

Should Christians Observe Easter?

Almost everyone who believes in Jesus Christ would answer “yes” to the question in our title. For millions of people around the world, Easter is one of the holiest days of the year. It is second only to Christmas as the most sacred of all religious holidays. They think of Easter as the time to remember the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Special church services are held at Easter. Multitudes of professed believers in Christ attend church services only at Christmas and Easter. They think this is all that is necessary in order for them to be faithful Christians.

What does the Bible say? Is Easter from God, or is it from man? Certainly, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ arose from the dead. The apostle Paul wrote: *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Paul also wrote concerning Christ that He *“was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4). The question is not, “Did Jesus Christ arise from the dead?” The evidence is indisputable that He did!

Rather the question is, “Did God appoint one special day of the year to be set aside to remember that Christ arose from the dead?” What does the Bible say?

The word “Easter” is found only one time in a common English version of the Bible, and it is an incorrect translation! In the King James Version of the Bible (1611), we read of King Herod putting the apostle Peter in prison: *“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”* (Acts 12:4). The word “Easter” is a mistranslation of the Greek word *πάσχα* (pascha). The American Standard Version (1901), the New King James Version, and nearly every other version of the Bible correctly translate *πάσχα* as “passover.” The respected Greek scholar, W. E. Vine, in his well known work, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, pointed out that *πάσχα* should be translated as “passover.” He says that the Passover was a Jewish religious festival. It was not an observance of the early church! Mr. Vine further points out that the word “Easter” is of pagan origin. According to him, it is a form of “Astarte,” one of the names for an ancient Chaldean goddess. He also says that the pagan festival of Astarte was introduced into the apostate church in an attempt to adapt pagan festivals to Christianity.

Many of the customs associated with Easter come from pagan religions. *The World Book Encyclopedia* says of Easter: “In most countries, Easter comes in the early spring, at a time when green grass and warm sunshine begin to push aside the snow and

ice of winter. Its name may come from Eostre, a Teutonic goddess of spring or from the Teutonic festival of spring called Eostur...Eggs represent the new life that returns to nature about Easter time. The custom of exchanging eggs began in ancient times. The ancient Egyptians and Persians often dyed eggs in spring colors and gave them to their friends as gifts. The Persians believed the earth had hatched from a giant egg. In ancient Egypt, the rabbit symbolized birth and new life. Some ancient peoples considered it a symbol of the moon. It may later have become the Easter symbol because the moon determines the date of Easter. Many customs connected with the Easter season come from pagan festivals of spring. Others stem from the Passover celebration.”

Since Easter observance is of pagan origin, and is therefore not authorized by the Word of God, when should Christians remember the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? The Bible teaches that this is to be done every first day of every week! Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-13; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18). He met with His apostles on the first day of the week (John 20:19-26). The church of Christ began on Pentecost day (Acts 2). Pentecost came fifty days after the Passover. The Jews counted seven sabbaths from the Passover. On the following day was Pentecost. Since the sabbath was the seventh day (Saturday), then the day following it

would be Sunday, the first day of the week (Leviticus 23:4-11; see also Exodus 23:14-17). Therefore, Sunday, the first day of the week, was the day the Lord's church began (Acts 2:1-47).

Christians in the first century, under the direction of inspired men, always met on the first day of every week to worship God. The Lord's Supper, in which the death of Christ for our sins is remembered, was eaten on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Paul commanded that the contribution for the work of the church be taken up every first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). The first day of the week is the "*Lord's day*" (Revelation 1:10).

The death, burial and resurrection of our Lord should be remembered by Christians every first day of every week, not just one day a year! If we want to be pleasing to God, we must reject everything that comes from man, especially days and observances which have their origin in paganism. We dare not add to, nor take away from, the inspired teachings of God's Holy Word (Revelation 22:18-19). If we do so, our worship will be vain and unacceptable to God (Matthew 15:7-13).

Should Christians observe Easter or any other religious holiday which came from man? Absolutely not! Faithful Christians will be content to follow God's Word and remember the death, burial and resurrection of God's Son every first day of every week.



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