

Easter - cont.

Reese, *New Testament History: Acts*, p. 430).

So, why no Easter celebration for us today? Well, New Testament Christians were told to remember the Lord's death each first day of the week (Matthew 26:26-29; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-26). These Christians were not told to remember the Lord's resurrection once a year on Easter.

New Testament Christians were actually told to abstain from unauthorized "holy days" (Galatians 4:9-11; Colossians 2:16-22). And there is no New Testament authority for the observance of a religious "holy day" called Easter. Observing Easter as a civil holiday may be allowed (Romans 14:5), but not as a religious "holy day".

Yes, the resurrection of Jesus is important! In fact, the entire premise of Christianity is based, in part, on the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus was foretold in the Old Testament (Psalm 16:8-11; Isaiah 53:10-11). And we cannot be saved without the resurrection of Christ (Mark 16:9; Matthew 28:19; I Corinthians 15:1ff; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 5:16-18; 6:3-5; I Peter 1:3-5).

Easter - cont.

However, no "holy day" celebration commemorating the resurrection of Jesus exists in the Bible! Let us avoid empty religious traditions of man (Mark 7:7). Let us worship according to God's word only (Colossians 3:16). And let us worship God every Sunday, not just on "Easter Sunday" (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2).

- Chris Reeves -

Warfield Blvd. church of Christ
290 Warfield Blvd.
Clarksville, TN 37043

Website
wbcoc.org

Radio Program
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Assembly Times
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Everyone Is Welcome!
For More Information Call
(931) 647-1324

Published and Edited By
Chris Reeves
(615) 389-3250
chrisreevesmail@gmail.com
TheGoodTeacher.com

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Why No Easter Service?

The Warfield Blvd. church did not have an Easter service or celebration last Sunday. Why not? Let's consider the man-made tradition of Easter and compare it with what the Bible teaches.

"Easter" comes from the Anglo-Saxon word *eastre*, meaning "spring" or "dawn goddess" (Webster's Dictionary). Easter was the name of a German Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility and an annual spring festival was held in her honor going back to 300 B.C. Easter is also another form of Astarte or Ishtar, a Babylonian goddess, the queen of heaven.

"The earliest written evidence for an Easter festival appears in the 'paschal controversy' over the correct date for Easter, which began with the correspondence in A.D. 154 between Polycarp ... and Aticetus ..." (ZPEB, vol.2, p. 180).

The subject of Easter was debated in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. primarily to determine what relationship it would have with the Jewish Passover (NS-HERK, pp.43-47). At the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, the date for Easter was fixed on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox

– "spring equal night". This date can fall anywhere from March 22 to April 25.

There are numerous references to "Easter Sunday" after the 7th century and Easter can be traced to both pagan and Jewish traditions, but not the New Testament.

"There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament..." (EB, vol.7, p.859).

"That the early Christians kept with special honor the anniversary of the resurrection itself is more a matter of inference than of positive knowledge. No writer before Justin Martyr seems to mention such a celebration" (CE, vol.3, p. 159).

There are various man-made holidays associated with Easter. The following are:

- "Mardi Gras" (lit. "Fat Tuesday")
- "Ash Wednesday"
- "Lent" – (lit. "spring") - 40 days of fasting before Easter beginning with Ash Wednesday
- "Palm Sunday" – triumphal entry
- "Maundy Thursday" – foot washing
- "Good Friday" – the crucifixion
- "Easter Sunday"
- "White Sunday" (Pentecost)

But what about the word "Easter" in Acts 12:4 of the King James Version? This is actually a mistranslation. A majority of the versions have "the Passover". The Greek words are "to *pascha*," meaning "the Passover" (found 29 times in the NT).

The Passover is an eight-day Jewish festival including the days of unleavened bread, from Nisan 14 to Nisan 21 (Exodus 12:15-20; Leviticus 23:5-6; Deuteronomy 16:1-4). Consider the immediate context of Acts 12:4. The killing of James took place during "the days of unleavened bread" (v. 3) which includes the Passover (Luke 22:1). Herod Agrippa I wanted to "please the Jews" (v. 3), so he waited until the Jewish holy days of the Passover were ended (compare Mt. 26:5).

"Why this translation then in the KJV? One of the instructions given to the translators by James, King of England, was that they were not to change any of the accepted terms found in the Bishop's Bible (which was more or less the basis for the KJV). Before that version, Tyndale and Coverdale had used the word 'Easter' at this place; and hence, it had become a 'customary' rendering of this verse before it was incorporated in the KJV" (Gareth L.