

**The
Bible Truth
About
Easter**



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The story of Easter is not one simply of religion as pertains to Christianity but is one of a complex mixture of history and *mythology*.

We have set forth in a companion work entitled *Christmas—Fact or Farce? Christian or Heathen?* the web of paganistic rites and observances that many unsuspecting, well-meaning people have allowed themselves to be ensnared in under the guise of the supposed December 25th birthday of our Lord. In this work we intend by God's help to set forth the truth about His *death and resurrection*. When enlightened we can see that the devil has attacked the two vital points of our Christian faith—the *birth* and the *death and resurrection* of our Lord.

There is no record in the Bible of the early church ever having observed Easter as we see in the religious world of our day and age. Because of a strong Puritan influence, Easter was never observed in the United States until the latter part of the nineteenth century. It might do the modern-day Christian good to hearken back to some of the principles that caused our forefathers in this country to be such God-fearing people.

THE WORD "EASTER"

Should it be said that the word *Easter* appears in the Bible, we would hasten to add that it does not appear in Acts 12:4 in the original translation, but rather should be translated as *Passover*.

The word *Easter* is certainly not a word of biblical or Christian origin but comes from the old, idolatrous Chaldea. The English name for this festival has been derived from a northern goddess of spring and dawn, whose principle celebrations were held about the time of the vernal equinox. This goddess was known under several different names: "Ishtar," "Eostre," and "Astarte," which are all names given to the same Babylonian goddess, Semiramis. (See Christmas booklet for further information on this goddess.)

To find out how the celebration of Easter as we know it came about in religion, we must again turn (as we did in the work on Christmas) to Roman Catholicism, that infamous "*Mother of Harlots*" and the enemy of the Cross and of every true born-again child of God.

DATE FOR OBSERVANCE OF EASTER

Since the date for the observance of the Lord's death and resurrection varied in different countries, the Council of Nicea, in A.D. 325 *ruled* that the observance and festival of Easter was to be celebrated not on the old Jewish Passover, which could fall on *any* day of the week, but rather they *ordered* Easter to be observed on the *Sunday* following the first full moon after (or on) the vernal equinox. The vernal equinox always occurs on March 21st, and it was this time of the year that the celebration of the spring goddess was held by the pagans. Roman Catholicism had a habit of giving so-called Christian significance to any of the pagan customs that could not be rooted out, as is very plainly observed in the celebration of Christmas. If the moon happened to be full on Sunday, the council decreed the observance was to be held on the following Sunday. From the time I was a child, I have heard a saying that Easter was to be observed on "the first Sunday, after the first Monday, after the first full moon, after the equinox." The vernal equinox is the time when the sun crosses the equator and makes night and day of equal lengths in all parts of the earth. Here again then in the observance of Easter, as in the celebration of Christmas, we find the *sun* playing a very important part.

So once again we see Roman Catholicism capitalize on pagan customs, celebrations, and observances steeped in myths and falsehoods, to promote her religious program, and supposed-to-be enlightened Christians hundreds of years later are firmly entrenched and enveloped in her damnable traditions and doctrines, which she has promoted as being truth and pleasing to God. *Born-again Christian, awake!*

THE LENTEN SEASON

Many people are duped into believing they are really sacrificing for God by giving up a package of chewing gum, a few cigarettes, etc., and yet, these same people are not willing to sacrifice the world and all of its pleasures for the remainder of the year in order to have a born-again experience that will lift them above the sin of this world and cause them to live holy *every day* of the year.

The period of Lent is just another *pagan* event that Roman Catholicism borrowed from heathenism and paganism and bequeathed to Christianity. They established the lenten season in A.D. 525, but hundreds of years previous to this, a season of fasting, and even forty days of fasting, were observed in *pagan* circles. Forty days of fasting were held at approximately the same time in Babylon for the death and resurrection of Tammuz, a heathen idol. It is recorded that even *devil worshipers* observed a lenten season. Mexican pagans kept a lenten season for forty days, which began three days after the equinox. It was in honor of the *sun*.

