

Did Jesus Teach against the Sabbath?

Jesus came from heaven bearing a startling message from God to man—the gospel of the kingdom of God—and to train disciples who were to found the New Testament church which would carry the same gospel world-wide. What were the practices of Jesus? What did He teach His disciples?

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Part IV

IT IS shocking but true—the teachings of Jesus and the inspired early New Testament church are not being preached by most churches today. The hundreds of denominations which resulted from the Protestant Reformation have NEVER regained the true faith which was corrupted for centuries by the great apostasy that occurred immediately after the death of the apostles.

The apostasy was working *secretly* in Paul's day (II Thess. 2:7). Later Jude wrote with great anxiety that the brethren should contend earnestly for the true faith which was delivered by Jesus and the apostles, because there were certain men ALREADY CREPT IN who were perverting the true gospel (Jude 3,4).

It's time we examined the teachings of Jesus, the apostles and the early church. Was Sunday the day for religious worship? Were Christmas and Easter the festivals of the original church?

Jesus Rejected Judaism

Over nineteen centuries ago, Jesus Christ came from the throne of God bearing a message, the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), among Jews who were steeped in Judaism—the traditions of the elders. In almost every act, and in almost every statement, he was in conflict with their man-made teachings.

You have probably heard the customary assumption that the traditions, which were so fashionable among the Jews, were the teachings of God contained in the Old Testament.

This common assumption is false!

Jesus himself said: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition . . . teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:3-9; Mark 7:6-13). Judaism is *not* the pure Old Testament religion. It is a system of man-made additions and fables that, as Jesus said, make the law of God of no effect. He never followed these foolish customs that the Jews developed.

Sure the Jews in Christ's day claimed

to follow Moses. But did they really believe Moses? "But if ye believe *not* his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" said Jesus in John 5:47.

Jesus often turned to the writings of Moses to prove that He was the prophesied messenger of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6; 12:24). In connection with preaching the New Testament message, Jesus came to set His church an example of the way of life which they should follow (I John 2:6). Since Jesus rejected Judaism and set an example for the New Testament church, let's see which days he observed and *what he commanded his disciples to teach the church.*

Why Jesus Observed God's Sabbath

Luke tells us that from a child Jesus observed the passover and feast of unleavened bread with his family (Luke 2:41,42). It was also the custom of Jesus as a youth to attend services on the sabbath. When starting his ministry, "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 for to read" (Luke 4:16).

So we would not be in doubt about Jesus' teaching for the church, the gospel writers devote entire chapters to sabbath controversies which Jesus had with the Jews. Notice in Mark 2:23-28 the reply of Jesus when the Pharisees accused his disciples of breaking man-made regulations for the sabbath. *Here was the perfect opportunity for Jesus to tell his disciples exactly what they should do about the sabbath.* What did He tell them?

"The sabbath was made *for man*, and not man for the sabbath."

Here Jesus rejected the legalistic restraints imposed by Judaism, but he upheld the original purpose of the sabbath—it was made to serve man's welfare.

By *what authority* could Jesus give this explanation? By the fact that He was "Lord also of the sabbath." He originally instituted the sabbath at creation (Gen. 2:2-3). Paul said God created

everything by Jesus Christ (Col. 1:16). *Because Jesus CREATED THE SABBATH, he taught the disciples, the future leaders in the church, exactly how he, as the Lord of the sabbath, intended that day to be used.*

Notice how different this is from most church teachings today.

Now let's turn to another account in the gospels. Luke 6:6-12 describes him explaining to the Pharisees that *it is lawful to do good on the sabbath.* Although continuously discrediting the traditions of the Pharisees, Jesus *never once* in all his ministry told the disciples that then or later the sabbath would become a day of secular work.

According to the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, page 4173, "Jesus revered the sabbath . . ." This is the conclusion of the scholars and critics who have studied the life of Jesus.

Once the Jews accused Jesus of breaking the sabbath (John 9:16). This charge, of course, meant only that he was violating *their* human rules for that day. Jesus never once broke the Sabbath. He taught his disciples HOW TO KEEP THE SABBATH.

