



The Good Friday/Easter Sunday Dilemma

By Allen Stout



Early Christianity became divided over the Passover/Easter Sunday controversy. What are the Biblical proofs? Which should Christians observe?



United Church of God
An International Association

Broken Laws, Broken Dreams

By Janet Treadway

On a cold wintry day in November 1993, my daughter and I experienced one of the saddest days of our life together, a day that will be etched in our minds forever

Inside This Issue...

Broken Laws, Broken Dreams

By Janet Treadway.....2

The Corruption of Good Habits

By Robert Berendt.....5

God Condemns Idolatry and Greed

By William Miller.....7

Surviving the Serpent Part Two

By John Elliott.....8

The Good Friday/Easter Sunday Dilemma

By Allen Stout.....11

Women of Faith

By Amy Stephens.....14

Just walking into the funeral home and seeing so many teenagers sent a chill throughout our bodies that matched the cold outside. There must have been at least 200 or more teens in the room. Usually when you see a large gathering of teens it would be for a pep rally or party, but not today. They were there to say their final good-bye to their very special friend, Kenny.

As my daughter, Michelle, and I got closer to the coffin, I noticed Kenny's brother (who survived the accident) and two sisters to the right of his coffin. One could only look at their faces to see the horror and shock of disbelief that this event was really happening, that their brother Kenny was dead, and lying in a coffin. As I looked over to

the left, sitting on the front row were his parents. I reached out to hug them; I was at a loss for words. What could I say that would take their pain away? There were no words that I could reach for, no magic thing that could be said to make everything seem okay. How do you bury your seventeen-year-old son? How do you let go, and how do you say good-bye to your precious child?

It was clear to me as I looked around the room of people sobbing, old and young, the question going through their minds; the same question that was going through mine. Why? Why did this happen to Kenny? He was only seventeen; he had his whole life ahead of him. Why? A few months later I was to

ask myself the same question once again.

Several months later the question of why surfaced once again at my son, David's, graduation ceremony. Something happened that brought the whole audience to their feet with resounding applause. The applause was for one of the seniors, Brian, who had been in a serious accident a year earlier that left him unable to walk. Brian was determined to walk once again, so he struggled the whole year just for this special night. When Brian's name was announced to receive his diploma, he slowly got up and struggled for a few minutes just to get his balance on his crutches.

There was dead silence in the audience as he took his first step forward. We were all afraid that if we made one sound he would come crashing down to the floor. The whole audience was drawn in as they watched Brian move slowly forward, as if they were silently yelling, "Come on, Brian, you can make it!" As Brian reached the front of the room, he reached out and took his diploma. The silence was broken as the audience jumped to their feet with resounding applause. The applause for

Brian went on for a few minutes, because we all felt that unity of sharing in the victory of a young man who had gone through so much the year before. For Brian to be able to get up for the first time since the accident, and walk to receive his diploma seemed to be a miracle.

Was this a miracle for Brian or short of what he could have had?

As I sat back down, my thoughts went back to Kenny whose funeral we had only attended a few months earlier. Kenny would never realize that dream of graduating. This was also to be the year that Kenny would have received his diploma. He would never experience that pleasure. The question came to mind once again of why, why did tragedy strike twice? Why did this have to happen to two young teenagers who had their whole life ahead of them? The answer is that laws were broken that changed their lives and the lives of their families forever.

We all tend to think that our lives are indestructible—that we will live forever. We especially think this way when we are young; however, as we get

older, experience tells us differently with our frequent visits to the funeral home. Reality that we are only made of dust and will return to dust becomes very clear.

Young people love to take chances and believe they can't get hurt. You have heard people say, "It only happens to other people, it won't happen to me" or, "I won't get caught, nobody is watching." So what's the big deal with traffic laws? Everybody breaks them. What's the big deal with trespassing? I'm not hurting anyone, am I? No big deal—or is it? So what happened to Kenny and Brian?

