

How Should A Christian Observe Easter?

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The churches of this world place much emphasis on their two most important holidays: Christmas and Easter. Many people who stay away from church on Sundays will make their appearance on these two days. Church attendance is at its highest on Christmas and Easter.

The attitude demonstrated by this twice-yearly church attendance usually generates some consternation. During these two seasons, the following is often heard, not only from lay members, but also from the pulpit: "Why do so many of our members ignore church during the year, but then take an interest in religion over the holiday seasons?"

This is a fair question.

Is there a right or wrong attitude to have during these two major holidays? Is it possible that there could be improvement in the way these two days are kept?

Let's find out how the dedicated Christian should observe the Easter season. Let's see if there is an attitude which should prevail in the hearts and minds of Christians during this important Spring festival.

Before we begin, however, the reader should be cautioned. If you feel that what is written in the Bible is not important, then you need read no further. You should probably lay this booklet aside and forget about the whole subject of Easter.

But if what is contained in the Bible is important to you, then you should ask God to guide you as you investigate. The subject of holidays is not one to be taken lightly. Once a person **understands** the truth, he is **held accountable** for his subsequent actions.

In a very short while, you will be given the truth regarding the Easter holiday and its accompanying season. Once you have received this truth, it then becomes your responsibility to act on it accordingly!

Easter in the Bible

The first oddity we find in looking at Easter is that it is mentioned only once in the Bible! Doesn't this seem strange since we consider Easter one of the two most important holidays in Christianity?

The single Scripture is Acts 12:4, "And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."

It is important to note that the word "Easter" as it appears in the King James Version of the Bible was translated from the original Greek word "pascha."

Remember, the New Testament was originally written in Greek--not in English. The Greek word "pascha" was used by the original writers 29 times. **Only once** did the King James scholars translate it to read "Easter." They correctly translated it to "Passover" the other 28 times!

So, when we read Acts 12:4 in the King James Bible, we know that the word "Easter" should not be there. The correct word should be "Passover."

Perhaps you still are not convinced. If this is the case, then you should read Acts 12:4 in other translations of the Bible. Look up this Scripture in the Revised Standard Version, the New King James Bible, the Moffatt translation, the Living Bible, and the Modern Language Bible. If you do, you will find that virtually every other Bible translation acknowledges that the word "Easter" should not be found nowhere in the Bible!

How Easter Really Began

We now have a problem. We want to learn more about Easter, but we cannot find it in the Bible! Can we go to other places to learn about this important holiday?

Of course we can. We can go to any encyclopedia and obtain considerable information on the subject. It is suggested that the reader go to several such sources for additional insights. In the meantime, here is what one publication tells us:

"Easter, a Christian festival embodies many pre-Christian traditions. The origin of its name is unknown. Scholars, however, accepting the derivation proposed by the 8th-century English scholar St. Bede, believe it probably comes from Eastr, the Anglo-Saxon name of a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility, to whom was dedicated a month corresponding to April.

"...traditions associated with the festival survive in the Easter rabbit, a symbol of fertility, and in colored easter eggs, originally painted with bright colors...

"Such festivals, and the stories and legends that explain their origin, were common in ancient religions" (Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia, Vol I., 8, p, 433).

Did you catch that? The origin of Easter actually pre-dates Jesus Christ! It was a pagan festival honoring a mythical goddess! Its origins are non-biblical and non-Christian!

Easter and Christianity

At this point, an obvious question needs to be asked. "If Easter is not a holiday found in the Bible, and if its origins are found in paganism, how did it ever become part of the religious beliefs of the world's churches?"

Our answer begins with the early Christian church which was formed immediately after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This body of believers was Hebrew in many ways. The apostolic church observed the Old Testament holy days such as Passover and Pentecost. They worshipped in the Temple and at the synagogues. **And they did not celebrate Easter!**

The church which came on the scene after the deaths of Peter, James, John and Paul began to take on a new character. After the first century, the Christians who continued religious practices taught by the apostles were persecuted. During the second Jewish war

(132- 135 AD), all racial Jews were expelled from Jerusalem by the government in Rome. Thereafter, the church in Jerusalem was ruled by Gentiles--people who brought in new religious practices. Power over the Christian church soon shifted to Rome.

As Christianity spread throughout the civilized world, it began incorporating many Gentiles with pagan religious beliefs. In order to entice these new converts, church leaders allowed them to retain many of their heathen practices. Paganism began to be GRAFTED into the very body of this new church which called itself Christian.

"Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it...Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world" (Will Durant, Caesar and Christ, p. 595).

The mixing of paganism and Bible teachings continued throughout the Middle Ages. Emperors such as Charlemagne (about 800 AD) forced whole tribes of pagans into the church. These reluctant non-believers begrudgingly accepted the name of Jesus Christ, but held on to their non-Christian beliefs and practices.