Jesus Observed Annual Festivals, Too!

We previously noted that before his ministry, Jesus kept the annual spring festivals which God had given to Israel. He continued this same practice according to the gospel record, for we often find Jesus coming especially to Jerusalem for the annual God-given festivals (John 2:13,23).

Now bear this in mind. Jesus *never* taught his disciples that his observance of the festivals should not be followed by the church. This silence of Jesus is vital because Jesus always spoke *openly* against every evil of Judaism. His practice among a people keeping these festivals can mean *nothing less than full approval of their observance.*

The apostle John devoted an entire chapter to the presence of Jesus at the feast of tabernacles in the last autumn of his ministry (John 7).

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What Did Jesus Teach?

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Almost entirely overlooked by writers, is the fact that Jesus never offered sacrifices on these days, *except the passover lamb*. This corresponds exactly with Jeremiah's statement, that when originally instituted, *no offerings* (except the passover) were placed upon them (Jer. 7:22). The sacrifices placed upon them *later* were given to the Levitical priesthood to offer.

Importance of Last Passover Supper

The passover is only one of the seven annual festivals which Jesus observed. It is a memorial ordained forever (Exodus 12:14). For that reason Jesus observed it and instructed his disciples on that last night how it should be continuously observed annually *after his death* by the New Testament church in remembrance of him. "This *do* in remembrance of me." That is a *command* for the church about one of God's annual festivals—the passover (Luke 22:19). Even the apostle Paul, who was converted much later, understood that Jesus set an example that night for Jewish and Gentile converts alike (1 Corinthians 11:20-34).

The sad service occurred after sunset. The eating of the passover lamb at supper having already ended, and the ordinance of foot washing having been instituted (John 13:14), Jesus sat down

and explained to the disciples that, hereafter, the commanded offering of a lamb *in anticipation* of the death of the Messiah would be *replaced* with new emblems because the lamb of God would have been slain for the world. Jesus used *unleavened bread* and *wine* as the new emblems.

God *never* permitted leavened bread to be used at the passover. Also the "fruit of the vine" could not have been unfermented grape juice. Grape juice could not at that time be preserved till spring. It either became wine, about forty days following the harvest, or else the grape juice was made into a heavy syrup. Any knowledge of the practices of the Jewish community in the days of Jesus will reveal that *fermented wine was used exclusively at the passover* (*Hasting's Dictionary*, article "Wine").

The strange doctrines that entered the church in later years and changed the passover into the mass, the eucharist, communion and "Lord's Supper" will be explained fully in coming articles. This perversion of Jesus' teaching is one of the most sordid episodes of church history.

Was the Sabbath Observed After Christ Died?

You have probably heard that even though Jesus DID NOT ONCE DURING HIS WHOLE LIFE preach against the days God instituted, that they were abolished by his *death*.

Now notice this. *After the handwriting of ordinances was abolished by Christ's death* (Col. 2:14), the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to say that the day *after* the death of Jesus was a high day—the first annual sabbath in the festival of unleavened bread (John 19:31), and that the seventh day was *still* the sabbath according to the fourth commandment (Luke 23:56). The followers of Jesus rested on that sabbath!

The first Sunday after the resurrection, the women came to the tomb because it was a *work day*. Later that Sunday Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples as they were gathered . . . in honor of the resurrection? NO! But behind closed doors "FOR FEAR OF THE JEWS" *as they were eating their evening meal*. And Jesus rebuked them for their unbelief because they did not believe the accounts of the resurrection that the women gave (Mark 16:13-14 and John 20:19).

How different this is from the fables commonly taught!

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF "THE GOOD NEWS" WILL APPEAR AN ARTICLE PROVING ABSOLUTELY FROM AUTHENTIC HISTORY, ASTRONOMY AND THE BIBLE THAT JESUS DID NOT DIE ON FRIDAY, THAT THE RESURRECTION WAS NOT ON

SUNDAY—THAT THE PASSOVER WAS ON WEDNESDAY IN THE VERY YEAR CHRIST DIED. You won't want to miss it!
