hang overnight (Deu. 21:22-23). Because an annual Sabbath was quickly approaching, the work necessary to bury a body needed to be accomplished before sundown—before the beginning of a high day observed from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32). Therefore, Joseph hurriedly completed the preparation and burial process. It would have taken several hours to obtain permission from Pilate to acquire the body, gather the necessary materials, and perform the actual work of burying Christ all alone. This length of time was shortened by the aid of Nicodemus.

The Apostle John conveyed the sense of urgency to complete the task before Sabbath began:

And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby (John 19:39-42).

The reason Joseph and Nicodemus chose a tomb nearby was because they were pressed for time. In the words of Luke, “the Sabbath drew near” (Luke 23:54). When Christ’s body was finally laid to rest, and the stone rolled over the tomb, it must have been at or near sunset. Therefore, in order for Christ’s words to be true, He would have risen from the dead at sunset 72 hours later

### ***When Was Christ Resurrected?***

The tradition of a Sunday sunrise resurrection is built upon the gospel accounts of the women coming to the

tomb early Sunday morning only to find that Christ had risen from the dead. But understand the truth. When the women arrived at the tomb it was not sunrise. It was still dark. Notice what the Scriptures declare:

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 (John 20:1).

When Mary came to the tomb Sunday morning, it was dark and Christ had already been resurrected. Mark's gospel record also documented that when the women arrived the large stone had already been moved:

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. And they said among themselves, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great (KJV, Mark 16:1-4).

Because verse two states that "they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun," some believe that the sun had already risen when they arrived at the tomb. But this is not the case. This Greek expression is *anatello ho helios* and refers to the period of time known as dusk. Jewish scholars state that dusk is:

From the ascending of the morning, or break of day, until the sun rises, is an hour and a half (Piske Tosafot in Pesach. art. 44).

When the women arrived at the grave, the sun had not risen yet and the stone was already rolled away. In addition, Christ was gone! The only spirit being these women initially saw was an angel who told them:

“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. **He is not here; for He is risen**, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word (Matthew 28:5-8).

These women did not see Christ when they first arrived at the tomb. Thus, they had no idea when He actually rose from the dead. As we can see, these verses cannot be used to justify the belief in a Sunday morning resurrection. Obvious as this truth is, some claim that Christ rose from the dead on Sunday. They assert that Mark 16:9 proves their assumption. This verse reads:

Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9).

Those who advocate the Easter Sunday tradition believe this verse states Christ was raised on the first day of the week. However, several facts refute such a conclusion.

First, the context of the verse is not speaking about the time Christ was resurrected at all. It does not say He was raised on Sunday morning. The verse is actually speaking of an event that occurred after He was resurrected. The subject of this Scripture is simply who He first appeared to after three days and nights had passed.

A second point has to do with a modern literary tool unused in ancient times. When the original text of the Bible was written, there was no punctuation. Later, translators placed commas, periods, and question marks where they deemed appropriate. A comma after the word “week,” makes it appear as if Christ was raised the first day of the week. However, if these translators understood the truth, they would have placed the comma after the word “risen.” Though this jot may seem insignificant to many, consider how the verse is read with accurate punctuation.

Now when *He* rose, early the first *day* of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.

Placing the comma appropriately allows us to easily see that it was early the first day of the week when He appeared to Mary—not when he rose from the dead. Realizing that Christ was raised before dawn, it is now possible to form the true picture of when He was resurrected. We know that Christ died at the same time the Jews sacrificed the Passover lamb. We know that He was buried that evening just before sunset. We know there were two Sabbaths during the 72 hours Christ was in the grave. We also know that it was dark when the women came to the grave early Sunday morning and He was not in the tomb.

When we look at the historical record of the calendar we find that the weekly Sabbath was the third day after the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This sequence only occurred twice during Christ’s lifetime. In those years the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month fell on a Wednesday. Wednesday is the middle day of the week. This was the day Christ was crucified! Interestingly, but not coincidentally, Daniel prophesied:

Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself... in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering (Daniel 9:27).

