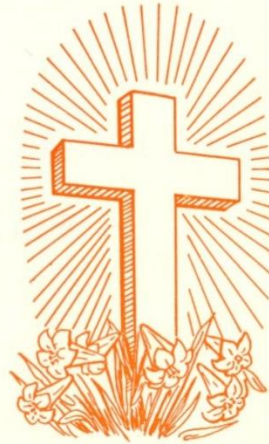


What  
Christians  
Should  
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# EASTER



He is not here: for  
He is risen. Matt. 28:6

**What Christians Should  
Know About Easter**

*A Study  
Of the Word of God  
In the Interest of Bible Truth*



**The Bible Advocate Press**  
Stanberry, Missouri 64489

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## WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT EASTER

Just a minute, please! How much do you know about Easter?

Inasmuch as this is one of the chiefest of religious days—one which is widely and ceremoniously celebrated by the Christian world in general—it would seem logical that every Christian would be vitally interested in this subject and that one would naturally expect to find ready answers in the Bible to questions pertaining to it.

Therefore, this pamphlet about Easter has been prepared to challenge your knowledge about this special day and to set forth what we believe to be interesting facts about it.

First we would ask this question: Easter is always celebrated on Sunday; why is this, when Christmas falls on every day of the week? Did it ever occur to you that this is peculiar? It is commonly said that Easter is celebrated because Christ was resurrected on that day. Is that your answer to our question?

If it is and if Christ did resurrect on Sunday, why is it that the anniversary of this event always falls on Sunday? Birthdays do not come on the same day every year. Neither does Independence Day, nor New Years, nor Christmas. What is the answer to this peculiarity about Easter?

If this is a Biblically-endorsed festival we should expect to find satisfactory and convincing information about it in the Bible,



which is the foundation of the Christian religion. So we will go to this Source Book to see what we can find. It does not take long to discover that there is only one place in the Bible where the word *Easter* occurs—in Acts 12:4 (in the King James version). This is the quotation:

*And when he [Herod] had apprehended him [Peter], 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.*

This should register as being rather singular—that so much religious significance is attached to an event that is only mentioned once in all the Bible and then in such a matter-of-fact way. No teaching or instruction regarding the occasion nor direct information about it is set forth in this verse. It is only mentioned in connection with what Herod intended to do with Peter. Therefore, we proceed to investigate this word.

#### A Mistranslation

It is to be found that *Easter* is of Anglo-Saxon origin and that this language was not used in the days when the Bible was written. Going back to the original language in which the New Testament (commonly so-called) was written, we find that the word *Easter* is translated from the word *pascha* (pronounced *paska*). In 1 Corinthians 5:7 the same original word (*pascha*) is used, and

here it is rendered "*passover*" (in the King James version). Why should this word be rendered in two different ways, when Easter and Passover are not synonymous? The fact is, it should not be.

It is interesting to note the way this word is translated in other versions—in Acts 12:4 and 1 Corinthians 5:7. We here list a few:

*American Standard Version:*

"Passover" and "passover."

*Revised Standard Version:*

"passover" and "paschal lamb."

*Revised Version (1881):*

"Passover" and "passover."

*Emphatic Diaglott:*

"Passover" and "Paschal Lamb."

*Moffatt's translation:*

"passover" and "paschal lamb."

George Ricker Berry's *Greek New Testament Interlinear:*

"passover" both places.

Thus it can be seen that it is well-recognized that the word *Easter* is spurious and not considered to be the proper translation. Why then, one might naturally ask, does the King James version use it?

For the answer we turn to history as is recorded in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1892 ed., Vol. VII, pp. 613, 614):

"EASTER, the annual festival observed throughout Christendom in commemoration of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word *Easter*—Anglo-Saxon, *Eastre*, *Eos-*

ter; German, *Ostern*—like the names of the days of the week, is a survival from the old Teutonic mythology. According to Bede it is derived from *Eostre*, or *Ostara*, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, to whom the fourth month, answering to our April—thence called *Eostur-monath*—was dedicated.”

