

Truth or Tradition – Week 2 – Lent and Good Friday Hoax – Bible Study Helps

Title: Lent and the Good Friday Hoax: Examining Traditions Against Scripture

Sermon Summary:

This sermon challenges long-held Christian traditions, specifically Lent and the Good Friday crucifixion narrative, by examining them through careful biblical study. The sermon argues that many religious traditions have been elevated above Scripture itself, leading billions astray. Through detailed analysis of biblical timelines, Jewish feast days, and the definition of days in Scripture, the message demonstrates that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday (Passover) and resurrected on Saturday evening/Sunday morning—exactly three days and three nights as prophesied. The sermon emphasizes that Jesus Christ fulfilled all Old Testament shadows including the Passover lamb and the Sabbath rest, and calls believers to abandon unbiblical traditions in favor of following Scripture alone. The underlying message warns that churches promoting traditions over biblical truth may have other dangerous theological errors, and challenges listeners to examine all their beliefs against God's Word.

Key Points:

- The word "Lent" appears five times in the King James Bible, but only as the past tense of "lend," never as a religious observance
- Religious traditions often blur the lines between human customs and biblical commands, leading to dangerous spiritual deception
- Jesus Christ must be in the tomb for exactly three days and three nights (72 hours) according to Matthew 12:40
- A biblical day consists of 12 hours of "day" and 12 hours of "night," totaling 24 hours
- There are multiple Sabbaths in Scripture, not just the weekly Saturday Sabbath—including "high Sabbaths" during feast days
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th of Nisan with a high Sabbath, the day after Passover (14th of Nisan)
- Jesus was crucified on Wednesday (Passover), placed in the tomb before Thursday's high Sabbath, and rose Saturday evening
- Good Friday is mathematically impossible when counting backward 72 hours from Sunday morning
- Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover lamb, as John the Baptist declared: "Behold the Lamb of God"
- The Sabbath rest is fulfilled in Jesus Christ—believers now rest in Him daily rather than observing a specific day

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- The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) merged pagan Roman practices with Christianity, creating many unbiblical traditions including Lent
- Religious leaders crucified Jesus while maintaining their traditions, refusing to enter Pilate's hall to avoid defilement before Passover
- Billions today participate in religious traditions while rejecting the true Jesus Christ and continuing in sin
- The Bible is our sole authority and must be trusted over all human traditions and teachings

Scripture Reference:

- Colossians 2:6-23 (Primary text warning against traditions of men and regarding holy days)
- Matthew 12:38-40 (The sign of Jonah—three days and three nights)
- Mark 16:9 (Jesus rose early on the first day of the week)
- John 11:9 (Jesus defines a day as having 12 hours)
- Genesis 1:5 (God's definition of a day: evening and morning)
- Leviticus 23:1-7 (The feasts of the Lord, including Passover and high Sabbaths)
- Exodus 12 (The first Passover and instructions for its observance)
- Luke 23:50-54 (Jesus buried before the Sabbath on preparation day)
- Mark 15:42 (The day before the Sabbath, preparation day)
- John 1:29, 36 (John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God)
- 1 Corinthians 5:7 (Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us)
- Hebrews 4:6-16 (Jesus Christ is our rest/Sabbath)
- Isaiah 58:13-14 (God's view of the Sabbath as a holy day)
- John 18:28 (Religious leaders refuse to enter judgment hall to avoid defilement before Passover)

Stories:

- The pastor's personal testimony of being raised in religious tradition (Mormon background) and coming to salvation on January 7, 1996, at age 25, when he realized everything he'd been taught contradicted Scripture
- Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:8) where Abraham prophesied "God will provide himself a lamb" on the exact spot where Jesus would later be crucified

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- The first Passover in Exodus when lambs were slain and blood placed on doorposts so the death angel would pass over
- The account of Jesus before Pilate, where religious leaders refused to enter the judgment hall to avoid defilement while simultaneously condemning the innocent Lamb of God to death
- A visit to a basilica in Costa Rica where "holy water" was being sold from a fountain, with people getting sick from drinking it—illustrating the danger of religious deception
- The story of someone sleeping in the rafters during Paul's midnight preaching in Acts 20

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Discipleship Questions

How does recognizing that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Sabbath change your understanding of rest in Christ versus religious observance?

If traditions you've held dear contradict Scripture, what steps would you take to align your beliefs with the Bible, and what challenges might you face?

How does the mathematical impossibility of Good Friday challenge you to examine other widely accepted religious traditions in light of Scripture?

What does it reveal about God's sovereignty and perfect timing that Jesus was crucified on Passover, fulfilling thousands of years of prophecy?

In what ways might modern Christians be like the religious leaders who observed Passover while rejecting Jesus, holding to traditions while missing the person of Christ?

How does understanding that Jesus is our Passover Lamb change the way you view communion, worship, and daily relationship with God?

What does Colossians 2:16-17 teach us about judging others based on holy days, and how should this affect our interactions with believers who observe different traditions?