EASTER CUSTOMS

EGGS: Long before Christ, eggs were regarded as symbols of continuing life and resurrection. Ancient Persians, Greeks, and Chinese exchanged them at their festivals in honor of the goddess of spring. Pagan mythology speaks of a "World-Egg," which was supposed to have dropped down upon the waters of Chaos. It broke open into two halves, one silver and one gold. The silver one represented the earth and the gold one the sky. The outer membrane of the egg was the mountains and the inner membrane was the clouds and the mists. The veins were the rivers, the fluid was the ocean, and from this egg was born *the sun*. Sound fantastic?

I can go one better than that, and it does not even come out of mythology. Modern-day Easter has a rabbit running around laying eggs, and colored ones at that. This is supposedly an enlightened America. Pagans today are more refined. They have the eggs delivered by a rabbit. Now where did that come from?

THE EASTER RABBIT: In ancient Egypt the rabbit or hare symbolized new life and birth. Some pagans considered them a symbol of the moon. (Remember that Easter's date is determined by the moon.) Parents lie to their children by telling them that there is an Easter bunny.

HOT CROSS BUNS: The cross was used as a sign by the pagans long before Christ. It has been associated with the goddess Diana. Many believed bread and buns made on Good Friday had curative and magical powers.

SUNRISE SERVICES: First of all Christ was out of the tomb *before* the sun ever arose. The basis for this is easily traced back to the belief that the sun danced on the morning that Christ resurrected and people gathered on Easter morning to see if they could see it dance. This goes back even farther in the tradition of the heathens who danced at a festival in honor of the sun after the vernal equinox.

GOOD FRIDAY, GOD'S FRIDAY, LONG FRIDAY

This day, known by one of the three above names in various countries, is a day which, again, was instituted by Roman Catholicism to be observed preceding Easter Sunday as the day our Lord was crucified. I now invite your close attention as we look into God's Word to see if Christ really was crucified on Friday.

To all truly born-again Christians, the Lord's death and resurrection is an established *fact* in their hearts and lives by virtue of the *new life* that has been instilled within them and the victory they have over sin. *When* He was crucified and *when* He arose and *how long* He was actually in the grave are the questions

we now wish to answer by the Bible. The entire Christian world has *assumed* (without biblical proof) that Christ was crucified on Friday. This assumption was based on another assumption that the Sabbath day following the crucifixion was a *seventh-day* Sabbath. This is *also* without Bible foundation.

CONCERNING THE PERIOD OF CHRIST'S ENTOMBMENT

The Holy Writ is very clear in stating that the Lord was to be in the tomb *three days and three nights* (Matthew 12:40). More specifically, He was to be in the earth the same length of time as Jonah was in the belly of the fish. Armed with these definite facts, let us now explore the period of time He lay in the tomb.

Just how long was a *day* in Christ's time? According to His own words in John 11:9, it was a duration of twelve hours, thus leaving twelve hours for the night. It is a proven fact that the Jewish day began at 6:00 in the morning and lasted until 6:00 that evening. Thus, a complete twenty-four hour period started at 6:00 one evening and lasted until 6:00 the next evening. With this *biblical* reckoning of a day, how can we possibly extract three twelve-hour periods of light (or three days) from the period between Friday evening and Sunday morning? You just cannot do it. Now, before some would begin an attempt to count a portion of Friday, all of Saturday, and a small portion of Sunday to try and squeeze in the three days and three nights, let us carefully examine the Scriptures and see that this is impossible and a violation of the true impact of the original Greek text.

BIBLICAL PROOF OF THREE FULL DAYS AND THREE FULL NIGHTS OF INTERMENT

Matthew 12:40 states that Christ was to be in the grave the same length of time as was Jonah in the belly of the whale. Jonah 1:17 reads, "And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." I call your attention to the fact that the word *days* in this text is translated from a Hebrew word *yowm*, which means "to be hot, a day (as the warm hours) from *sunrise to sunset*." Jonah was in the belly of the whale for *three* periods, from sunrise to sunset. The word *night* comes from the Hebrew *laylah*, which means "night season." Therefore, Christ was to be in the earth for *three* periods from sunrise to sunset and for *three* night seasons. This is impossible if He were buried on Friday evening.