Kenny grew up with my daughter, Michelle. They played together, started their school years together, and were best friends. Kenny, as a teenager, had a lot of friends. He had a job and a great relationship with his family. His hobby was rebuilding cars with his dad. One fateful night took that all away.

Our family moved away when Kenny was ten so we lost touch with him and his family until that night when terrible circumstances brought us together. One evening while I was watching the late news, it

was announced that they were searching for a teenager who was in a car accident and thrown out of the car. One boy got out okay and they were looking for his brother. At first, it was thought that the young man got out as well and was perhaps stumbling around in the woods in a daze. When they announced his name, I was in shock. The next day all hopes of his being alive were dashed when they found him in the river, tangled up in some weeds, dead.

Kenny had just finished rebuilding a new car with his dad and decided to try it out with his brother. As Kenny rounded the curve at ninety miles an hour in a twenty-five-mile zone, he lost control of the car and went over an embankment. The impact from the accident threw Kenny into the river, where he tangled up in some weeds and soon drowned. His brother managed to crawl out of the car and survive. Kenny's life was gone; his dreams dashed because of one broken law.

Brian's story was different but with tragic results as well. Brian attended a completely different school. He was very popular, had many friends, and was very involved in

sports. Brian loved basketball and played on the school team. His dream was to become a basketball star. Another one of his loves was skiing and he belonged to a ski club. One day, instead of going to basketball practice, he decided to go with some friends to a nearby ski slope. While skiing, they came to a slope where a sign warned "Don't Ski Here." Instead of heeding the danger sign, they decided to ski there anyway. They pulled the sign up and Brian was the first to go down. He slid into a tree and was severely injured.

Brian broke his neck, and the doctors first thought that he would never walk again. Brian struggled with painful therapy for a whole year, not to ski or play basketball, but just to take that walk down the aisle to receive his diploma. That ski trip and the decision that Brian made that day changed his life forever. Broken laws, broken dreams. Laws broken that we take for granted every day. Laws are there to protect us from such tragedies as Kenny and Brian. So what's the big deal? Ask Brian what the big deal is. Ask Kenny's parents what the big deal is, since they will never see Kenny fulfill his dreams. Kenny's fami-

ly is left behind to pick up the pieces.

Kenny will never be able to experience the joys that we all take for granted. Brian will live with the effects of that decision he made on the ski trip for the rest of his life. Brian and Kenny are only two examples of the many people who are suffering as a result of broken laws.

There are many laws that are put into place by men to protect us from harm, such as speed limits, not drinking while driving, and more. There are even greater laws that are commanded by God, for our good (Exodus 20). The Ten Commandments, if obeyed, will give us much happiness and peace of mind. God, our loving Father, pleads with us in Deuteronomy 5:29, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" Notice what it says, "...that it might be well with you and your children..." If we could only realize how frail we are, and see that man's laws, as well as God's laws, are there to protect us; not make life hard for us.

Proverbs 3:1-2 says, “My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.” God tells us that we will have length of days and years with abundant life if we will keep His laws! Brian and Kenny chose to ignore a law. It is too late for them, but not too late for you.

Strive to take to heart the importance of keeping God’s Ten Com-

mandments and showing respect for man’s laws. Understand that they are there for your good. “And now, Israel (place your name there), what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

Why keep His laws? For Your Own Good.

Let us all learn from the tragedies of Kenny and Brian—from the effects that come from broken laws—so your dreams will not be broken! Keep God’s laws for your good!

The Corruption of Good Habits

By Robert Berendt

If we are not on guard, the world can degrade our good habits

We humans are designed to be social creatures. We need one another and our lives are only complete when we are with others. One problem we all face is exposure to the many people who have not lived in a way that is a credit to them personally or to their families and nation. There are people who have terrible habits that often lead to immoral lives and a depth of unhappiness that is hard to describe.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:33: “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’” It is not easy for us to believe that. We tend to think that with our good habits we should reach out to those with bad habits and help them. Jesus was criticized by the Jews for socializing with sinners, but we are not Jesus. While it is a good thing to help others, it is not a good idea to spend a lot of time with them. We tend not to believe that we will be

changed for the worse by those we wish to help.

