



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XII  
Issue 287

# The Myth of Easter

## “The Christian Mythology” Series

by – Clyde L. Pilkington Jr.

There are many myths in Christendom. They have managed to master their own form of mythology. Easter is an example of such a religious fable.

If Easter is the celebration of the historical fact of our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection, then why does its date change every year? Historical dates do not fluctuate; but Easter Sunday can fall anywhere between March 22 and April 25. Have you ever wondered *why*?<sup>1</sup>

It is one of the glaring clues that something is *seriously wrong* with Christendom. The Western Christian religion can't seem to get anything right when it comes to even the simplest of Scripture truths.

Have you ever really considered if there is any scriptural basis for *Good Friday* or *Easter Sunrise Services* that are so commonly observed by the religious community? Additionally, have you ever considered what *Easter Rabbits* and *Easter Eggs* have to do with the resurrection of Christ or the teachings of God's Word?

Although millions of people are of the opinion that Easter and all of its customs are Christian and originated as a result of Christ's resurrection, it is a historical fact that the observance of Easter long antedates Christianity by centuries.



### THE ORIGIN OF EASTER

The English name for *Easter* shows unmistakable traces of heathenism. The name “*Easter*,” which is the slightly changed English spelling of the name of the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian goddess *Ishtar*, comes to us from the old Teutonic mythology where it is known as *Ostera* or *Eostre*. The Phoenician name of this goddess is *Astarte* (Ashtoreth), consort of Baal, whose worship is denounced by Jehovah in the Scriptures as the most abominable of all pagan idolatry.

The English Historian, the Venerable Bede (672-735), is our only source regarding the use of the word *Easter*. He wrote that in Britain the feast was named *Easter* after the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, *Eostre*, whose festival was celebrated at the Vernal Equinox. According to legend, *Eostre* opened the gates of Valhalla to Balder, the murdered Sun god who had brought light to mankind.<sup>2</sup>

Although Easter is a religious holiday, we still follow customs that go back to an ancient festival that was at this time of year long before Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

(continued on page 2643)

- Robert J. Myers, *Celebrations: the Complete Book of American Holidays* (Doubleday & Co., 1972), pp. 103.
- Bernice Burnett, *Greeks and Romans*, (Franklin Watts, Inc., 1955), p.16.

1. This work is based in part on an edited and revised reprint of *The Truth About Easter*, in the *Bible Student's Notebook* #7 (1991).

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## **Bible Student's Notebook™**

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14);
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6);
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*(continued from front page)*

There is no doubt that the [Roman] church in its early days adopted the old pagan customs and have [added] Christian meaning to them. As the festival of *Eostre* was a celebration of life, in the Spring it was easy to adopt the pagan holiday and make it a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.<sup>4</sup>

## GOOD FRIDAY

That Jesus Christ died on Friday seems a simple, sure and straightforward enough fact. Certainly Christendom has this basic and fundamental element accurate, doesn't it?

Most of us have assumed that Jesus died on "Good Friday" and arose from the dead early on "Easter Sunday" morning. Jesus often said He would rise "*the third day*" (Matthew 16:21; Mark 10:34). But He also spoke of this time period and gave it as a specific sign of His Messiahship as being three days and three nights.

*"As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly,"* He said, *"So shall the Son of man be THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS in the heart of the earth"* (Matthew 12:38-40).

Since there are twelve hours in a day and twelve hours in a night (John 11:9-10), if we figure a full "*three days and three nights*," this would equal 72 hours. But was the time element exactly 72 hours?

Jesus was to be in the tomb for "*Three days and three nights*" and "*rise after three days*" (Mark 8:31). We see no reason to figure this as any less than a full 72 hours. On the other hand, if He was to be raised from the dead "in three days" (John 2:19), this does not seem unreasonable to assume that the time period was exactly 72 hours. After all, God is a God of EXACTNESS. He does everything right on schedule. Nothing is accidental with Him.

Since there was an exact time for Christ to be born, an exact time for His anointing, and an exact time for His death, we have no problem believing there was also an exact time period between His burial

and His resurrection – 72 hours exactly. If this is true, then the resurrection took place at the same time of day Jesus was buried – only *three days later*.

