

# WHERE Did God Command YOU to Observe Lent?

Where and when did the custom of observing Lent originate?  
Here is an article revealing amazing FACTS hidden for centuries  
—facts that will surprise you!

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**B**ELIEVE it or not, Lent was observed 4000 years ago!

It was still being observed when Christ was born—during His ministry—and in the days of the apostles, yet Christ did not institute it and He never observed it! The apostles never observed it. The Church Jesus built never observed it.

The apostle Paul commanded the Gentile-born Christians to *cease* observing it! More startling, Christ commands us today to cease observing it.

How, then, did Lent enter the Christianity of our Western World?

Isn't it time we pause to ask ourselves *why* we observe the customs we do? We may have *supposed* Lent was taught in the Bible. But have we ever looked into the Bible to see what the Bible really says?

## WHY the Churches Observe Lent

The Lenten season is a period of 40 days abstinence, beginning on "Ash Wednesday." Do you know what the meaning of "Lent" is?

The word "Lent" comes from the old English word "Lencten" meaning the "spring" of the year. You can verify it in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The Lenten celebration was originally associated with the *spring* of the year. But today it begins in the winter! Why?

Where did the spring-time celebration of Lent actually originate? When was the celebration of Lent changed from spring to winter? Here is the surprising answer!

Let us first turn back the pages of time till we reach the close of the second century. This was 100 years after the death of the last of the 12 apostles. Here is what Irenaeus writes to the Bishop of Rome about Lent at this time:

"For the controversy is not only concerning the day"—there was a controversy over the time to celebrate Easter—

"but also concerning the very manner of the fast"—the fast of the Lenten season. "For some think that they should fast one day, others two, yet others more, and some forty," reports Irenaeus, Bishop from France.

How did all this confusion originate? God is not the author of confusion! Then who originated this confusion over Lent?

"And this variety in its observance," continues Irenaeus, "has not originated in our time; but long before in that of our ancestors. It is likely that they did not hold to strict accuracy, and thus *formed a custom* for their posterity according to *private fancy*"—not apostolic authority or Christ's command! (From Eusebius' *Church History*, Book 5, chapter 24.)

Lent came into the Church through CUSTOM—through PRIVATE FANCY. The churches observe Lent, not because the Bible commands it, but because professing Christians adopted the custom from their Gentile neighbors.

"As long as the perfection of the primitive church [the inspired New Testament Church] remained inviolable," wrote Cassian, the Catholic prelate of the fifth century, "*there was no observance of Lent*; but when men began to decline from the apostolical fervour of devotion . . . then *the priests in general agreed* to recall them from secular cares by a canonical indiction of fasting . . ." (*Antiquities of the Christian Church*, Book 21, chapter 1.)

Fasting, or abstinence from certain foods, was imposed *after* the days of the apostles—by the authority of the priests!

Lent is not of apostolic origin! It did not originate with Christ! It entered the Christianity of the Roman World in the second century. It entered at the same time that Easter did! Lent is always associated with Easter! But when did Easter originate?

## What about Easter?

Here is what Socrates Scholasticus wrote in his *Ecclesiastical History*, not long after Emperor Constantine, in the fourth century after Christ:

"Neither the apostles, therefore, nor the Gospels, have anywhere imposed . . . Easter . . . Wherefore inasmuch as men love festivals, because they afford them cessation from labor: each individual in every place, according to his own pleasure, has by a prevalent custom celebrated [Easter] . . . The Saviour and his apostles have enjoined us by no law to keep this feast . . . just as many other customs have been established in individual localities according to usage, so also the feast of Easter CAME TO BE OBSERVED IN EACH PLACE ACCORDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL PECULIARITIES OF THE PEOPLES inasmuch as none of the apostles legislated on the matter. And that the observance originated not by legislation, BUT AS A CUSTOM the facts themselves indicate" (chapter 22).