I have observed some marriages where quite wonderful and caring young women marry men who have terrible habits. The wife seems to think that the husband will change. Some very sad lives have resulted from this erroneous thinking. God says evil company corrupts the good—not that the good should seek out and change the evil.

Youth can be easily ensnared by bad habits if they do not have guidance

Our young people have many opportunities. Education, travel, and material wealth are all attainable. When a person has high standards of behavior, his or her success is almost guaranteed. It has long been the responsibility of parents, teachers, and churches to teach standards of behavior to the young. When the adult generation falters in this area, the young suffer.

Discipline, self-esteem, honesty, the love of the truth, and respecting others are all principles that need to be taught. We are not born with them. Many young people are often left to fend for themselves and learn by experience. That can be terribly painful, and it can be fatal. One of the major causes of death among youth is suicide. Accidents are the greatest cause and many are caused by irresponsible actions. Driving at breakneck speeds, taking risks, and “living on the edge” are all hard at work in the young, especially when bad habits rub off on friends.

No generation has been perfect, but each generation has had some remark-

able people. The current generation of young people is also developing some wonderful human beings. But it is facing a growing number of broken families and a great loss of the values that develop good habits. People avoid being “too religious” and our nation proclaims that we are not a Christian nation. The way of life, which at one time was emphasized in our land, is fading away. A few decades ago, school classes began with prayer. Churches and clergy were respected. Teachers were thought to be important. Family honor was a strong factor in the actions of the young. The thought of bringing shame to one’s family helped focus a person on the right path. Right and wrong were taught.

The world grows more corrupt each day

Many things have changed. We constantly read of corruption and graft and immorality among the leading businessmen and politicians these days. Surely, none of us are so naïve as to think that evil did not exist before, but the degree of corruption has escalated. Good habits have given way to the satisfaction of the “needs” of the self. That mindset is what the Bible warns about for the

last days, as people become “lovers of themselves” (2 Timothy 3:1-7). Self-gratification has become an imperative in the last decade or so. The days have become dangerous because the focus is on the self. “Lovers of pleasure” is a label that applies to far too many people. In verse 6, Paul states that these “creep into households,” and one has the impression that evil seeps into a society, a home, or a personal life.

We have often said, “power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” (attributed to Lord Acton). These words, too, reflect a seeping in of wrong values that undermine good habits. People who are good leaders with high standards and values can be caught up in this degeneration. God was displeased with the teachers who had the responsibility to teach His way in Israel and failed. Ezekiel 44:23 states, “And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy...”

God inspired Malachi to point out the faults of the priesthood who had the responsibility to teach “good habits” (God’s way of living). Malachi 2:8-9 states that people have de-

parted from “the way” and stumbled at “the law.” He goes on to say that they had become “contemptible and base.” Verses 13-14 and 17 show that people talk to God and wonder why He is angry with them. The distance they have put between themselves and God is reflected in the corruption of good habits, which are based upon the laws and directions from God.

In this new century we can see how many values have been corrupted. Men and women “shack up” and accept dishonor rather than marrying with dignity, respect, and commitment. The feminist movement in its radical form has taken the position of the father in the home and blurred the roles of men and women. Adultery was considered shameful years ago, but now if a man’s wife leaves her husband and runs off with another man, she is still entitled to half of the

marriage assets and more. The adulterous situation is supported financially by the hard work of the first husband. The shoe also can be on the other foot in the sense of the man running off in adultery and not supporting his family. Both evils are huge contributors to the corruption and undermining of the good habits that were once promoted. Same sex marriages are openly celebrated as is homosexuality and the huge “gay parades” that are ever more evident. To disagree is to be seen as intolerant.

