

How to Honor the Resurrection of Jesus

Does the New Testament teach believers to honor the day or to celebrate the event?

by John N. Andrews and Daniel Knauft*

Many people think they honor the Lord by uniting together to change the memorial of the creation of the heavens and the earth into a memorial of the resurrection of Christ.

In doing so they remove the "blessing" and "sanctification" from the seventh day (Saturday) and transfer it to the first day (Sunday). In doing so the first day of the week becomes a sacred day, and the seventh day is used for ordinary business. In their thinking the Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) is taken away from the seventh day and attached to the first day; and all believers are required to observe Sunday on the authority of this Commandment.

Those who practice this change justify themselves by saying that the resurrection of Christ ought to be commemorated, and that it is pleasing to God that we should change the memorial of the creation of the heavens and the earth into a memorial of Christ's resurrection. In this way they dare to sanctify a day which God has not sanctified, and to abandon and profane the day which He has sanctified. As well, the day which God Himself has chosen for the Fourth Commandment is changed to one He has not mentioned in the Commandment.

It must be asked of all, why is it necessary to abandon the seventh day, which honors Jesus as Creator, in order to commemorate His resurrection?

The Lord asks for our devotion in love and obedience; He is dishonored by human reasoning which, however sincere, negates His expressed will. God has never authorized His followers to create religious institutions, and He will not permit us to disband those which He has created for our benefit and blessing.

If we observe a day in obedience to the Fourth Commandment, it is only right to follow the pattern designated by the Creator Himself and not to substitute another day for it.

Why not memorialize the day of the crucifixion?

The Fourth Commandment makes no reference to the resurrection of Christ. Those who use this Commandment to authorize the observance of the day of the resurrection of Christ, might with equal propriety use it to authorize the observance of the day of His crucifixion.

Why should not the crucifixion as well as the resurrection of Christ be commemorated? Do they not stand as equals in the redemption of humans? The New Testament must answer this question. No one will say that the Fourth Commandment requires us to celebrate the day of the crucifixion of Christ. But why should we not use this Commandment to make the day of the crucifixion, the sixth day, a memorial of the death of Jesus?

There are four excellent reasons not to use it in this way:

- (1)** The Fourth Commandment was officially given nearly 1500 years before the crucifixion of Christ.
- (2)** The Commandment makes no reference to the crucifixion.
- (3)** The Commandment makes direct reference to the rest day of the Creator, and to no other day.
- (4)** The New Testament teaches us to commemorate the crucifixion by the Lord's Supper which was designated by the Lord Himself for this very purpose.

All will admit these are conclusive reasons for denying that the Fourth Commandment should be used to enforce observance of the day of the crucifixion - Friday. But it is no more absurd to institute the observance of the day of the crucifixion by the Fourth Commandment than it is to institute the observance of the day of the resurrection by that Commandment. The Fourth Commandment has no reference to either of those days, but it does refer specifically and definitely to the rest day of the Creator.

The crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ are the apex of events in the narrative of the New Testament. It is the New Testament, therefore, which must teach us our duty with respect to the commemoration of these two events.

If we study this book we will find our responsibility in this respect very clear.

Our Savior did not command us to observe the day of His crucifixion in memory of His death. He commanded us to celebrate the **event**, and not the **day**. In doing this Jesus set a precedent that should determine how we should approach the commemoration of His resurrection as well.

Remember, His choice is to celebrate the **event**, and not the **day**.

No one claims that the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated by Jesus followers every Thursday night or Friday, the day of the crucifixion. Paul specifically stated: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" 1 Corinthians 11:26 (NASB). Based on what Jesus revealed to Paul here, we have no biblical mandate to worship weekly on the sixth day to commemorate His crucifixion. But, indeed, we have the privilege of honoring our Lord's death whenever the Lord's Supper is prepared.

According to the apostle Paul the holy supper is the true memorial of the crucifixion of Christ. The breaking of the bread represents the fact that the body of Jesus was broken for us; and the wine poured out in the cup is an emblem of His shed blood for the remission of our sins.

The Bible's memorial of the Resurrection

Now hear what the same apostle has to say concerning the memorial of the burial and resurrection of Christ:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" Romans 6:3-5.

". . .buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who had raised Him from the dead" Colossians 2:12.

Now we have learned from the Scriptures its chosen memorial of the resurrection of Christ which every believer may experience. It is the humble act of **baptism** by immersion beneath the water. Because of this it is not necessary to disband the Sabbath day of the Fourth Commandment in order to commemorate the crucifixion or the resurrection of Christ. In honesty and truthfulness the Word of God continues to be the final arbiter to show the path of the genuine Christian life.

Whenever any person is placed beneath the waters of baptism in the likeness of the burial and resurrection of the Savior, it is a most impressive commemoration of that resurrection, not by that person only, but by the pastor and the entire church family who witness and cooperate in the act.

Baptism in water is a most personal experience in which the believer publicly unites them self in the experience of Jesus as their substitute. Baptism represents a death to the reign of sin and a burial of its controlling power in the life. Rising out of the water of baptism represents the new creation after the making of Christ that the believer has become. This miracle of new life to be lived following baptism is now in the likeness of the resurrected Lord.

It would be well that baptism once more would take its rightful place in the life of the twenty-first century follower of Jesus and the entire Christian church body.

Comparing baptism to a wedding

Baptism can be compared with a wedding. Just as the wedding day is the public beginning and joining of a

man and woman in marriage, baptism is the recognition of a life-long bond of union with the risen Christ. Every day of married life a person



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carries the consciousness that they are wedded as "one" with their beloved. There is never a morning that a married person wakes up and feels like they are single again; yes, there is daily, hourly the sense of being that they belong to their beloved.

So it is with the Bible's true commemoration of the resurrection of Christ. The person who is united with the risen Christ in baptism may daily, hourly, moment by moment carry the consciousness of their belonging to the risen Savior of the world. There is never a day that they awaken but what they sense the ever present bond with Jesus through the experience of baptism. And the believer has a continuing awareness that they may access the power of the resurrected Christ to successfully live the Christ-like life.

In giving the ordinance of baptism, Jesus has outwitted everyone. He has made His resurrection, not to be commemorated on a certain day of the week, but to be an ever abiding consciousness in the heart and mind of the believer that they are intimately united with the resurrected Christ.

Jesus desires a saving relationship with every believer beyond what anyone can comprehend. So it is not surprising that Jesus would give this command to His followers before His ascension: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: . . ."

Matthew 28:19.

It is worth noting that baptism has the signature of each member of the God family; but the "day" of the resurrection does not.

May God be praised and Jesus be glorified!

And now you know why the seventh-day Sabbath of the

Fourth Commandment is still the expressed will in the twenty-first century of the Lawgiver Himself - Jesus Christ.

*This article written by John N. Andrews was published in the magazine Signs of the Times, September 14, 1882. Author Daniel

Knauff has edited the article and added material that did not appear in the original article.