As the Lamb of God, Christ did away with the need for animal sacrifices and burnt offerings. The evidence leads us to one conclusion. Christ was crucified on a Wednesday. His body was placed in the tomb as the sun was setting that evening. His body lay in the tomb that night. He was in the sepulcher all day Thursday and the following night. He was in the grave all day Friday and the following night. He was in the grave all day on the Sabbath. He was then resurrected as the sun was setting at the end of the Sabbath. Just as the Messiah had prophesied, Christ was in the heart of the earth for 72 hours—three days and three nights!

## ***Three Days and Three Nights***

<b>Night One</b>	<b>Day One</b>	<b>Night Two</b>	<b>Day Two</b>	<b>Night Three</b>	<b>Day Three</b>
Began at sunset	Thursday day	Began at sunset	Friday day	Began at sunset	Sabbath day
Christ was in the grave	Christ was in the grave	Christ was in the grave	Christ was in the grave	Christ was in the grave	Christ was in the grave
Christ's body was placed in a sepulcher just before sunset	First high day of the Feast			Weekly Sabbath began	

### ***Does Luke 24:21 Indicate Sunday Is the Third Day?***

The Scriptures indicate that Christ would be raised both “in three days,” and “after three days.” The only way these statements could be true is if the time was not more or less. Anything short of that would make Christ a liar and

we would have no Savior. He was raised at an exact time and the only way the Biblical criteria could be met is by a Wednesday crucifixion.

Another important aspect of understanding the timing of Christ's resurrection involves understanding how God's people reckon a 24 hour day. In modern times we begin and end each day at midnight. This is vastly different than the way God instructed. God's people have always begun and ended each day as sunset. This process was established by God in the first chapter of Genesis where he repeatedly stated that, "the evening and the morning" completed each day. Therefore, each new day begins after sunset; which is why God instructed us to observe the Sabbath from evening to evening which means from sunset to sunset.

Because most societies no longer recognize the true beginning and ending of each day, some have used scriptures of Luke 24 as a means to advocate an Easter Sunday resurrection. In this passage, two followers of Jesus were walking to a village called Emmaus. These disciples were noticeably troubled over the recent events. Unrecognized, Christ asked these men the reason for their sorrow:

The one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, **today is the third day since these things happened** (Luke 24:18-21).

While many use verse 21 in an attempt to prove that Christ rose on Sunday, a thorough study reveals otherwise. The passage begins with Cleopas relating “the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth,” and ends with the statement “today is the third day since these things happened,” but the third day from what, or from when? While it initially seemed as though Cleopas would summarize Christ’s life, he only mentions three things:

1. Christ was a great prophet.
2. The Jewish leadership incited Christ’s crucifixion.
3. His disciples hoped that Christ would redeem Israel.

Because his words emphasize Christ’s death, combined with the men’s visible grief, it’s obvious that Cleopas referred to the third day after He was killed. But did this disciple actually say that Sunday morning was the third day? The answer is no.

The last part of verse 21 suffers from mistranslation. In the King James Version it appears the disciples are stating that “today,” Sunday, is the third day. But the word “today” is the Greek word *semeron* which can be defined as the “*night current or just passed...*” (*Strong’s*, G4594). Therefore, the previous night marked the time when three days had passed.

The word translated “is” also does not agree with the actual Greek. It is *ago* from which we get our English expression “ago” meaning something that already happened. This word is used 72 times in the Bible, but only translated as is in this single instance. The word actually means to “lead, bring, pass, go, or lead away” (*Strong’s*, G71). This definition indicates the movement of something passing or going away. With this understanding, Cleopas’ words actually state that the previous night marked three days that had passed since Christ was placed in the tomb. God’s people have always started the day at sunset. With

the passing of Saturday, the evening prior to this conversation would have been three days.

With this perspective, Luke 24:21 should have been translated “the past day concludes the third day since these things were done.” Indeed, several other translators have recognized this truth, and their translations reflect this understanding. Note the following renditions:

But it has already been three days since all this happened (*Contemporary English Version*).

But then all this happened. And now something else: It has been three days since he was killed (*Easy to Read Version*).

In addition to all this he has now let three days go by from the time when these things took place (*The Bible in Basic English*).