Many years ago I was trained as a driving instructor. One of the first points that was taught was that even very good drivers constantly need reminders and “tune ups” in their driving habits. With time and growing confidence, good drivers can develop bad habits. As a matter of fact everybody does—unless they consistently

review their habits and make sure nothing unwanted has crept in.

Corruption often comes a little at a time. When not checked, it can soon change a person and blur the good habits. Accepting lower standards can be the beginning of the slide. In driving, an accident or close call will sometimes be a wake-up call. In living, the results can be devastating but not so quickly evident. Take the Bible in your hands, study it and apply its teaching. Examine yourself in the light of the instruction God gives, and refresh the good habits that bring a long and happy life. Treasure good habits—they are worth keeping.

To help you study the Bible more deeply, and in return develop the good habits God desires, please request our free Bible study course.

God Condemns Idolatry and Greed

By William Miller

Many people do not realize that popular holidays are negative influences in their lives.

Out of all of the prophets, Jeremiah is the one who most leads me to believe that God

condemns idolatry and greed. Idolatry can be seen in Christmas, Easter Sunday and

Halloween, all of which work against God and God’s way of life.

First, Christmas is about getting not giving. Many say it is a holiday for children, and it is! It teaches a child to want to get, and then later we wonder why many children are so materialistic (Jeremiah 8:10). And its pagan origins are apparent by doing a little research within and outside the Bible. It is clear how God feels about mixing pagan practices with His truth (Jeremiah 10:2-5).

Next, Easter Sunday, originating in worship for the ancient Babylonian goddess Astarte's family, is confusing (Jeremiah 7:18...Jeremiah here uses another of Astarte's names; "queen of heaven"). Instead of recognizing that Jesus died to save us, the world unwittingly rejoices in the resurrection of Astarte's mythical son Tammuz. God wants us to recognize the *sacrifice* of His Son the most (Jeremiah 2:11-13). People watch the sunrise on Easter Sunday and rejoice, not real-

izing they are diminishing Christ's sacrifice and perpetuating sun worship.

Finally, Halloween (or as I choose to call it -- "Hollow Evening") is a night to masquerade as anything but truth. Again, we say it is a holiday for children, but it is a night to teach the very young the most abominable tactic: trick or treat! Again, it's about get, and this time it is get or else there may be negative consequences. Why don't we admit what we have embraced by observing these days? These three major holidays of the Western world all teach children to grasp, grab, and want more. Is it any wonder that many grow up with greed and a sense of entitlement as their principal attitudes?

Jeremiah hated idolatry, but he also hated how his people had become so forgetful of the Eternal, the Provider of the benefits they enjoyed. They ceased to be concerned for the poor, the maimed and

the widows. The social network had been so unraveled that those slipping through it were abandoned and unnoticed (Jeremiah 5:26-29).

God showed Jeremiah that idolatry and selfishness go together. When we fail to acknowledge God as the giver of every good gift, we tend to think of ourselves as the originator and sustainer of all the benefits we enjoy, and our attitudes proclaim, "Look what my hands have made!" (Jeremiah 17:5, 9; 9:23-24; 23:17). God told Jeremiah to cry out without ceasing and to show the people these two detestable sins. Should *we* do anything less?

To understand many of the truths behind the world's most popular holidays, please request our free booklet *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?*

Surviving the Serpent Part Two

By John Elliott

Encountering a serpent today can be risky, but there will come a time when that will change

The cost of treating a rattlesnake bite in Arizona starts at \$100,000. As its venom is injected from fangs into an unsuspecting human's limb, it races through the bloodstream

from the incision point into surrounding tissues and can ultimately impact even the muscles of the heart. The injected poison gets absorbed too fast to be retrieved by cutting the

wound and applying suction. Calming the victim will slow the poison's advance, while administering anti-venom drugs will counter the poison's lethal side effect. However, this

thwarting of death itself does not mean one avoids major, life-altering effects that a rattlesnake bite brings. The muscles' swelling will be greater than the skin can stretch to accommodate, and the muscle tissues that directly encounter the venom will die. The resulting trauma and disfigurement will have a permanent impact on one's physical body.