One of the pagan holidays observed by those conquered by Charlemagne was a spring festival of resurrection dedicated to the goddess Easter. Although the conquered tribes changed the focus of their observance from the goddess to Jesus Christ, they still called it Easter. The church follows their example to this day.

The hybridization of paganism and Bible teachings played a key role in the spread of Christianity over the past 2,000 years. Many churches base their doctrines on this foundation.

Again, the original New Testament Church did NOT keep Easter. Scholars have shown again and again that the early church kept the holy days taught in the Old Testament.

"There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament... The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed. Thus the Passover, with a new conception added to it, of Christ as the true Paschal Lamb and the first fruits from the dead, continued to be observed" (Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 8, pp. 828-829).

Easter Bunnies and Colored Eggs

If we are unable to find Easter in the Bible and we know that it comes from pagan religions, why do we celebrate it with bunnies and brightly colored eggs? After all, bunnies do not lay eggs.

The egg was an important religious symbol to many ancient peoples. To them the egg represented fertility. Remember that in many pagan cultures, sex and procreation were an important part of religion. The sex act itself was performed as a rite in cults devoted to goddess worship. These false religions, which were widespread in antiquity, promoted degeneracy among their followers.

The ancient Babylonians loved the concept of an egg, which to them represented the regeneration of life. These people enjoyed painting eggs with bright colors. They then hid them so others could search for them and had contests to see who could find the most eggs. Sound familiar?

But this custom did not originate in Christianity. The ritual use of eggs extends back to the dawn of civilization. As archaeologists point out, Easter itself is but a "Christianization of more ancient spring re-generation rituals"! (Marija Gimbutas, The Language of the Goddess, p. 213.) The people of antiquity believed that a cosmogonic egg was the agent of creation, as well as a later symbol of human fertility.

The Babylonians were not the only ones to include the egg in their religious practices. The Druids, the Romans, the Persians, the Egyptians, the Chinese, and the Japanese also made ritual use of eggs.

"The egg as a symbol of fertility and of renewed life goes back to the ancient Egyptians and Persians, who had also the custom of coloring and eating eggs during their spring festival" (The Encyclopedia Britannica, article entitled "Easter").

The conversion of thousands of pagans brought these practices into the church. Eventually, the Catholic Church, in order to appease the masses, felt compelled to place its stamp of approval on the use of eggs. Pope Paul V, who ruled from 1605 to 1621, gave the following prayer: "Bless, O Lord, we beseech thee, this thy creature of eggs that it may become wholesome sustenance unto thy servants, eating it in remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 5, p. 227).

The church gave its blessing to pagan practices in its rituals!

And what about the Easter bunny?

The history of this creature in pagan religions is very similar to that of the egg. The rabbit, with its ability to reproduce at a rate faster than most other mammals, was also a symbol of fertility in the ancient rites of goddesses such as Ishtar, Astarte, and Easter (note the similarity of names). Like the egg, the rabbit has been carelessly accepted by the church in its Easter celebration.

Easter Sunrise Services

Many churches hold their Easter services at dawn so that their worship coincides with sunrise. This practice is supposedly based on the assumption that Christ rose on Sunday morning. Indeed, most professing Christians believe Jesus rose at that time. But is this belief based on New Testament evidence?

During His earthly ministry, Jesus performed many miracles. He healed the sick, raised the dead, calmed the sea, and made water from wine. But He told His disciples that none of these miracles were actual PROOF that He was the Messiah.

Notice that Jesus said: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonas:

"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and in three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39-40).

This is a very important Scripture. Jesus said His being in the tomb for three days and three nights was the **only** sign that He was who He said He was. It is clear that if Jesus was NOT in the tomb three days and three nights, then He was NOT the Savior!

But what do the churches of this world teach? They teach that Jesus died Friday afternoon and that He rose on Sunday morning!

Did you ever stop to think about that? This teaching of a late Friday afternoon death and a Sunday morning resurrection actually *indicates that Jesus was not the Messiah!* From 3:00 p.m. Friday afternoon to Sunday morning before sunrise is only about 36 hours! From Friday afternoon to Sunday morning is only two nights and one day!

Remember, Jesus said He had to be in the tomb three days and. three nights—a full 72 hour period. **Anything less would disqualify Him from being our Savior.**

Again, this was the ONLY sign of Jesus' Messiahship!

Churches have come up with many ingenious ways to explain this discrepancy. Instead of teaching the TRUTH--that Jesus died at sundown on Wednesday and was resurrected at sundown on the weekly Sabbath--they twist other Scriptures such as Genesis 42:17-18; I Samuel 30:12-13; I Kings 20:29; and I Chronicles 10:5.