Now, coming over to the New Testament, we find that every verse in which the word *day* or *days* is used in denoting the length of time He was to be in the grave, is translated from the Greek word *hemera*, which according to *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* means "of the natural day, or the interval between sunrise and sunset as distinguished from and contrasted with night." When referring to its usage in Matthew 12:40, Thayer says, "To the number of days are added as many nights." Again, we find ourselves in trouble trying to get three intervals of time between sunrise and sunset, plus the same number of nights, in that period between Friday evening and Sunday morning. *It just cannot be done.*

". . . and *after* three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). The word *after* is here translated from the Greek word *meta*, which means *sequence*. So Christ was to arise after a sequence of three periods of time between sunrise and sunset had elapsed, to which was to be added as many periods of night.

THE "HIGH-DAY" SABBATH

We now want to look into the Bible and follow Christ through His last hours here on earth and by this means obtain further understanding on the death and resurrection of our Lord.

According to the commandment of God in Exodus 12:1-6, the Israelites were to kill the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month of their sacred year. This month was called *Nisan* and corresponds to parts of our March and April. According to verse 6, as recorded in the original Hebrew, the lamb was to be killed between the "two evenings." One evening was considered as being between 3:00 p.m. and

6:00 p.m. and the other evening from 6:00 p.m. until total darkness. Since the Jewish day began at 6:00 p.m. and lasted until the following 6:00 p.m., we can see the Passover lamb was killed *after* 6:00 p.m. when the fourteenth of Nisan had started, for it was to be eaten on the fourteenth and it certainly took time to kill and prepare the lamb before it could be eaten. Verse 8 clearly states the Israelites were to eat the flesh *in that night* (of the fourteenth).

As was His custom, Christ kept the Jewish feasts and accordingly we see Him in Matthew 26:17-20 (also Luke 22:7-16) instructing the disciples to prepare the Passover. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted a total of eight days, beginning on the fourteenth, and are referred to by either title at various times. In Matthew 26:20 we read, "Now when the *even* was come, he sat down with the twelve." The word *even* here comes from the Greek word *opseeos* that, according to *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, means from our 6:00 p.m. until the beginning of night. This then was the beginning of the fourteenth of Nisan.

John, Chapter 13, gives us the details of the institution of the ordinance of feet washing. After this the Lord's Supper was instituted, and following this they went out into the Mount of Olives (Mark 14:26-30) and the writer lets us know in verse 54 that it was dark.

Christ was taken prisoner and led away to the high priest and was before him the rest of the night (Mark 14:53-65 and Matthew 26:57-68). At daybreak (still the fourteenth of Nisan for it began at 6:00 the previous evening) He was taken before Pilate (Matthew 27:1-2 and John 18:28). He appeared before Pilate and Herod both and was finally turned over to the waiting mob and was crucified about the sixth hour (or 12:00 noon on the fourteenth). He finally gave up the ghost at the ninth hour, or 3:00 p.m. (John 19:13-14; Matthew 27:45-46; Luke 23:42-44). That same day His body was claimed and prepared for the tomb between the hours of 3:00 and 6:00 p.m., for the Scripture lets us know the next day was a Sabbath day and the Sabbath days all began at the even (Leviticus 23:32; Mark 15:42-46; John 19:40-42).

Most people have assumed that the Sabbath that followed the crucifixion of Christ was the seventh-day Sabbath, *but it was not*. The clue to the truth here lies in John 19:31, which designates *this* Sabbath as a *high day*. This was not just the ordinary seventh-day Sabbath but was special enough to be called a *high-day* Sabbath. What Sabbath was this then that followed the crucifixion and interment of Christ?

Leviticus 23:1-6 informs us that the *first* day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be a Sabbath in which no servile work was to be done. The *Passover* was on the fourteenth, but the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was on the fifteenth. There were three feasts that all physically-able and ceremonially-clean Jewish men were to attend (Deuteronomy 16:16-17). The first and most important of these feasts was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. No wonder, in the light of its importance, it was called a *high day*. But was it a Sabbath day? Let us study this point in the light of additional Scripture.

The Passover always came on the fourteenth day of Nisan. This was followed by the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the fifteenth of Nisan. The *next* day, which was the sixteenth of Nisan and the second day of the seven days of the feast, was the day on which a wave offering was given (Leviticus 23:15). According to Leviticus 23:11-15, the day preceding the sixteenth (the day of the wave offering) was a *Sabbath*. What day was that? It was the fifteenth, the first day of the feast, the day after the Passover, and also *the day after the crucifixion of Christ*. It was from this point that the Pentecost was determined (Leviticus 23:15-16). This clearly proves that the day after Passover was a Sabbath. They hastened to get His body down and into the grave before the Sabbath started that evening. The old Law provided that a body was not to hang all night (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

I know some will say that the women rested on that Sabbath day and went to the tomb the following day, but that is not so. Here again confusion prevails. Study with me and pray that God will clear up all the mist.

