

INTRODUCTION

It so happens that in the middle of this epidemic, the day comes that is known as "Easter" or "Easter Sunday." Many of the churches in the world set apart one Lord's Day per year from all the others, designating it as "Easter Sunday," and doing several things not normally done at other times, to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

I, as a pastor, do not lead this church to recognize one Lord's Day per year above the others as "Easter Sunday." Instead, I lead the church to treat every Lord's Day the same as every other. And those extra practices not normally done, I do not lead the church to do once per year.

Allow me to make some observations on the superiority of observing the Lord's Day every week of the year over the practice of celebrating one day each year as "Easter Sunday."

TEXT

Acts 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

BODY

I. Grounding in the Scriptures

A. The Lord's Day

1. our Lord's practice with the disciples when He rose from the dead
 - a) John 20:19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.
 - b) John 20:26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.
2. the church's practice when the apostles were still with us
 - a) Acts 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.
3. the apostle's instruction by letter
 - a) 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. (2) Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

B. Easter Sunday

1. not to be found in the bible
2. therefore invented by human imagination
3. handed down to you not in the scriptures, but by traditions of men
4. claims to oral tradition from the apostles should be rejected; we claim only the written tradition from the apostles

II. Obedience to God's Ten Commandments

A. In the fourth commandment, we are commanded to set apart one day each week as holy unto the Lord

1. in the OT laws of Moses, there are annual holy days; but they all ceased with the end of the OT and the beginning of the New
2. regarding holy days, the only commandment in moral law, which endures through changes of covenant, is the commandment to set apart as holy one day per week, one day in each seven
3. the weekly Lord's Day is in keeping with this commandment
4. the annual Easter Sunday is not in keeping with this commandment

B. In the second commandment, we are required to worship as God has taught us, not as we imagine.

1. the institution of an annual holy day for the church is not commanded by God anywhere in the New Testament
2. the annual Easter Sunday is not in keeping with this commandment

III. Unintended Consequences

A. Major controversies in the church over the date to be used for Easter Sunday

1. in the early years after the apostles had died
2. in the middle ages when ancient Christianity in England, Scotland, and Ireland encountered the rising influence of the pope in Rome
3. other times, also
4. much of the time and energy of many church leaders was wasted in controversy over this matter

B. Stunting of the church's appetite for, and production of, hymns on the resurrection

1. if the church sings songs about Christ's resurrection mostly on one day per year, a supply of just a few songs will do
 - a) Up from the Grave He Arose
 - b) Because He Lives
 - c) He Is Lord
 - d) Christ the Lord Is Ris'n Today
2. I observe that we have not produced and do not know the number of hymns that we should about the resurrection of our Lord from the

dead; and I know to attribute that to the reduction of demand for them to one week per year

C. Teaching the church to abandon normal worship

1. preaching in favor of drama
2. congregational singing in favor of musical performance

D. Confusing people on conversion and church membership

1. by fostering once-per-year church attendance by nominal church members
2. I remember facing difficulty in removing delinquent church members for non-attendance
 - a) there were many on the membership role who had not regularly attended worship for years
 - b) yet they technically were not subject to exclusion from church membership, because they had attended on Easter and Mother's Day

E. Giving the church's enemies occasion to increase persecution

1. every year at Easter, the headlines include stories from muslim countries, telling of what church buildings were damaged and what Christians were persecuted on the occasion of Easter
2. I find this very sad, because so unnecessary!

F. Focusing the world's attention on the antichrist pope of Rome

1. the pope of Rome is not the epitome of Christianity, but the epitome of antichrist
2. yet every Easter, the main new outlets write many stories and show many pictures of what the pope says and does; at Easter time, the world exalts the pope as the face of Christianity

G. Distracting and confusing children

1. the typical celebration of Easter Sunday has come to include
 - a) a mythical supernatural figure, the Easter bunny, who supposedly provides children with
 - (1) Easter eggs
 - (2) Easter basket
2. so, on the day that supposedly celebrates the great truth that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, a truth so important for the church to believe and preach, we spend our time telling children the falsehood

that the Easter bunny has brought them a basket and some candy-filled plastic eggs

3. this certainly has the potential to be confusing to children
4. it most definitely is distracting to children

H. Undermining the practice of dressing modestly

1. our Lord's apostles specifically instructed His disciples to adorn themselves not with outward adornment such as expensive clothing
2. but the tradition of having a new dress (and hat!) to wear on Easter Sunday undermines that practice
3. making the problem even more distressing is the fact that in our culture today, the new dresses that ladies can buy off the rack are typically very immodest, not in the sense of being luxurious, but in the sense of being revealing; so that the maintaining of chastity among the disciples of Jesus Christ is undermined by the supposed celebration of His resurrection

IV. Adherence to Our Confession of Faith

A. 1689.22.7 “called the Lord’s Day”

As it is the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time, by God's appointment, be set apart for the worship of God, so by his Word, in a positive moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men, in all ages, he has particularly appointed one day in seven for a sabbath to be kept holy unto him, which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ was the last day of the week, and from the resurrection of Christ was changed into the first day of the week, **which is called the Lord's Day** and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath, the observation of the last day of the week being abolished.