It is claimed that these Bible passages demonstrate that a part of a 24 hour period can be a day. But the fact remains that none of the above prove that three days and three nights are equal to two nights and one day!

When the Bible talks about a day, it means a period of time which begins at dusk and ends at dusk, 24 hours later (Leviticus 23:32).

During the Creation epic we are told that "...the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:5). A Biblical day consists of a 12 hour period of darkness followed by a 12 hour period of light.

The problem with our three days and three nights controversy begins with a faulty assumption. When reading the Gospel accounts which tell us that Jesus was crucified on "the day before the Sabbath," the world assumes that it is the weekly Sabbath being discussed.

We must never lose sight of the fact that Jesus and His disciples observed other Sabbaths--annual Sabbaths--in addition to the weekly Sabbath. These annual high days can be found in Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16.

The Sabbath day which followed Jesus' crucifixion was one of those annual high days (John 19:31). It was the first day of unleavened bread, which fell on a Thursday in the year that Jesus was killed.

Remember that the Jews began their day at sunset. A high day which fell on a Thursday would begin Wednesday evening around 6:00 pm. The Jews wanted Jesus and the two thieves removed from Calvary and buried before Wednesday sunset.

When Was Jesus Resurrected?

"But didn't Jesus rise on Sunday morning?" you ask. NO! Read the Scriptures for yourself. Notice **what** happens and **when** it happens on the wonderful day of His resurrection.

The two Marys came to Jesus' tomb "in the end of the Sabbath" (Matthew 28:1). Was this the annual Sabbath which fell on a Thursday? No. We are **not** talking about the weekly Sabbath which fell on the 7th day of the week.

As we pointed out, a day for the Jews began and ended at sunset. When the two Marys came to His tomb "in the end of the sabbath," they arrived at sunset.

People use Mark 16:9 as "proof" that Jesus rose on Sunday morning. "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene..."

Notice the comma after the word "week." It should be noted that this comma was **not** in the original Greek text. The comma in the King James Version of the Bible was added centuries AFTER the original text was written by Mark. Removing the comma changes the meaning. With the comma gone, the verse no longer implies that Jesus had risen early the first day of the week. Notice how the Revised English Bible translates the same verse: "When he had risen from the dead, early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary of Magdala..."

Can you see how it makes more sense? This account shows that He had already risen. Then early on the first day of the week, He appears to Mary. Again, when did the first day of the week begin? Around 6:00 pm Saturday night.

The sequence is now very clear:

- 1) Jesus dies and is buried around 6:00 pm Wednesday evening.
- 2) Jesus is resurrected exactly three days and three nights later, around 6:00 pm Saturday evening.
- 3) Sometime shortly after 6:00 pm Saturday evening the two Marys approach the tomb and talk to Him.

Jesus' proof of Messiahship discredits those who teach that He died Friday night and was raised on Sunday morning!

Why Is Any of This Important?

At this point, you may be asking the question, "Why is any of this important? So what if Easter is not based on the Bible? So what if the apostles never kept it? Even if Easter contains paganism, what harm is there in observing it?"

There is a great deal of harm in following such practices! God condemns them!

Jesus said that the true followers of God must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). Easter is not based on the truth. It is founded on false concepts that deny God as creator. Easter focuses on goddesses and symbols of fertility and celebrates them as the source of life. What an abominable lie!

Proverbs 14:12 says that "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death." God's Word makes it clear that we cannot make judgments based on our own suppositions. We must base our judgments on the very Word of God.

When God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, He told them specifically NOT to follow the way of the pagan. He knew that His people would be tempted to go after the heathen gods of the people who lived nearby.

He warned Israel, "Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage..."

"Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you" (Deuteronomy 6:12, 14).

God further told His people that they were to worship Him as He directed. They were not to add to nor subtract from His way of worship (Deuteronomy 12:32).

God also said, "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jeremiah 10:2).

Yet, the children of Israel did this very thing. They turned away from His days and followed the ways of the heathen. The churches of this world are no different. God says to observe His Sabbath. The world's churches worship on Sunday. God says to observe His annual high days. The world's churches keep days rooted in paganism and think that those holidays are somehow consecrated to Him.

What Should You Do?

No matter how one tries to blend Christianity with paganism, Easter does **not** commemorate the resurrection of Jesus. Easter is an abomination to God Almighty! God gives clear instructions to those who understand His truth. Speaking of the great false religion, the Bible tells us to "come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

Will you come out of the world's system of false religion?

We began this study by asking how a Christian should observe Easter. Based on God's Word and on the history of this holiday, could it be plainer? A Christian should NOT EVER observe Easter!

For more information, check out DynamicChristianMinistries.org.

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