And lo, three days [have passed], since all these things occurred (*Murdock Translation*).

These two disciples actually spoke of the previous day completing the third day. The two men were walking the afternoon of Sunday. Sunset the evening prior concluded the third day since all these things happened.

Luke 24:21 does not prove that Sunday is the third day. A comprehensive study of Cleopas’ words proves that Christ was resurrected Saturday evening—three days and three nights after being placed in the tomb.

### ***What Really Happened That Sunday?***

The tragedy of the Easter Sunday tradition is that it prevents people from clearly seeing God’s transcendent plan for all humanity. By mistakenly focusing on a Sunday resurrection, most of professing Christianity completely misses out on the true meaning of what really took place that Sunday morning.

God's plan is portrayed through the annual holy days He designed and instituted (Lev. 23). Each one foreshadows an important event in His plan of salvation (Col. 2:16-17). The first of these is Passover. We have already discussed how Christ's sacrifice was a fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice. Christ died to pay the penalty of sin in our stead. Just as the blood of the sacrificial lamb saved the lives of the Israelites, the blood of Christ saves our lives.

Further, as the death of the firstborn enabled the Israelites to escape the slavery of Egypt, the death of God's firstborn enables us to escape the slavery of sin. Passover pictures the redemption of man through the sacrifice of our Savior—the Lamb of God.

Once pardoned for past sins (Rom. 3:25), we must diligently put God's way in us to prevent sin from creeping into our lives. This is what the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures. God uses leaven as a physical analogy to represent sin and instructed the Israelites to put leaven out of their homes and to eat unleavened bread for seven days (Exo. 12:18-20; Lev. 23:5-6). Notice the spiritual application of this festival:

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

The first day of Unleavened Bread is a high day. The Israelites came out of slavery on this very day (Num. 33:3). This pictures God's people coming out of a life in bondage to sin. The seventh day of Unleavened Bread is also a high day and pictures leaving sin completely behind. This day the ancient Israelites safely crossed the

Red Sea on their way to the Promised Land while the pursuing Egyptian army perished. That event portrays the Christian's baptism, the death and burial of the old self, and the beginning of an entirely new way of life (1Cor. 10:2; Rom. 6:3-4).

The next of God's festivals is the Feast of Firstfruits also known as Pentecost. The observance of this festival coincides with the harvest at the end of spring preceding the bigger fall harvest in Israel. This Feast pictures the firstfruits of God's spiritual harvest. God will eventually give the opportunity for salvation to every human being who has ever lived, but He will first harvest a small group of faithful people to assist Him by ruling with Christ for 1000 years (Rev. 20:4-5).

The Feast of Firstfruits is celebrated seven weeks and one day from the Sunday immediately following the first weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:15-16). For this reason, the holy day was also called the Feast of Weeks and is commonly known as Pentecost meaning "fiftieth" (*Strong's*, G2250). Christ told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until this day arrived, and they would be endued with power from the Holy Spirit. On that first New Testament Pentecost, God sent His Spirit to those who were truly converted. This was a major step towards the first harvest of mankind (Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-4). However, before any other humans can become a part of God's harvest, there first had to be the harvest of Christ. This is what actually occurred that Sunday—Christ ascended to heaven!

The Sunday after the first weekly Sabbath within the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the day of an important annual offering known as the wave sheaf. Until this offering was complete, no Israelite was allowed to harvest any spring grain (Lev. 23:14). The wave sheaf offering symbolized Christ's sacrifice and pictured what occurred the Sunday after His resurrection.

The procedure for harvesting the first sheaf is not dictated in the Scriptures. According to Alfred Edersheim's study of *The Temple its Ministry and Services as they were at the Time of Jesus Christ*, a spot where the sheaf was to be reaped was marked by the priesthood and tied in a bundle beforehand (p. 170). Later, at the close of the Sabbath, just as the sun had set on the horizon, the sheaf was cut from the ground. That is the very moment the promised three days and nights were over and Christ was miraculously resurrected to spirit. He was no longer physically connected to the earth similar to the sheaf that was cut from the ground. On the following day, Sunday morning, the priest would lift up the sheaf and wave it for God's acceptance before placing it upon the altar:

He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it (Leviticus 23:11).