If billions of people can be wrong about something as foundational as the crucifixion timeline, what does this suggest about the importance of personal Bible study versus accepting inherited beliefs?

How does the concept that Jesus provides eternal rest challenge the human tendency to find security in religious works and rituals?

What practical changes might God be calling you to make after learning that many church traditions may not align with Scripture?

Small Group Guide: Lent and the Good Friday Hoax

Opening Prayer

Begin with prayer, asking God to open hearts and minds to His truth and give wisdom for the discussion ahead.

Ice Breaker (5-10 minutes)

What religious traditions did you grow up with? How did they shape your understanding of faith?

Key Scripture References

- **Colossians 2:8, 16-17** - Warning against traditions of men
- **Matthew 12:40** - Three days and three nights
- **Mark 16:9** - First day of the week resurrection
- **Leviticus 23:5-7** - Passover and High Sabbath
- **1 Corinthians 5:7** - Christ our Passover

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Traditions vs. Scripture (15-20 minutes)

1. **Read Colossians 2:8, 16-23**
 - What does Paul warn us about regarding traditions?
 - Why do you think people hold onto religious traditions even when they contradict Scripture?
 - Have you ever discovered a tradition you believed wasn't actually biblical? How did you respond?
2. **The Authority Question**
 - What should be our ultimate authority: church tradition, family customs, or the Bible? Why?
 - How do we balance respecting others' traditions while standing on biblical truth?

Part 2: The Mathematical Problem (20-25 minutes)

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3. **Read Matthew 12:38-40**

- Jesus clearly states "three days and three nights." Count the hours from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning. What do you get?
- Why do you think this mathematical impossibility has been overlooked for so long?

4. **The Timeline Evidence**

- Review the biblical evidence for a Wednesday crucifixion:
 - Resurrection on Sunday (first day of the week) - all four Gospels agree
 - Working backward 72 hours (3 days × 12 hours + 3 nights × 12 hours)
 - High Sabbath (Feast of Unleavened Bread) vs. weekly Sabbath
- What makes the most sense to you based on Scripture?

5. **Read Leviticus 23:5-7**

- How does understanding the Jewish feast calendar help clarify the crucifixion timeline?
- What is the significance of Jesus being crucified on Passover specifically?

Part 3: The Bigger Picture (15-20 minutes)

6. **Jesus as the Passover Lamb**

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:7 and John 1:29
- How does Jesus fulfill the Passover lamb symbolism?
- What does it mean that God's timing is perfect down to the very day?

7. **Read John 18:28**

- What's disturbing about the religious leaders refusing to enter Pilate's hall?
- How do people today participate in religious traditions while rejecting Jesus?
- Can you sin against God while keeping religious traditions? What does this reveal?

Part 4: Personal Application (15-20 minutes)

8. **The Sabbath Rest**

- Read Hebrews 4:9-11
- How is Jesus our Sabbath rest?
- What does it mean to "cease from our own works" and trust in Christ?

9. **Challenging Beliefs**

- What was your reaction to this sermon's message?
- Is there something you've believed or practiced that needs to be examined in light of Scripture?
- What makes it difficult to change long-held beliefs or family traditions?

10. **Moving Forward**

- How will you approach Easter/Resurrection Sunday differently this year?
- If someone asks why you don't observe Lent or Good Friday, how will you respond?

Key Takeaways

1. **The Bible is our ultimate authority** - not tradition, not family customs, not what "everyone does"
2. **Good Friday is mathematically impossible** - Jesus said three days AND three nights (72 hours), which cannot fit between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning
3. **Jesus was crucified on Wednesday (Passover)** - perfectly fulfilling the Passover lamb symbolism and allowing for exactly 72 hours before His resurrection
4. **There are multiple Sabbaths** - High Sabbaths (feast days) in addition to the weekly Sabbath, which explains the "day before Sabbath" references
5. **Jesus fulfilled all Old Testament shadows** - including Passover, the Sabbath, and the feast days. We now rest in Him, not religious observances
6. **Billions follow traditions while rejecting Christ** - like the religious leaders who killed Jesus then ate Passover, many observe Easter traditions while living in sin and unbelief

Practical Applications

This Week:

- **Study for yourself:** Look up all the resurrection accounts and verify the "first day of the week" references
- **Do the math:** Draw out a timeline from Wednesday to Sunday and count the 72 hours
- **Check your traditions:** Make a list of religious traditions you observe and search the Scriptures to see if they're biblical

This Month:

- **Share the truth:** Be prepared to explain the Wednesday crucifixion to someone who asks (practice drawing it on a napkin!)
- **Focus on Christ:** Instead of observing Lent, spend daily time in God's Word focusing on Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection
- **Examine everything:** Apply this same scrutiny to other traditions you've accepted without biblical verification

Ongoing:

- **Prioritize Scripture:** Make God's Word your final authority on all matters of faith and practice
- **Rest in Christ:** Remember that Jesus is your Sabbath rest—celebrate Him every day, not just religious holidays
- **Be willing to change:** Maintain an attitude of humility and willingness to align your beliefs with Scripture, even when it's uncomfortable

Closing Discussion

The Heart Question:

- Are you willing to follow Scripture even when it contradicts what you've always believed or what your family practices?
- What's more important: being right with God or maintaining family/church traditions?