What time of day was this? (See chart on next page.)

Jesus died shortly after "*the ninth hour*," or three in the afternoon (Matthew 27:46-50).

*The Jews, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away ... but when they came to Jesus ... He was dead already* (John 19:31-33).

By this time, "*the even was come*" (Mark 15:42), it was late afternoon. The law said,

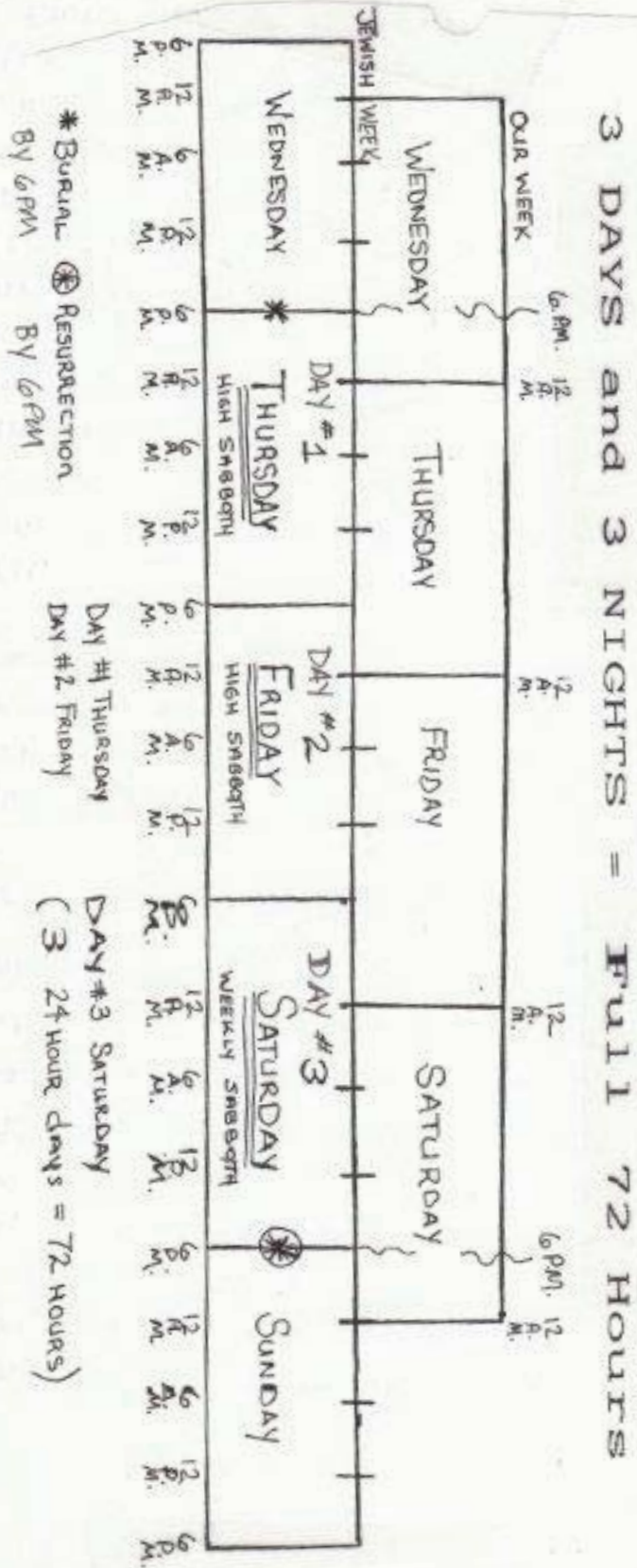
*His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day* (Deuteronomy 21:23).

In the time remaining in that day before sundown, before the high day sabbath began, Joseph of Arimathaea obtained permission to remove the body. He and Nicodemus prepared the body for burial with linen clothes and spices, and placed it in a nearby tomb (John 19:38-42) – all of this being completed by sundown.