Tangling with the "spiritual serpent" will likewise result in life-altering consequences. Consider each of the following human passions and imagine the bitter sting that would result from each action.

Galatians 5:19-21 (King James Version) "*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (20) idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (21) envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: ...they which do such things shall not inherit the*

kingdom of God."
(Emphasis added)

On a sunny California morning, my friend and I hiked into the wilderness of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. A short distance ahead of us, a 7-foot rattlesnake stretched across the path sunning itself. It was a huge snake with a head as big as one of our hands. The two of us together would be no match for that large of a reptile with its speed and poisonous venom. The serpent eyed us carefully while effectively blocking the way forward.

Similarly, any attempt to wrestle with the spiritual Serpent trying to block our spiritual path seems daunting. But thankfully, God has created an effective method for dealing with serpents, both spiritual and physical.

James 4:7 (KJV) "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*"

A brief prayer, followed by a visible display of our intent to proceed, sent that big rattler scurrying down the mountainside. It is important to notice carefully the admonition of that passage, as any other method

can be deadly. Notice, that it doesn't advocate that one disrespect, harass, harm, or try to kill a serpent. And, for an important reason: most people bitten by poisonous snakes are those motivated by fear or hatred with intent to harm them. To the serpent in Eden, God said,

Genesis 3:15 (KJV)
"*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman...*"

Sadly, most people that die from snakebites die unnecessary deaths. We humans tend to gauge our preeminence by our size, superior intellect and assumed skill at wielding weapons. In contrast, the snake is assessed as being smaller, less intelligent and a less formidable enemy. A surprise comes too late for those who tangle with a coiled rattler with intent to harm him. Once alarmed, a mature snake winds into a muscular spring, coiled and ready propel itself at its foe. Receptors work diligently to help accurately target its victim. And its instantaneous strike is timed with precision. In an instant it suddenly shoots through the air faster than a human can react, tipped with exposed fangs dripping poisonous venom. It is an ill-matched contest

when one attacks a rattlesnake with a simple rake or hoe, resulting in a battle many have lost throughout time. However, when a person is careful not to intrude upon or engage it and respects the lethal danger that a snake possesses, one can expect not to be harmed by it.

Likewise, the Bride of Christ is warned to be prepared to repel the wiles of the Serpent. (Ephesians 6:11) The example, she is given is not to hate him or wish him harm. Her godly mindset should not retaliate with disrespect for his imperfect authority.

Jude 1:9 (KJV) "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

A Coming Change

But, soon an end will come to the threat posed to humans by both "species" of serpents. First, Christ will

remove the proximity and influence of the Great Serpent from the earth.

Revelation 20:2 (KJV) "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years," ...

Next, He will re-create the physical characteristics of the animal species to be harmless.

Isaiah 65:25 (KJV) "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD." ...

A very different age is coming to Earth soon.

"And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the

cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:8-9) (KJV).

Then, a young mother will be exhilarated to be out in nature enjoying God's Creation with her daughter one day. The lake's small white crests will mirror a blue sky with its white clouds sailing overhead. She searches about in hopes of showing her daughter a baby from another species. Unexpectedly her child rushes up clutching a baby rattlesnake in her little hands. The mother beams with excitement and replies, "Yes, you can keep it dear. But don't hurt it, okay?"

In the meantime, maintain a proper sense of fear and respect for serpents until the day when God brings His Kingdom to this earth.

The Good Friday/Easter Sunday Dilemma

By Allen Stout

Early Christianity became divided over the Passover/Easter Sunday controversy. What are the Biblical proofs? Which should Christians observe?