The timing and the symbolism of the wave sheaf offering is unmistakable. The wave sheaf represented Christ—the firstfruits of all mankind (1Cor. 15:20-23). He was removed from his connection to the earth just as the sheaf was cut from the ground. He was accepted by the Father as a suitable offering and the first harvest of humanity. He then ascended to heaven just as the sheaf was lifted up into the air. Notice His words to Mary Magdalene on Sunday before His ascension:

**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 (KJV, John 20:17).

Christ did not ascend to heaven the moment He was resurrected the prior evening. This is why He could not be

touched. He had not yet presented himself before the Father to be accepted as the wave sheaf offering and the first spirit born human being of all humanity. As Paul later wrote:

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

Christ is the firstborn among many brethren—the first of the firstfruits. He ascended to heaven and, like the wave sheaf that the priests presented to God, Christ presented himself before his Father and was accepted. For this reason, Paul wrote:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 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 each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

### ***What Does All This Mean To You?***

Satan has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9). We've all been misled to some degree by him. The devil blinds the minds of men lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them (2Co. 4:4). The Friday crucifixion and Sunday morning resurrection story is a deception designed to keep mankind from understanding the marvelous plan God is working out here on earth. It's a lie that came from the author of lies (John 8:44). Satan has led much of modern professing Christianity into false worship in a fashion similar to that which he used to lead God's people into counterfeit worship for centuries.

Thousands of years ago God revealed His law and His holy days to Israel, but they rebelled and fell into the idolatry practiced by surrounding pagan nations. The Israelites picked up an age old pagan practice—the worship of Ashtoreth transforming itself into the same Easter that so many professing Christians observe today. Easter Sunday worship is an extension of that same ancient pagan sun and fertility worship. For more on this subject please read our free booklet—*The Truth about Easter*.

God has always condemned such practices. We read in Ezekiel 8:13-14 that the women of Israel wept for Tammuz. This false god was a deity of spring vegetation. Tammuz was the brother of Ishtar, the goddess of fertility. Ishtar is the Babylonian name given to the Phoenician goddess Ashtoreth, and is the goddess from whom Easter got its name and traditions. That is why Easter is celebrated with symbols of fertility such as eggs, bunnies, and sunrise services. Consider what the prophet Ezekiel recorded:

Then He said to me, “Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.” So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east (Ezekiel 8:15-16).

The sun rises in the East, and every Easter millions of professing Christians continue to practice this worship that God condemns. On Easter Sunday they go to services early and claim to praise Christ while facing the rising sun. They do so believing that Christ was resurrected Sunday morning. But now you know the truth.

God is working out a marvelous plan. His annual holy days, which were designed to portray His plan for mankind, have been replaced by misguided believers with counterfeit holidays. But did you know there are still groups of true Christians who celebrate God's annual festivals just as Christ and the apostles did?

Nearly 2000 years ago, exactly 50 days after Christ ascended to his Father, the apostles and many other disciples were gathered together to keep Pentecost as Christ had instructed them. It was on that day that God poured out his Spirit on individuals called to become firstfruits. If God is calling you, He will make that same spirit available (John 6:44; 14:16-17).

It is time to stop taking your religious beliefs for granted. It is time to stop going along with error you have been taught by the tradition of men. It is time to look into the Bible to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good" (1Ths. 5:21). It is time to accept the truth and act on what you now know.

The Eternal Church of God offers a variety of books, booklets, articles, video, and audio to help people better understand God's Word and His plan for humanity. Some of the printed material available includes:

*The Truth about Easter*

*The Truth about Heaven*

*The Truth about Christmas*

*The Truth about Halloween*

*The Truth about New Year's Day*

*The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*

*The Truth about Valentine's Day*

*The Truth about Mardi Gras,  
Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, and Lent*

*Understanding the Mark of the Beast*

*True Freedom*

*Sabbath Confessions*

*What does it mean to be Born Again?*

The Eternal Church of God  
P.O. Box 80248  
Billings, MT 59108  
U.S.A

[eternalcog.org](http://eternalcog.org)