If the resurrection took place at the same time of day as when Jesus was buried – only *three days later* – this would place the resurrection close to sundown, not sunrise as is commonly assumed. A sunrise resurrection would have required an extra night – *three days and four nights*. This was not the case, of course. Those who came to the tomb at sunrise, instead of witnessing the resurrection at that precise time, found that the tomb was already empty (Mark 16:2). John's account tells us that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb when "*it was yet dark*" on the first day of the week and Jesus was NOT THERE (John 20:1-2).

The gospel writers tell of several different visits made by the disciples to the tomb on the first day of the week. In EVERY instance, they found the tomb EMPTY! An angel said,

4. Alice Hazeltine, *The Eastern Book of Legends and Stories* (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1947), p. 16.



*He is not here: for He is risen, as He said*  
(Matthew 28:16).

The first day of the week was when the disciples discovered that he was risen (Luke 24:1-2, etc.), but nowhere does the Bible actually say this was the time of the resurrection.

When Sunday morning came, Jesus had already risen, the resurrection having already taken place just before sundown of the day before. Counting back three days would bring us back to Wednesday. Would this make three days and three nights between the burial and the resurrection of Christ? Yes ... This would make a total of exactly three days and three nights, or 72 hours.

Since Jesus was crucified on the day before the sabbath, we can understand why some have thought of Friday as the day of the crucifixion. But the sabbath that followed His death was not the *weekly* sabbath, but an *annual* sabbath,

*For that sabbath was an **high day*** (John 19:14-31).

This sabbath could fall on any day of the week, and that year it apparently came on Thursday. He was crucified and buried on the *preparation day* (Wednesday), the next day was the *high day* sabbath (Thursday), then Friday another sabbath, the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*; followed by the *weekly* sabbath (Saturday), making *three* sabbaths in a row that particular week (Leviticus 23:4-8).

Understanding that there were three sabbaths that week explains how Christ could be crucified on the day before the sabbath came – yet fulfilling His sign of three days and three nights.”<sup>5</sup>

### A “CROSS”? OR A “STAKE”?

Do the Scriptures actually teach that the Lord Jesus Christ was nailed to a “cross”?

The “Christian Cross” is the preeminent symbol of Christendom. However, most are unaware that the Greek word *stauros*, traditionally translated “cross”

in Scripture, actually indicates a simple upright “pole” or “stake.”

Here are definitions for the Greek word *stauros*:

A stake or post. – James A. Strong<sup>6</sup>

An upright pale or stake. – E.W. Bullinger<sup>7</sup>

An upright stake or pale, without any crosspiece. – A.E. Knoch<sup>8</sup>

An upright stake. – Joseph Thayer<sup>9</sup>

A mere stake of one single piece *without* transom [crossbar].<sup>10</sup>

*Staurós*, designated a pointed, vertical wooden stake firmly fixed in the ground. ... They were set up as instruments of torture on which serious offenders of law were publicly suspended to die.<sup>11</sup>

There is nothing in the Greek of the New Testament even to imply two pieces of timber. – E.W. Bullinger<sup>12</sup>

*Stauros* denotes, primarily, an upright pale or stake. On such, malefactors were nailed for execution. Both the noun and the verb *stauroo*, to fasten to a stake or pale, are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of the two-beamed cross. The shape of the latter had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as a symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt. By the middle of the third century A.D. the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from

6. James A. Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, #4716.

7. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*.

8. A.E. Knoch, *Concordant Keyword Concordance*, page 63.

9. Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

10. *The Cyclopædia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*.

11. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1, p. 825.

12. E.W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, Appendix 162: “The Cross and the Crucifixion.”

5. Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion*, pp. 135-139.

regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered [†], was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ. – W.E. Vine<sup>13</sup>

We can see from these Greek language sources that the word “cross” is just another place where religion has “changed the truth of God into a lie.” Our Lord Jesus Christ did not give His life for us on a “cross.” He died on “a stake or post,” or what is elsewhere referred to in the Scriptures as a “tree.”