Did you notice that? Easter originated as a custom of the people! And so did Lent. Lent is merely the introduction to Easter. Easter is the climax to Lent. (If you have not already read the TRUTH about Easter, write immediately for Mr. Armstrong's free booklet entitled "Easter." It will give you many astounding facts about the origin of Easter—and it will reveal what the New Testament Church observed *instead of Easter!*)

But from what city did the celebration of Lent really begin to spread throughout the professing Christianity of the Roman World?

Here is what the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* records:

"In any case it is certain from the 'Festival Letters' of St. Athanasius that in 331 [he] enjoined upon his flock a period of FORTY DAYS of fasting preliminary to . . . Holy Week, and second

that in 339 *after having travelled to Rome* and over the greater part of Europe, [he] wrote in the strongest terms to urge this observance"—Lent—upon the people under his jurisdiction.

Athanasius was influenced by Roman custom. It was *at Rome* that not only Easter, but also Lent, entered the Christian Church. Irenaeus wrote that Lent and Easter were introduced during the time of Bishop Xystus of Rome. This Bishop "did not permit those after him" to observe the practices of the apostles, but instead introduced the custom of Easter and of Lent.

But from where did the bishops of Rome obtain the custom of Lent?

### The Origin of Lent

In the early Catholic Church, Lent was always called *tessaraktoste*, in Greek, or *quadagesima*, in Latin. These two words mean "count forty." Lent—though sometimes celebrated for only one or two days, or for several weeks—**WAS ALWAYS CALLED THE CELEBRATION OF FORTY DAYS!**

Why?

Why should a period of abstinence have gone by this name *even though it was not until the beginning of the eighth century after Christ that the final number of forty days was fastened on the whole Church?*

The answer is obvious—abstinence among the pagans was called by the name "count forty" because that is the length of time they celebrated their spring festival! Remember, Lent means "spring."

The historian Wilkinson, in his book *Egyptian Antiquities*, chapter III, p. 181, wrote that the pagans kept "fasts, many of which lasted from seven to forty-two days, and sometimes even a longer period."

The Christians, after the death of the apostles, were also divided as to the length of their periods of fasting!

But the original length of the fast, traced back to ancient Babylon 4000 years ago, was a "forty days' fast in the spring of the year!" (from Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, chapter 4, page 93). That is why it bore its *name* of "forty days!" Each nation gradually changed the length of celebration, but they all retained the *name*. The apostas-

tizing Christians merely adopted the customs found in their respective countries—that is why they were divided as to its length from the beginning. It took the churches of the Western World nearly eight centuries to impose a total period of 40 days abstinence as had been the original custom at Babel!

Christianity today has turned to the pagan customs of Babel instead of the commands of God in the Bible!

### Where Mentioned in the Bible

Lent is nowhere commanded or mentioned in the New Testament. But it is mentioned in the Old Testament!

"Lent," remember, "seems to have been an indispensable preliminary to the great annual festival in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Tammuz"—the pagan Babylonian Messiah. The month of June was named in honor of the false Babylonian Messiah. Forty days preceding the feast of Tammuz (usually celebrated in June) the pagans held their Lenten season! Ezekiel describes it vividly in Ezek. 8:13-14:

"He"—the Lord—"said also unto me, 'Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater *abominations*.'" Notice that God calls what Ezekiel is about to see an **ABOMINATION**. What does the prophet see?

"And, behold, there sat women weeping for *Tammuz*!"

They wept for Tammuz, the false Messiah of the pagans! That weeping preceded the pagan festival in honor of the supposed resurrection of Tammuz. Fasting was joined with weeping **FOR A PERIOD OF FORTY DAYS** before the festival in honor of Tammuz. The period of weeping and semi-fasting fell during springtime. That is why the word Lent means "spring!" Lent is a continuation of the pagan spring-time custom of abstaining from certain foods just prior to celebrating a fake resurrection! **And God calls LENT an ABOMINATION!**

That is why Christ and the true New Testament Church never observed it! Paul forbade Christians to observe these pagan "times" or "seasons" (Gal. 4:10).