B. If you call it “Easter Sunday” instead, you are not in keeping with our confession

C. In the Latin-based languages, the first day of the week is called, essentially, “the Lord’s Day”

1. Latin: dies Dominica
2. Spanish: Domingo
3. Italian: Domenica
4. French: Dimanche

D. In the northern European languages, the first day of the week is normally named for the sun

1. Sonntag
2. Zondag
3. Sunday

E. I don’t think it necessary to scruple over calling the first day of the week “Sunday” for normal use in English; but I do think we have gone too far when we take to calling “the Lord’s Day” as “Sunday” in ecclesiastical use

V. Emphasis on Jesus Christ as Risen from the Dead

- A. The holy scriptures tell us that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead
 1. He died for our sins, according to the scriptures
 2. He was buried
 3. He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures
- B. By that resurrection on the first day of the week, the observance of one day in seven as holy to the Lord was changed from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week
- C. The first day of the week, then, is to be, for Christ's church, the day upon which we worship Him as risen from the dead
- D. When men decided, long ago, to have not a weekly, but an annual holy day for celebrating Christ's resurrection, they surely must have meant not to de-emphasis, but to emphasize His resurrection
- E. But we can observe now, many centuries later, that having an annual resurrection observance actually has the opposite effect; it causes those who lead the church in worship to avoid the subject of Christ's resurrection to some degree during 51 weeks of the year; resurrection material is saved for one day per year
 1. songs
 2. scripture reading
 3. preaching
- F. Because there are 52 weeks in a year; each week's worship service constitutes about 2% of the church's worship in a year's time.
 1. so, when the songs, scripture readings, and sermons on the resurrection of Christ Jesus are kept mostly to one week per year, that great theme is made to be a very small part of the church's worship
 2. much better is the practice of having the birth, death, resurrection, and return of our Lord Jesus Christ to be themes that may be mentioned frequently throughout the year

CONCLUSION

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. Let Him be worshipped as such on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, every week of the year.

As He is risen from the dead, so we who believe in Him also shall rise from the dead when He comes again. Let that blessed hope be cultivated, strengthened, affirmed every week until our Lord Jesus comes again.

Ussher: *A Discourse of the Religion Anciently Professed by the Irish and the British*, 1631 contains a section on Easter

https://books.google.com/books?id=bIhLAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false page 235

Note that the early church, under the direction of the apostles, while they were still with us, is not recorded as putting on musical concerts or dramas on the first day of the week.

The weekly Lord's Day is in keeping with the 10 Commandments rather than in violation of them.

- The fourth commandment requires us to set apart one day in seven
- The second commandment requires us to worship as God has taught us, not as we imagine. The institution of an annual holy day for the church is not shown us in the New Testament.

The weekly Lord's Day does not tempt the disciples of Jesus Christ to follow the Pope's other man-made holy days. e.g. lent, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, etc.

Let it be observed that when the church decides it might invent a holy day for worship, it also has decided it might invent practices for worship.

Acts 12:4

VI. Two Different Practices

A. What the two practices are

1. the church assembles to observe the first day of the week as a weekly holy day called “the Lord’s Day”
 - a) just as every other week of the year
 - b) no other holy days
2. the church assembles to observe the first day of the week as an annual holy day called “Easter Sunday”
 - a) distinct from every other week of the year
 - b) typically as one of several other holy days

B. That they are incompatible

1. a church cannot practice one of these without it not being the other

The Lord’s Day Instead of Easter - 9:30 a.m. Bible Study - 2018-04-01

The observance of the Lord’s Day, unlike the observance of Easter, does not:

-lead to mistranslation of the bible: BB, KJV Acts 12:4

-Greek *pascha*; Vulgate *pascha*; Wycliffe “pask;” Geneva “Passover”

-lead Christians to speak of what is holy with pagan terminology: “Easter Sunday”

-especially it does not put such unbiblical words in the mouth of the preacher in the pulpit

-lead Reformed Baptists to forsake the biblical teaching of our 1689 confession

-1689.22.7 “called the Lord’s Day”

-lead Christians to substitute man-made holy day for God-ordained holy days

-weekly Lord’s Day, which is holy, treated as common

-lead Christians into relegating worship of Jesus Christ as resurrected to one week per year

-less than 2%

-songs, scripture reading, preaching

-stunt the church's appetite for, and therefore production of, hymns on the resurrection

-teach the church to abandon preaching in favor of drama; and to abandon congregational singing for musical performance

-confuse the issues of conversion and membership and church discipline by fostering once-per-year church attendance by nominal church members

-undermine the doctrine of dressing modestly

-focus the world's attention on the antichrist pope of Rome

-give the church's enemies occasion to increase persecution

-give skeptics material for plausible arguments against the truth of Christianity, with which to confuse the weak

-distract children from the gospel or confuse them as to what true religion is

-Easter egg decorating and hunt -Easter basket -Easter bunny

The observance of the weekly Lord's Day does none of these undesirable things that Easter does. Instead, it grants the believer in Jesus Christ rest from his usual labor, and opportunity to worship the Lord Jesus as He Himself has commanded.