“There is no trace of the celebration of Easter as a Christian festival in the New Testament or in the writings of the apostolic fathers. The sanctity of special times or places was an idea quite alien from the early Christian mind . . . The ecclesiastical historian Socrates states with perfect truth that neither Christ nor his apostles enjoined the keeping of this or any other festival. ‘The apostles,’ he writes, ‘had no thought of appointing festival days, but of promoting a life of blamelessness and piety;’ and he attributes the introduction of the festival of Easter into the church to the perpetuation of an old usage, ‘just as many other customs have been established.’ The first Christians, being derived from, or intimately connected with, the Jewish church, naturally continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events of which these had been shadows.”

“But though the observance of the Paschal festival at a very early period became the rule in the Christian church, a difference as to the time of its observance speedily sprang up between Christians of Jewish and Gentile descent . . . With the Jewish Christians, whose

leading thought would be the death of Christ as the true Paschal Lamb, this fast would end at the same time as that of the Jews, on the 14th day of the moon, at evening, and the Easter festival would immediately follow, entirely *irrespective of the day of the week*. With the Gentile Christians . . . the first day of the week would be identified with the resurrection festival, and the preceding Friday would be kept as the commemoration of the Crucifixion, *irrespective of the day of the month* . . . With the one, therefore, the observance of the day of the month, with the other the observance of the day of the week, was the ruling principle. . . . Those who, adopting the Jewish rule, did so keep the 14th day were called *Quartodecimani*, and were stigmatized as heretics. In the absence of any authoritative decision as to the day to be observed and the proper mode of calculating it, other discrepancies arose, which led to controversies and dissensions which, in the words of Epiphanius . . . ‘distracted the church, and became a source of mockery and ridicule to the unbelievers’.”

“This diversity of usage was gradually brought to an end by the verdict of the Church of Rome . . . A decretal of Pope Pius I, c. 147—the genuineness of which, however, is by no means established—pronounces that ‘the Pash should be celebrated on the Lord’s Day by all.’ His successor Anicetus was equally firm upon the point. Polycarp, the



venerable and sainted bishop of Smyrna, who . . . visited Rome in 159 with this object, failed to induce Anicetus to conform to the Quartodeciman usage, which Polycarp had inherited from his master, the Apostle John."

From the foregoing historical record it can be seen that the word *Easter* comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *Eastre* or *Ostara*—their goddess of spring. The Anglo-Saxons observed the advent of spring with zealous fervor and much ceremony—of a religious nature.

The Christian church, soon after the days of the apostles, found that they had much to contend with in attempts to Christianize these people. Practically every heathen religion had some religious ceremonies at this season, even to celebrating the revival of vegetation, which to them signified the resurrection of the dead vegetation.

#### **Compromised with Heathen**

Many of the early churchmen, like many of our own time, seeking to add numbers to their faith made many compromises with the heathen. Many of these compromises were legalized, as far as the apostate church was concerned, by councils and edicts during the time of Constantine, the first (so-called) Christian emperor of Rome in the fourth century. Please note the controversy that had risen between the Jewish and the Gentile proselytes to the Christian faith over the resurrection festival.

Polycarp, purportedly a disciple and companion of the Apostle John, contended (as we have already mentioned) for the Jewish practice of celebrating it at the time of the Jewish Passover regardless of the day of the week, just as they celebrated their deliverance from Egypt; but it seems that he had no success with the bishop of Rome, and in 325 A.D. (during the reign of Constantine) the Council of Nice confirmed the Roman practice (see *New Standard Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, art. Easter).

It seems that the church had become so corrupt that they cared little for the actual teachings of the Holy Scriptures, but rather gave way to such compromises as they felt would gather numbers of the heathen to the standards of the Christian church. Constantine is said to have remarked on one occasion: "I have noticed that when a joiner wishes to join two boards that will not fit, he planes a little off of the one and a little off the other; then they fit nicely."