The Gospel Question:

- Have you personally trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, or are you just following religious traditions?
- If you died today, do you know for certain you would go to heaven? On what basis?

Closing Prayer

Pray together:

- Thanking God for His perfect Word and perfect plan
- Asking for courage to stand on Scripture even when it's unpopular
- Seeking wisdom to discern truth from tradition
- Praying for unsaved family and friends who follow traditions but don't know Christ
- Committing to trust God's Word as the final authority

Additional Resources

- Study all four Gospel accounts of the resurrection (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20)
- Research the Jewish calendar and feast days (Leviticus 23)
- Read about church history, particularly the Council of Nicaea (325 AD)
- Review Revelation 2-3 (seven churches representing church history periods)

For Next Week

Come prepared to share:

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1. One tradition you've decided to change based on Scripture
2. A conversation you had with someone about the Wednesday crucifixion
3. How understanding Jesus as our Passover Lamb has deepened your faith

5-Day Bible Reading Plan: Truth Over Tradition

Day 1: The Authority of God's Word

Reading: Colossians 2:6-10

Devotional: Paul warns us against being spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit according to the tradition of men. How often do we follow religious practices simply because "we've always done it this way"? The Colossian believers needed to hear that they were complete in Christ alone—not in rituals, not in man-made observances, but in Him. Today, examine your spiritual life. Are you holding traditions above Scripture? God's Word is our sole authority. When human teaching conflicts with biblical truth, we must have the courage to stand with Scripture. Jesus Christ is sufficient. You need nothing added to Him. Let this truth anchor your faith and free you from religious bondage that adds to the finished work of Christ.

Day 2: Rightly Dividing the Word

Reading: Matthew 12:38-40; Mark 16:9

Devotional: Jesus declared He would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth—a specific, verifiable sign. Yet tradition has obscured this clear biblical timeline. This isn't merely about calendar calculations; it's about whether we trust God's Word as written or adjust it to fit our preferences. When we study Scripture carefully, comparing verse with verse, the Bible interprets itself perfectly. God's precision in fulfilling prophecy—Jesus as the Passover Lamb crucified on Passover itself—demonstrates His sovereignty over every detail. Are you willing to change long-held beliefs when Scripture clearly teaches otherwise? True discipleship requires submitting our understanding to God's revelation, even when it challenges everything we've been taught. Study diligently. Trust completely.

Day 3: Jesus, Our Sabbath Rest

Reading: Hebrews 4:1-11

Devotional: The Old Testament Sabbath pointed forward to something greater—Someone greater. When Jesus Christ came, He fulfilled the Sabbath's meaning. He is our rest. The religious leaders of Jesus' day meticulously observed Sabbath regulations while rejecting the Lord of the Sabbath Himself. How tragic to maintain the shadow while crucifying the substance! Today, many people participate in religious observances while living in rebellion against God. They celebrate traditions but refuse to surrender to Christ. True rest comes not from observing holy days but from ceasing our works and trusting completely in Jesus' finished work. Have you entered His rest? Stop striving in religious performance. Jesus paid it all. Trust Him alone for salvation, and experience the peace that passes understanding.

Day 4: The Lamb of God

Reading: John 1:29-36; 1 Corinthians 5:7

Devotional: From Genesis 22, when Abraham declared "God will provide Himself a lamb," through Exodus 12's Passover, to John the Baptist's proclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God"—all of Scripture points to Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of every Old Testament picture, every sacrifice, every holy day. On Passover, as lambs were being slaughtered throughout Jerusalem, the true Lamb of God hung on the cross at the very location where Abraham offered Isaac. God's timing is perfect. His plans are precise. Nothing happens by accident. When Christ declared "It is finished," He completed everything the Law foreshadowed. The religious calendar found its fulfillment in Him. Today, worship Jesus as your Passover Lamb who takes away your sin. His blood covers you completely.

Day 5: Choosing Truth Over Tradition

Reading: Mark 7:6-13; John 18:28

Devotional: The religious leaders wouldn't enter Pilate's hall lest they be defiled before Passover—yet they orchestrated the murder of God's Son. This stunning hypocrisy reveals the danger of elevating tradition above truth. They kept their customs while crucifying their Creator. Today, billions participate in religious traditions while rejecting biblical truth and living in sin against God. The question isn't whether your traditions are sincere or meaningful to your family—it's whether they align with Scripture. Are you able to sin against God while maintaining your religious observances? That's the test. God desires obedience, not ritual. He wants your heart, not your performance. Examine every belief through Scripture's lens. Be willing to abandon cherished traditions that contradict God's Word. Follow Jesus Christ alone.