### Jesus Christ Forbids Lenten Celebrations

Surely the people today are sincere—but so were the pagans!—*they didn't*

*know better!* Observe what God says He will do to those who refuse to repent of this abomination: "Is it a light thing . . . *that* they commit the **ABOMINATIONS** which they commit here? . . . Therefore will I also deal **IN FURY**: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice"—of course they pray to God—"yet will I not hear them!" (Ezek. 8:15-18).

But what if Easter and Lent *are* ancient pagan festivals. Isn't it *still* all right, if we use them to honor CHRIST? That's the way people reason today. Let GOD answer that question:

Jesus Christ—the Word of God—spoke to Moses to warn the people not to follow these customs of the heathen. Here is what Jesus Christ said: "Take heed . . . that thou inquire not after their gods, saying: 'How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.' **THOU SHALT NOT DO SO UNTO THE ETERNAL THY GOD; FOR EVERY ABOMINATION TO THE ETERNAL, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods**" (Deut. 12:30-31).

Here is what *God says*—it doesn't matter what we think—but it **DOES MATTER** what God thinks. He calls these pagan Easter and Lenten customs *abominations*. No wonder the apostles did not teach the early spirit-filled New Testament Church of God to observe these traditions of men!

Is it any wonder that Jeremiah was *inspired* to write: "Learn not the way of the heathen . . . for the customs of the people are vain"? (Jer. 10:2-3).

Jesus left us an example of what we ought to do—and that example is not Easter or Lent!

### A Fake Resurrection

Notice that Lent immediately precedes the celebration of a Sunday resurrection—supposedly of Christ! *But Christ was not resurrected on Sunday!* (For the astounding proof of this, write for Mr. Armstrong's shocking free booklet "The Resurrection of Christ Was NOT on Sunday." You will be amazed with what you will learn about Christ's resurrection directly from the New Testament.)

Nowhere does the New Testament command us to observe the resurrection of Christ! We are commanded to ob-

serve the MEMORIAL OF HIS DEATH—"Do this in remembrance of Me," commanded Jesus! The early inspired true New Testament Church did observe *that* memorial, but it never observed Easter or Lent! God never commanded Easter in honor of the resurrection! Easter is in honor of the false Messiah—Tammuz.

Easter and Lent celebrate the resurrection of a false Christ. Paul warned that this very custom would develop—"For if he that cometh preacheth *another Jesus*, whom we have not preached"—and that is exactly what has happened (II Cor. 11:4). Lent celebrated *another Jesus*, a false Messiah from Babylon!

The celebration of a festival on Sunday in honor of the resurrection comes

directly from PAGANISM. The pagans celebrated the resurrection of Tammuz, the false Messiah, immediately after Lent. This festival crept into the professing Christian world after the death of the apostles. The Christians began to neglect *the annual memorial* of Christ's death. They substituted a Sunday Easter in its stead. (If you want to know what the inspired New Testament Church really observed, also include in your letter a request for Mr. Armstrong's booklet "When and How Often Should We Observe the Lord's Supper?" It will give you the amazing answer.)

Notice that immediately after the Lenten observance, the prophet Ezekiel sees the people observing an Easter sunrise service: "Then said He unto me,

'Hast thou seen this?'"—the Lenten fast. "Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see GREATER ABOMINATIONS than these.'" What does the prophet see: people bowing down toward the sun in the East. Easter sunrise services—the climax to the 40 days of Lent! (Ezek. 8:16).

God calls the sunrise service an ABOMINATION! — Sun-Worship! It is a sin! It does make a difference to God. He labels Lent and Easter exactly what they are—pagan festivals!

Your eternal destiny depends upon what God SAYS, not upon what *seems right* to you.

And don't delay writing for Mr. Armstrong's booklets. If you have not yet read them, request them *immediately*.