*Who His Own self bare our sins in His Own body **on the tree** ... (I Peter 2:24).*

*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who **hangs on a tree**” (Galatians 3:13).*

The “cross” is not just something that religion has corrupted for its own purposes; it is something it injected as a replacement for our Savior’s “tree.” There is NOTHING Christian about the pagan “cross.” Genesis’ garden starts with a “Tree” of Life. Revelation end’s with a “Tree” of Life. In between our Savior provided Life for us on a “tree.”

Note these further references to the “cross” and its true origin.

How did the cross find its way into Christian worship? This question must seem strange to those who have ever regarded it as THE Christian Symbol. As a fact (and the evidence is so abundant) the cross is not in any sense a Christian emblem, but a notorious heathen one. It is one of the oldest and best authenticated heathen emblems known to mankind, and the era of its adoration [can be] ascertained by anyone who cares to investigate the subject dispassionately. The cross existed in Africa, Asia, America and Europe as a religious symbol quite two thousand years before the “Christian era.”<sup>14</sup>

In the Egyptian churches the cross was a pagan symbol of life borrowed by the Christians and in-

terpreted in the pagan manner.<sup>15</sup>

It never means two pieces of timber placed across one another at any angle, but always of one piece alone ... Crosses were used as symbols of the Babylonian sun god ... It should be stated that Constantine was a sun god worshipper ... The evidence is thus complete, that the Lord was put to death upon an upright stake, and not on two pieces of timber placed at any angle.<sup>16</sup>

This Pagan symbol ... the Tau, the sign of the cross, the indisputable sign of Tammuz, the false Messiah ... the mystic Tau of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) and Egyptians – the true original form of the letter T, the initial of the name of Tammuz ... the Babylonian cross was the recognized emblem of Tammuz.<sup>17</sup>

The coins of Constantine show an even-armed cross as a symbol for the Sun-god.<sup>18</sup>

It was not until Christianity began to be paganized that the cross came to be thought of as a Christian symbol. It was in 431 A.D. that crosses in churches and chambers were introduced, while the use of crosses on steeples did not come until about 586 A.D. In the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, the crucifix image was introduced and its worship sanctioned by the Church of Rome.<sup>19</sup>

A tradition of the Church which our fathers have inherited was the adoption of the words “cross” and “crucify.” These words are nowhere to be found in the Greek of the New Testament ... Why then was the “cross” brought into the Faith? Again, historical evidence points to Constantine as the one who had the major share in uniting Sun-worship and the Messianic Faith. Constantine’s famous vision of “the cross superimposed on the sun,” in the year 312, is usually cited. Writers, ignorant of the fact that the cross was not to be found in the New Testament Scriptures, put much emphasis on this vision as the onset of the so-called “conversion” ►

15. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition, Vol. 14, page 273.

16. E.W. Bullinger, *The Companion Bible*, Appendix 162.

17. Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* (Loiuzeaux Bros., 1961), pages 197-205.

18. Johannes Geffcken, *The Last Days of Greco-Roman Paganism*, page 319.

19. Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion*, p. 50.

13. W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

14. Baron Alfred Porcelli, *The Cross: Its History, Meaning and Use* (The Protestant Truth Society, 1920), p. 3.

of Constantine. But, unless Constantine had been misguided by the Gnostic Manichean half-Christians, who indeed used the cross in their hybrid religion, this vision of the cross superimposed on the sun could only be the same old cosmic religion, the astrological religion of Babylon. The fact remains: that which Constantine saw, is nowhere to be found in Scripture ...

As stated above, the indisputable sign of Tammuz, the mystic Tau of the Babylonians and Egyptians, was brought into the Church chiefly because of Constantine, and has since been adored with all the homage due only to the Most High. The Protestants have for many years refrained from undue adoration of, or homage to the cross, especially in England at the time of the Puritans in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries. But lately this un-Scriptural symbol has been increasingly accepted in Protestantism ...