Recently, I was asked why I believe Jesus was crucified on Wednesday and rose on the Sabbath before sunset.

This is what the gentleman said: "You say that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday. This can't be. We know from Luke 23:53-54 that he was taken down and laid in the sepulcher the same day that he was killed. That means that Wednesday night (would have been) the first night He was 'in the belly of the whale.' Thursday, the first day. Thursday night, the second night. Friday, the second day. Friday night, the third night. Saturday, the third day. We know that He rose again the first day of the week: Sunday morning. If true, that means that He would have been 'in the belly of the whale' on Saturday night, making it 4 nights, not three (see Matthew 12:38-40). This cannot be. Now, if he was crucified on a Thursday, this would work, but not on a Wednesday. See my point?"

And further, from Luke 23:54-56, he said, "We can see that Pilate took down the body, wrapped it in linen and laid it in the sepul-

cher and that these things happened right after Jesus died; (and) that day was the prep day, so it had to have been a Friday. (And in) Verse 55, they (the women) followed after them that took the body on Friday evening to lay it in the sepulcher, again, on Friday evening. Verse 56, they left the site and came back on Friday evening with their ointments and spices because they knew they would not do so the next day, the Sabbath day of rest. This is evident as we read in the last half of verse 56. He must have been crucified on a Friday. Your thoughts?"

These are good questions. How would you answer those who observe Good Friday as the day of Christ's crucifixion, and Easter Sunday as the time of His resurrection? And how can you prove if Jesus was crucified on Wednesday afternoon and resurrected on the Sabbath before sunset?

How do we solve this dilemma? How can we prove which is right from the Bible?

This person was correct in saying that the Bible says Jesus was crucified and

laid in the sepulcher (tomb) on the Day of Preparation, and that Friday is a prep day for the weekly Sabbath. But he assumed that THIS Preparation Day had to be a Friday, and THAT Sabbath was the weekly Sabbath.

Let's consider what John wrote in John 19:31: "...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)..." And in verse 14 he explained that THIS Preparation Day was "the Preparation Day of the Passover," not the weekly Sabbath. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, "high day" from the Greek "*megas*" meaning great, is here virtually equivalent to holy.

There are seven annual high holy day feasts in the Old Testament, called "The feasts ("moed" meaning appointed times or appointments, seasons) of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations." They are called holy days (meaning sanctified or set apart for God's purpose) and Sabbaths (meaning a time of rest to cease from one's labor)

(Exodus 35:2; Leviticus 23:1-4,24,32,37-39; Nehemiah 8:2,9-11). Traditional Christianity does not understand or proclaim them because they have substituted and keep pagan "holidays" instead of God's true holy days (see "God's Holy Day Plan—Hope For All Mankind" and "Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?")

The Passover is an observance which always occurs on the evening of the 14th day of the first month of the biblical year (Abib or Nisan: Exodus 12:1). It is not a Sabbath holy day or high day, but it is a preparation day. The following day of the 15th is the first holy day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is the 15th of Nisan (a high day Sabbath: Leviticus 23:5-8).

Was Jesus resurrected on Sunday?

Another assumption this person made is that, "We know that He (Jesus) rose again on the first day of the week: Sunday morning." Is that what the Scriptures really say?

[Note: Sunday came to be called the "Lord's Day" to justify changing from keeping the "Jewish" Sab-

bath, based on the assumption that Jesus rose from the grave on Sunday, the first day of the week. But Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath," not Sunday (Mark 2:27-28; Luke 6:5).

God's Sabbath has always been the seventh day, which the Lord God sanctified after creating man (Genesis 2:14).

Matthew 28:1-6 says: "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." An angel said to 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" (see also Mark 16:2-6 and Luke 24:1-7).