Rabbinical tradition had it that the spirit of a person wandered around in the tomb for *three days* trying to reenter the body. Corruption was supposed to set in on the fourth day, at which time the spirit was said to have left. Absolute identification of a body was impossible after three days because of the corruption. Thus, we can see the wisdom of God in allowing Lazarus to remain in the grave *four days* before he was brought forth. John 11:39 says, "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, *by this time* he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." Why did Jesus tarry when they told Him Lazarus was dead? Why the emphasis on *four days*? To *prove* the power of God to these unbelieving Jews over the top of all their false religion and superstitions. Also, Christ was to be in the tomb for only three days and three nights and His flesh was not to see *corruption* (Acts 2:31).

Now let us clear up the women coming to anoint or embalm the body. It was a custom to mourn for the dead for three days and three nights called "days of weeping." This was followed by four more "days of lamentation." Thus, a total of seven days (Genesis 27:41, 50:10; 1 Samuel 31:13; Job 2:13).

Herodotus in his writings, *Herodotus II*, 86-89, stated that the embalming of a body did not take place until the fourth day when the spirit was supposed to have left after trying to reenter the body for the previous *three-day period*.

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

Christ was crucified and buried in the closing hours of the Passover day, the fourteenth of Nisan, which *must* be a *Wednesday evening* (not Friday). The next day was the *high-day Sabbath*, the fifteenth of Nisan, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The following day was the day of the wave offering, the sixteenth of Nisan. The next day was a Saturday, the seventeenth of Nisan, the last day Christ remained in the grave. Why did the women not go on the sixteenth instead of the early hours of the eighteenth? It was the custom, and they awaited for the spirit to leave at the end of the three days.

Remember that their day started at 6:00 in the evening, or six hours before our day starts at 12:00 midnight. Note the following calculations:

Wednesday, 14th—Passover; Christ crucified, buried by 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, 15th—Day began at 6:00 p.m. and lasted until 6:00 the next evening.

First *night* and first *day*—*high-day Sabbath*.

Friday, 16th—Wave Offering; from 6:00 until 6:00 is *second* night and *second* day.

Saturday, 17th—Seventh-day Sabbath; *third* night and *third* day. Three full days and three full nights end at 6:00 p.m. Saturday evening (our time).

Therefore, we must rightly conclude that the three days and three nights of the entombment of Christ ended at 6:00 Saturday evening. According to *our time*, Sunday does not begin until *six hours later*, at 12:00 midnight. Christ actually resurrected sometime shortly after 6:00 Saturday evening. Let us note the Scriptures, please:

1. Matthew 28:1—"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn"
2. Mark 16:2—"And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun."
3. Luke 24:1—"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning"
4. John 20:1—"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark"

Even though the language may vary, the fact remains the same in each account. *When they came to the tomb, Jesus was gone*, having resurrected sometime after 6:00 p.m. that evening.

Certainly Jesus' enemies believed He would resurrect after three days, for this is the length of time they placed the guards at His tomb (Matthew 27:63). Matthew 28:11-13 depicts the scheme of the Jews to try and discredit His resurrection by paying men to lie and say, "His disciples *came by night*, and stole him away while we slept." Notice that *it was by night*.

CONCLUSION

By no stretch of the imagination, and certainly not by fact, can we prove Christ to have been crucified any other day than Wednesday. Yet, supposedly Christian people will year after year allow themselves to be duped into pagan practices and observances at a time of the year called *Easter*.

How much longer will we allow ourselves to be involved in egg hunts, Easter plays, and pageants? If we have forsaken the paganism of Christmas, I call upon the saints of God to arise and forsake this pagan holiday also. We are not forsaking the wonderful death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, but rather all the frivolity and foolishness and carnival atmosphere that accompanies the *observance* of this resurrection. We ought to see it could not occur on a Sunday *every year* if man had not arranged it that way. May the *true* observance of His death, burial, and resurrection be as the world looks on us as saints who are the *direct results* of that wonderful work.