The evidence for its pagan origin is so convincing that *The Catholic Encyclopedia* admits that “the sign of the cross, represented in its simplest form by a crossing of two lines at right angles, greatly antedates, in both the East and the West, the introduction of Christianity. It goes back to a very remote period of human civilization.” It then continues and refers to the Tau cross of the pagan Egyptians, “In later times the Egyptian Christians (Copts), attracted by its form, and perhaps by its symbolism, adopted it as the emblem of the cross.” Further proof of its pagan origin is the recorded evidence of the Vestal Virgins of pagan Rome having the cross hanging on a necklace, and the Egyptians doing it too, as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. The Buddhists, and numerous other sects of India, also used the sign of the cross as a mark on their followers’ heads.<sup>20</sup>

The “cross” itself, long revered as the symbol of Christ’s crucifixion, actually originated in the pagan cultures. The Aztecs who had never heard of Christ, had used the symbol of the cross centuries earlier. The translators of the New Testament mistranslated the Greek term which meant “stake” into the word “cross.” It would be more correct to say that Jesus was crucified on a big tree-like stake. It is reported, scholars and the Anglican

clergy were aware of this in the Eighteenth Century. The cross was not adopted until about three hundred years after the crucifixion, and it wasn’t portrayed in Christian art until the middle of the Fifth Century ... The cross was another pagan symbol adopted and claimed by the Church.<sup>21</sup>

... The crucifix – a cross, a sculpture of art, an icon of human sentiment – is as false as it can be, because our Lord was not crucified on a cross. He was crucified on a pole or a stake – an upright stake. Now that’s a historical fact. The cross is an emblem of the Christian religion, a worldwide religion, a worldwide deception ... The cross of Christianity is tainted, it’s already wrong; it’s only an emblem, a piece of jewelry, a status symbol that you belong to the club ... and yet Christianity is totally and emotionally in love with it – infatuated.<sup>22</sup>

### **CHRIST’S RESURRECTION: Did He Really Rise from the DEAD?**

Christianity has somehow managed to embrace the lie of Satan found in Genesis 3:4,

*You shall not surely die.*

When people die, we are taught that somehow they are not really *dead*, but *alive* somewhere else. This is also taught concerning the death of Christ; but it must be remembered that resurrection is at the very heart of the gospel.

*Christ died for our sins, was buried and was raised the third day* (I Corinthians 15:1-5).

Paul confirms that, without the resurrection, there would be no hope:

*If Christ is not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins. Then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable* (I Corinthians 15:17-19).

In fact, Paul devotes his longest chapter to this vital subject of resurrection (I Corinthians 15).

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21. Robert W. Stace, *Why Weren't We Told?* 2001, p. 83.

22. Martin Zender, *Crack O' Dawn Report*, #31 (2011).

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20. *The Final Reformation* (Institute for Scripture Research).

Again, the Christian religion as a whole has propagated the idea that the dead are not actually “dead,” but remarkably “alive” somewhere else. It is also taught that Christ was really not dead and in His tomb, but actually off “alive” doing other things during those “*three days*” of the gospel. This is not the truth of the Scriptures. Rather, the very heart of the gospel is that “**Christ DIED for our sins, was buried and was raised the third day**” (I Corinthians 15:1-5).

### The Condition of Death

Death is simple: it is the *end of life*. In the Scriptures the dead are dead, and are therefore always in contrast with the living.

In death there is no praise of the Lord.

*While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises to my God while I have any being* (Psalm 146:1-2).

*The dead praise not the LORD, neither any who go down into silence* (Psalm 115:17).

In death man returns to the earth.

*He returns to his earth ...* (Psalm 146:4).

*They die, and return to their dust* (Psalm 104:29).

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was ...* (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

In death man’s thoughts perish.

*In that very day his thoughts perish* (Psalm 146:4).

In death man knows nothing.

*For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything* (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

*Whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go* (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

In death man is silent.

*The dead praise not the LORD, neither any who go down into silence* (Psalm 115:17).

### God’s Remedy for Death

God’s remedy for death is so simple: it is the resurrection of the dead!

Man speaks of death as a friend, but God speaks of it as an *enemy*!

*For He must reign, until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death* (I Corinthians 15:25-26).

God will destroy death in resurrection!