Notice that it does NOT say when He rose, but rather that He had already risen, even as He said He would. He said He would rise after being dead and in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights—72 hours (Matthew 12:40). As the angel also said, "Remember how He spoke to you when He

was still in Galilee, saying 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again'" (Luke 24:6-7).

If we believe the Scriptures, then we must believe that Jesus rose as He said, after being dead and in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. That is from Wednesday evening to Saturday (the weekly Sabbath) evening, not Friday evening to Sunday morning. Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees who wanted to see a sign proving He was the Messiah,

"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 (72 hours) 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 12:38-40).

When did the three days and three nights begin and end?

So when did the three days and three nights begin and end according to the Scriptures?

We know that Jesus had already risen BEFORE very early Sunday morning, "as the first day of the week began to dawn" (Matthew 28:1). Also, we know that He was laid in the tomb in the evening, just before the high holy day Sabbath (Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:53-54; John 19:14, 31, 38-42). If He was laid in the tomb in the evening and was there three days and three nights (72 hours), as He said He would be (Matthew 12:40), then He rose in the evening BEFORE Sunday morning, which would have been on the weekly Sabbath just before sunset—NOT Sunday morning!

We can therefore count back three days and three nights to determine what day Jesus was laid in the tomb. Counting back three days and three nights from Saturday (Sabbath) evening takes us to Wednesday evening.

Jesus was, therefore, crucified and died on Wednesday afternoon, and laid in the tomb just before sunset. He rose again three days and three nights later on the evening of the

weekly Sabbath just at sunset. All four gospel accounts agree on the events of Jesus crucifixion and resurrection.

Which should Christians keep, Passover or Easter?

Should Christians keep Easter Sunday or the Passover—and when is the Passover to be kept? The scriptures are clear that Christians (disciples of Jesus Christ) should follow the example of Jesus. Jesus and His apostles kept God's holy days and the Passover. He said, concerning the Passover, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:15, 17).

Peter wrote concerning Christ's example,

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:" (1 Peter 2:21).

For more information on the Sabbath and God's holy days, request the free booklets: "Sunset to Sun-

set: God's Sabbath Rest" and "Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep

VIRTUAL CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE STAFF

Managing/Issue Editor:

Lorelei Nettles

Editors:

Angela Cardoz

Gayle Hoefker

Patrick Kansa

David Meidinger

Amy Stephens

Debbie Werner

Jeff Kuczynski-Brown

Ray Prater

Chelsea Dawe

Micki Bailey-Moore

Ken Cooke

Reviewers:

William Miller

Malcolm Murray

Gerald Seelig

Proofreaders:

Jeff Kuczynski-Brown

Sylvia Kennedy

Ray Prater

Marie Zelenka

Print version:

Robert Fenwick

Virtual Christian Magazine is published by the United Church of God, an International Association, 555 Technecenter Dr., Milford, OH 45150.

©2011 United Church of God, an International Association.

All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited.

Although the staff strives for truth and accuracy in its reporting, analysis and Bible commentary, *Virtual Christian Magazine* is not a doctrinal publication. Articles do undergo both an editorial and a review process.

Scriptural references are from the New King James Version (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., publishers) unless otherwise noted.

Women of Faith

By Amy Stephens

Of all the faithful listed in Hebrews 11, only two are women: Sara and Rahab the harlot. But are there other faithful women in the scriptures and, if so, what can we learn from their examples

They bring comfort, inspiration, and strength in a truly feminine way. They are the women of faith, the women who have gone before us, the women we worship with and serve alongside every week; they are the mothers and sisters we love. They help make us the women, wives, mothers, sisters, friends, and leaders that we are. A beautiful song captures the legacy of the women of faith:

These are the faces in photographs
Heads all held high
Not afraid to look life in the eye

They are women with backbone
Keepers of the flame
With a spirit even hard times couldn't tame
These are the women I come from

The faith that sustained them is bred in my bones
I know what I'm made of and where I belong
'Cause these are the women I come from

They were lovers of babies and lovers of God
With lessons and laughter in their songs
Did they dream better dreams for their children?

