

“O Christ, to Keep the Sabbath Day”

This hymn ponders the significance of Holy Saturday. Written in 2010, it is the product of the following small devotion written in 2009.

When the Sabbath Was Past

Here is a question seldom asked. Why did Jesus spend only a short time being dead? In all, He spent: a little bit of Friday, all of Saturday, and a portion of Sunday. This is not very long. Even the body of a person who died just one year ago has already spent well over one hundred times as long in the grave. I will give two answers to this question.

1. I believe that Christ was concerned only with keeping the Sabbath. Of the three days (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday), only one did He “keep” in its entirety: Saturday, the Sabbath. Throughout His ministry, Jesus was accused of breaking the Sabbath. Although He never actually did break it, He observes the Sabbath following His death as no man has ever observed it. He rests wholly and completely from His work of redeeming the world, stopping even His heart from beating. We learn that He fulfills the Sabbath and every other part of the law for us. He rises on Sunday, after the Sabbath has been kept. This is one reason.

2. Another reason is that His disciples could not have lasted much longer without Him. It is doubtful that they ate or even slept. How heartbroken they must have been! And afraid. How then could Christ be “taken away from them” (Matt. 9:15) any longer? He rose as soon as possible to give them—and us—peace, joy, and courage.