*But now is Christ raised from the dead, and become the Firstfruits of them who slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the Firstfruits; afterward they who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power* (I Corinthians 15:20-24).

### The Resurrection and the Gospel

The Lord Jesus Christ REALLY DID *rise from the dead*.

Many a gospel message has been spoiled and robbed of its power by omitting the great truth of the resurrection.<sup>23</sup>

Failure to grasp the truth concerning death strikes at the very heart of the gospel. ... Jesus Christ endured it to the full, in order to become man’s Savior. ... “*The wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). “*Christ died for our sins, was buried and was raised the third day*” (I Corinthians 15:1-5).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup>. Stuart Allen, *Resurrection and the Purpose of the Ages* (Berean Publishing Trust, 1957).

<sup>24</sup>. Tom Ballanger, *Heaven Dwellers*.



## LENT

The word *Lent* “is derived from the old English *lencten*, meaning the ‘spring.’”<sup>25</sup> Lent is not based upon the Scriptures, but has ancient pagan roots, being the forty-day custom of abstaining from certain foods in springtime just prior to celebrating the annual commemoration of the mythical death and resurrection of the pagan Babylonian deity Tammuz.

Even the *Catholic Dictionary* admits,

There is no mention in Scripture of the observance of Lent, or, indeed, of any determined time for fasting among Christians.<sup>26</sup>

## EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

There is no scriptural basis for Christians to observe an “Easter Sunrise Service” to commemorate the resurrection (as we have already studied, Christ rose long before sunrise).

An ancient (Pagan) belief connected with the rising of the sun is that it was possible to see the sun dance in the sky, if you beheld it just at dawn.<sup>27</sup>

God has some strong words for sun worshippers. God showed the prophet Ezekiel the sins of his people in a vision.

*“Have you seen this O son of man? Turn yet again, and you shalt see greater abominations than these.” And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD’s house, and behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then he said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here?” (Ezekiel 8:15-16).*

Is this not what millions are doing in Easter Sun-

<sup>25</sup>. *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology*, p. 321.

<sup>26</sup>. *Catholic Dictionary*, p. 512.

<sup>27</sup>. Robert J. Myers, *op. cit.*

rise “worship” services as they stand with their faces toward the east, as the sun is rising? Deceived into believing that this is Christian, millions are practicing, unwittingly, the rites of ancient sun worship that honors the sun god Baal and his mythical idolatrous consort, the goddess Eostre (Easter).

## THE SHIFTING DAYS OF EASTER

In A.D. 325 the Roman Catholic Council of Nicea decreed that the Easter festival should be celebrated on the Sunday following the full moon after (or on) the Vernal Equinox being deemed to occur on March 21<sup>st</sup>; and that if the moon happened to be full on Sunday, then Easter Day should be the Sunday after. Thus it is that Easter is governed in its day by the spring moon ... and has nothing to do with Christianity or the resurrection.<sup>28</sup>

Eventually, a permanent table was established for determining the *Ecclesiastical Full Moon*, and has been used ever since to determine the date of Easter. According to the Ecclesiastical tables, the Paschal Full Moon is on the day of the first *Ecclesiastical Full Moon* after March 20 (which was the date of the vernal equinox in 325 AD). Therefore Easter is observed on the Sunday immediately following the Paschal Full Moon. The Paschal Full Moon can vary as much as two days from the date of the actual full moon, with dates ranging from March 21 to April 18. As a result, Easter dates can range from March 22 through April 25.

On the other hand, however, the date of Christ’s death and resurrection are historical facts. He died on Nisan 14<sup>th</sup> and rose on Nisan 17<sup>th</sup>. This is confirmed in the great research work of E.W. Bullinger in his *Appendixes to the Companion Bible*.<sup>29</sup>

## EASTER IN SCRIPTURE

The word “Easter” does not appear in the Greek or Hebrew Scriptures, yet the *King James Version* of Scripture erroneously uses “Easter” in its translation of Acts 12:4.

<sup>28</sup>. Christina Hale, *Easter and its Customs* (M. Burrows & Co., 1961), pp. 8-9.