As they prayed silent prayers in the night
"Lord, make their way clear and always be near"
'Cause these are the women we come from.

("These Are the Women We Come From" Michael Chapdelaine)

We may not have photographs of the women of the New Testament, but we can read of their faith and how they set an example and paved the path. We can look to their legacy for inspiration. Let us consider their works of faith.

Tabitha

In Acts 9:36 (King James Version throughout), we read of Dorcas, a woman of Joppa, "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was

full of good works and alms deeds which she did."

Dorcas was special to her neighbors, and upon her death the widows mourned for her and praised her works showing Peter the clothes that she had made for them. Continuing in verse 39, "Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them."

Tabitha, or Dorcas, is resurrected by Peter and presented back to her beloved people and her story was known throughout Joppa and many believed

The Woman of Lydia

It is unknown if Lydia is the woman's name in Acts 16 or merely a reference to where she is originally from. What we do know is that she is a business woman, a seller of purple.

Dyeing of cloth was difficult as the dye was usually obtained from shellfish which made it costly and, therefore, made the material that she sold valuable and expensive. It was probably only purchased by the wealthy or those of the noble classes.

In Acts 16:13, we read that it was her custom to go to the river of prayer on the Sabbath day and it is here that she meets Paul. God was working with Lydia and opened her heart. She set an example for her household and her community by her actions in worship and obedience to God. Upon their baptism, Lydia and her household become the first converts in Europe.

She then invites Paul to stay with her and later Paul returns to her house to comfort the brethren of Philippi, indicating that her home was known to be the meeting place of the brethren.

Priscilla

In Acts we read of Priscilla, mentioned alongside her husband, Aquila, in every reference. We learn that the two of them served as religious instructors to Apollos. “And a certain Jew named Apollos...came

to Ephesus...and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John...whom when Aquila and Priscilla heard, they took him unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:24-26).

We see Priscilla opening her home and instructing in the ways of God alongside her husband. She and her husband are friends of Paul as indicated by his personal greetings to them on more than one occasion (Rom 16:3, 2 Tim. 4:19).

Phebe

Respected and trusted by Paul, Phebe is introduced in Romans when Paul tells us that she is a servant of the church in Cenchrea (Rom 16:1).

Paul then continues instructing the brethren that she is to be accepted and to receive whatever help she requires. She has a history of helping Paul and many others.

Lois and Eunice

Lois is the maternal grandmother of Timothy. Eunice, a Jewish woman, is Timothy’s mother. Eunice was married to a

Greek man, but there is no mention of his name as we read more of Timothy. What we do know is that Timothy received his Biblical instruction from his grandmother and mother. “And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15).

Timothy is known in his community and respected, even though he is presumably young. Paul takes Timothy, circumcises him, and he travels with Paul through the region of Galatia, establishing churches. Ultimately, Timothy is instructed by Paul to be a servant, assisting in the building and formation of the early churches.

Paul recognizes the faith of Lois and Eunice when he speaks of the faith that is in Timothy, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2nd Tim 1:5).

As we reflect on these examples and on the examples of women of faith that we have known personally or are blessed to our lives

currently, we learn that there are principles to being a "woman of faith." These include having a relationship with God and Christ, obeying His word, being able to teach by knowing God's way and studying His word, giving of ourselves in service and hospitality, seeing to the needs of others, being trustworthy and dependable, presenting ourselves in a manner that is both re-

spectable and acceptable so that we can be used by God, and providing for ourselves and our families by being diligent, hard-working, and wise.

One day we will be able to talk with these women and ask them what they prayed for, what made them laugh and cry, and how they loved and lived. I think we will learn that we have many similar dreams,

hopes, and fears. More importantly, I pray that there continues a similarity in the faith that they had because these are the women we come from.

For more helpful reading request our free booklet **You Can Have Living Faith.**