Such was the policy of the apostate church, as will be seen from the following quotation (also taken from *Encyclopaedia Britannica*):

"The propensity of rude and uneducated converts from paganism to cling to the festival rites of their forefathers proved to be invincible, so that it was seen to be necessary to adapt the old usages to the new worship rather than to abolish them altogether; moreover, although the empire had become Christian, it was manifestly expedi-

ent that the old holidays should be recognized as much as possible in the new arrangement of the calendar."

Now we quote from *The Golden Bough*, by Frazer, page 361:

"Taken altogether, the coincidences of the Christian with the heathen festivals are too close and too numerous to be accidental. They mark the compromise which the Church in the hour of its triumph was compelled to make with its vanquished yet still dangerous rivals. The inflexible protestantism of the primitive missionaries, with their fiery denunciations of heathendom, had been exchanged for the supple policy, the easy tolerance, the comprehensive charity of shrewd ecclesiastics, who clearly perceived that if Christianity was to conquer the world it could do so only by relaxing the too rigid principles of its Founder, by widening a little the narrow gate which leads to salvation."

We cannot believe it is fair to the Founder of our religion, or that we have any divinely-sanctioned right, to make such changes in His plan of salvation. Could such a practice be properly called Christian?

We now quote from one more authority:

"Our own name *Easter* is derived, as some suppose, from *Eostre*, the name of the Saxon deity whose feast was celebrated every year in the spring, about the same time as the Christian festival—the name being retained when the character of the feast was changed"

(*Chamber's Book*, art. "March 27," vol. 1).

This shows that the Saxon festival (*Eostre*) was about the time of the Christian festival. Thus it was not much of a change that had to be made to conform to this heathen festival and give it a sprinkling of truth to make the Christian accept it. With the innovation of such corruption, the church apostatized and did not shed all of its excess baggage during the reformation.

### Easter is a Heathen Festival

Thus the celebration of Easter, as it is practiced by the so-called Christian world, is a heathen-pagan-instituted festival and has no Scriptural sanctity. Jeremiah (Jer. 10:2) warns against adopting heathen practices in these words: "*Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen...*"

Furthermore, there is no scriptural injunction, direction, or even suggestion that the time of the resurrection of Christ was to be in any way celebrated or commemorated. The Bible instructs that His death should be commemorated (1 Cor. 11:23-30) but not His resurrection.

Besides, the writers of the Bible do not tell us that Christ was resurrected on Sunday. John (John 20:1-10), Luke (Luke 24:1-6), and Mark (Mark 16:1-7), in relating the details about His resurrection, all tell us that He was gone when the tomb was visited on the first day of the week (Sunday), but



they do not reveal how long He had been gone before they arrived. However, Matthew (Matt. 28:1-6) records that He was gone from the tomb "*In the end of the sabbath*"—before the first day of the week had arrived.

(For a thorough study of the resurrection subject write to: The Bible Advocate Press, Stanberry, Missouri, and ask for the free tract entitled, "The Time Element in the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ.")

After considering all the evidence, we are left with only one conclusion: If the translators of the King James version thought that Easter was synonymous with the Passover they were mistaken. If, however, by *Easter* they meant to convey *Passover*, then they were not meaning to say that Herod intended "*to bring [Peter] forth to the people*" after an *Easter Sunday*, for there was no set day of the week for the observance of the Passover. Therefore, *Easter* (in Acts 12:4) must be thought of as *Passover*, and it must be kept in mind that it has no connection whatsoever with the heathen-originated, adapted-to-Christianity-by-Rome festival that **honored the mythical goddess of spring.**

Thus we see that this religious system which Daniel said would "*think to change [God's] times and laws*" (Dan. 7:25) has been successful in deceiving the world concerning the time of the resurrection of Christ and instituting a false day upon which to commemorate it. The wonderful event of Christ's resurrection

is celebrated by hunting for colored eggs which little children are told were laid by the Easter rabbits. Now even baby chicks are dyed various colors and sold as Easter chicks. Not only do these practices give false ideas but they are foolish and disgusting and have no part in true Christian worship. It was after His wonderful resurrection from the dead that Jesus taught His disciples to "go . . . and teach all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . ." (Matthew 28:19, 20). Christians should know and teach the truth and not mingle it with any paganism such as is found in the observance of Easter.



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