<sup>29</sup>. E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913), *Appendixes to the Companion Bible*, (reprinted by Bible Student’s Press: Windber, PA; 2010), Appendixes 144, 156, 165, 166.

*Then when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quarters of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.*

In this verse the *King James Version* translators used “Easter” for the Greek word *pascha* without any justification. *Pascha* means “Passover,” and in every other instance the *King James Version* translators translated it correctly as “Passover.” In other words, it is translated 28 times as “Passover” and only this once as “Easter.”

All of the literal translations (*Concordant, Diaglott, Rotherham, Weymouth, Young*) accurately translate *pascha* as “Passover” in Acts 12:4, as do other other English translations (*ASV, Darby, etc.*).

### **BUNNIES AND EGGS: Other Pagan Associations with Spring Festivals**

#### **Easter Eggs**

Dyed Easter eggs also figured in the ancient Babylonian mystery rites, just as they do in Easter observance today.

The ancient Druids bore an egg as the sacred emblem of their idolatrous order.<sup>30</sup>

Eggs were sacred to many ancient civilizations and formed an integral part of the religious ceremonies in Egypt and in the Orient.

The association and use of brightly colored eggs as the symbols of the renewal of life are a part of a custom that goes back centuries before Christ.

Ancient pagan history depicts the egg as a symbol of fertility.

Eggs were hung up in the Egyptian temples. Bunsen calls attention to the mundane egg, the emblem of generative life, proceeding from the mouth of the great god of Egypt. The mystic egg of Babylon, hatching the Venus Ishtar, fell from

heaven to the Euphrates. Dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt, as they still are in China and Europe. Easter, or spring, was the season of birth, terrestrial and celestial.<sup>31</sup>

The coloring of the egg at the spring festival is also of a very ancient origin. The Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans used it in this way. In medieval England the priest blessed the Easter egg in a form authorized by Pope Paul V, in the course of which he said they were eaten “in thankfulness on the account of the resurrection of our Lord.”<sup>32</sup>

The ancient Egyptians and Persians often dyed eggs in spring colors and gave them to their friends as gifts. The Persians believed that the earth was hatched from a giant egg.<sup>33</sup>

#### **The Easter Rabbit**

Although the use of the chocolate Easter bunny is rather recent, the use of the rabbit itself can be traced back to the ancients as a symbol of rapid productivity. Actually, it is the hare and not the rabbit that is the secular Easter symbol.

Easter is a moveable feast dependent for its date on the phase of the moon. From antiquity the hare has been a symbol of the moon. Hares are born with their eyes open, rabbits are born blind, the Egyptian name for the hare is *un*, meaning “open” or “to open,” and the full moon watched open-eyed throughout the night. According to legend, the hare was thought never to blink or close its eyes. Like the moon it is a nocturnal creature. It carries its seed for about a month before giving birth. Both the moon and the hare were considered to be hermaphroditic; the waxing moon being masculine and the waning moon feminine.

The hare and the egg were also supposed to have been symbols of the spring goddess Eostre, and as such they were emblematic of fertility.

The children are told that the rabbit lays the ►

<sup>30</sup>. Edward Davies, *The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids*, p. 210.

<sup>31</sup>. James Bonwick, *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thoughts*, p. 211-212.

<sup>32</sup>. Robert J. Myers, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup>. *World Book Encyclopedia* (1977), Vol. 6, pp. 25-26.

Easter eggs and the eggs are sometimes hidden for the children to find. This is the adaptation of the pagan custom of regarding the rabbit as an emblem of fertility, that is, of new life.<sup>34</sup>

Thus the modern version of hunting eggs supposedly deposited by a rabbit is simply a simulation of an ancient fertility rite.

While it may not be pagan simply to color an egg or eat a chocolate rabbit, they have no association with the Scriptures and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## EASTER AND CHRISTIANITY

How was the pagan festival of Easter incorporated into professing Christianity? It is rooted in the assimilation of pagan festivals by the Roman Catholic Church for the sake of increasing their subjects and temporal power.

To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, (the) Roman (Church) pursuing its usual policy, took measure to get the Christian and pagan festivals amalgamated, and by a complicated but skillful adjustment of the calendar, it was found no difficult matter, in general, to get Paganism and Roman Catholicism, now far sunk in idolatry, in this as in many other things, to shake hands.<sup>35</sup>

## NO PROHIBITION NO AVOIDANCE

Some will take the truths presented here regarding the pagan influences on springtime celebrations to establish some type of avoidance or prohibition of them on the part of the believer, as if these practices are somehow “unclean.”

It is not our purpose to raise the issue of pagan practices with the intent that there be a prohibition against them. Much of the practices of the societies and cultures of the world around us are steeped in pagan influence. This is because they are rooted in heathen traditions void of the knowledge of the true and living God of Scripture; but according to Paul

34. George William Douglas, *American Book of Days* (The H.W. Wilson Co., 1937), p. 189.

35. Alexander Hislop, *Op. Cit.*, p. 105.

this does not make them “unclean.”

*I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself* (Romans 14:14).

*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not ... I will not be brought under the power of any* (I Corinthians 10:23; 6:12).

So much of everyday life can be traced to pagan roots. A notable example of how far it reaches into our daily lives is the names of the days of the week, and the names of the months of the year. Pagan roots are unavoidable, and according to Paul are no real issue for the believer. In both I Corinthians 8 and Romans 14 Paul discusses the topics of eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols. In essence he says that it doesn't matter to God if you do or don't. To the Corinthians he even goes so far as to say that there are no such things as pagan “gods.” He says that idols are really “nothing.” They're just made up in the imaginations of those who live in ignorance of the true God. Therefore, eating meat offered to idols (*i.e.*, “nothing”) was really no big deal. Paul's only warning was to those who are weak and do not have a clear understanding of this important truth.

In these two chapters Paul lays forth the important principle of the believer's liberty that can be applied to every aspect of our lives. Paganism is just simply a part of our historical past. There don't need to be any worries of avoidance or prohibitions of pagan practices, but neither are we constrained or bound by them. In the case of the cultural celebration of pagan spring rites and rituals, we just need to recognize them for what they are. They are as harmless to us as was the meat sacrificed to idols. Enjoy them if you like; but realize that you are free from their bondage, and that they have no relationship to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor bearing on the truth of Scripture. If you do enjoy springtime customs, you can do so with the recognition of what they really are – just a bit of your ancestral heathen fun – but nonetheless meaningless, since paganism is really “nothing.” The trouble comes in trying to marry their myths to the truth of God's Word and

*(continued on back page)*

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the fact of the glorious resurrection of Christ. Keep the truth the truth. Keep cultural customs cultural customs.

### **BELIEVERS REJOICE IN CHRIST'S RESURRECTION**

*If Christ is not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins (I Corinthians 15:17).*

If asked for the reason for an annual Easter observation, most will reply, "Well, I think it's good to remember and celebrate the resurrection of Christ." Fine, but why do it just once a year based on unscriptural teaching and in a manner that is unmistakably steeped in paganism and Romanism?

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is not an event to be observed as a "holy day" once a year. It is

a truth that is to be remembered and lived *every day* by the believer.

*You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain (Galatians 4:10-11).*

Why restrict worship to certain man-made days? Paul said that some, who are weak in faith, observe special days to the Lord, while those who are strong observe every day alike to the Lord (Romans 14). Every day is a day of worship, a day of celebration. Religions have "holy-days," nations have "holidays"; but for us who truly know Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, *every day* is a "holy-day" and every day a "holiday."

Celebrate Christ's resurrected life every day!

## *No Exceptions!*

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the **WORLD!** Not *part* of the world; not the *potential* Savior of the world; but *ALL* of mankind will be restored to the Father through Christ – **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Adam brought sin to all of mankind. Jesus Christ brought righteousness to all of mankind. Jesus reversed the sin and the curse for **EVERYONE!**

Did we need to come to Adam? Did we need to believe in Adam or accept Adam? Is the Last Adam less influential over the masses of humanity that He requires something more than being in the first Adam? **NOT!**

– *Dennis Collis*

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