

# The Truth About Easter

By  
Dennis Fischer  
&  
Art Braidic

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Every year, millions of professing Christians around the world participate in a celebration they believe honors the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This celebration is called Easter and it is arguably the most important observance in modern Christianity.

But when did this day originate? And from where did it come? What about its symbols and customs? Are they mentioned in the Bible? Why is Easter celebrated at sunrise? What is the origin of the Easter egg? What about bunnies? What do these symbols have to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ? What about the traditional foods such as Easter ham or hot cross buns? Why is it called "Easter"? Is this term mentioned in the Bible and what does it mean? Is there a story behind this "most holy" time of the year? Does the God of the Bible respect this observance? This booklet examines the tradition of Easter in light of the historical record and the scriptures. What you read in these pages may surprise you. It might even shock you, but the words are incontrovertible. They express without apology the truth about Easter.

## The Origin of Easter

Although most professing Christians believe Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, its roots can be traced to ancient civilizations that existed long before Jesus' birth, let alone His death and resurrection. The ancient civilizations of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and Greece as well as that of Rome itself all embraced religious rites that greatly resemble the holiday we call Easter.

The term Easter does not come from the Bible, but rather from the name of an ancient goddess of spring. Consider the words of Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia.

The name Easter comes from the ancient Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring. Eostre or Ostara, in whose honor an annual spring festival was held. Some of our Easter customs have come from this and other pre-Christian spring festivals. (Vol. 4, p. 140)

The famous historian Alexander Hislop clearly indicates that the term "Easter" is not Christian, but rather Chaldean in origin.

It is not a Christian name. It bears its Chaldean origin on its very forehead. Easter is nothing else than Astarte, one of the titles of Beltis, the queen of heaven, whose name, as pronounced by the people of Nineveh, was evidently identical with that now in common use in this country. That name, as found by Layard on the Assyrian monuments, is Ishtar. (The Two Babylons, Hislop, p.103)

The connection between Easter and the celebration of the goddess of spring is undeniable. Other highly credible reference works acknowledge that the roots of Easter are deeply woven into the pagan world. Consider the words of Funk and Wagnall's Standard Reference Encyclopedia.

Easter embodies traditions of an ancient time antedating the rise of Christianity. The origin of its name is lost in the dim past; some scholars believe it probably is derived from Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon name of a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility. (Vol. 8, p. 2940)

Tragically, despite having its roots in paganism, Easter was a festival later professing Christian leaders came to embrace as their own. According to Grolier's Encyclopedia, the leaders of the church became more than willing to adopt ancient pagan customs into their worship.

The name of this holiday and the time it is celebrated have led people to believe that an earlier holiday existed on this day before the Christian observance. For many ancient nations joyously celebrated the end of winter and the resurrection of the sun at this season of the year; and some devoted this festival to Eostre, Germanic goddess of spring. The church fathers turned this heathen holiday into the Christian celebration of the resurrection. (1966, Vol. 17)

Many believe that these "church fathers" embraced the symbols of Easter for strategic reasons. In essence, these religious leaders believed the only way they could persuade the pagan world to accept Christianity was by adopting many of the rituals these new "converts" held dear. Consider the words of Reader's Digest.

By a stroke of tactical genius, the church, while intolerant of pagan beliefs, was able to harness the powerful emotions generated by pagan worship. Often, churches were sited where temples had stood before, and many heathen festivals were added to the Christians calendar. Easter, for instance, a time of sacrifice and rebirth in the Christian year, takes its name from the Norse goddess Eostre, in whose honour rites were held every spring. She in turn was simply a northern version of the Phoenician earth-mother Astarte, goddess of fertility. (The Last Two Million Years by the Reader's Digest Association, 1981, p. 215)

In essence, Christianity has proclaimed as "holy" that which the Bible declares "profane." God once issued a scathing indictment against the priests of Israel because they did the very same thing. Consider the words of the prophet Ezekiel.

Her priests have violated My law, and have profaned Mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. (Ezek. 22:26)

These words should stand as a powerful reminder that God takes very seriously the way in which He is worshiped. When man takes upon himself the right to determine how he will honor God, he assumes a right that he does not have. God alone will determine what honors or dishonors Him.

Throughout the Bible, God specifically outlines the terms and conditions of His worship. Still, man believes that he has a better way and as a result, has created symbols that define a faith that is abhorrent to God and is condemned in the scriptures.

## An Ancient Easter Celebration

Today, Easter is regarded as the chief of Christian holidays. However, it is anything but Christian. Many ancient civilizations celebrated festivals centering around the death and resurrection of a man-god. In Assyria, it was Semeramis and Ninus. In Babylon, it was Ishtar and Tammuz. In Syria, it was Astarte and Baal. In Greece, it was Aphrodite and Adonis. The Interpreter's Dictionary provides some very interesting insight concerning how ancient civilizations embraced a belief strangely familiar to that of Easter.

The oldest common feature of the religions of the ancient Near East was the worship of a great mother goddess, the personification of fertility. Associated with her, usually as a consort, was a young god who died and came to life again, like the vegetation which quickly withers but blooms again... His absence produced infertility of the earth, of man, and of beast. His consort mourned and searched for him. His return brought renewed fertility and rejoicing. In Mesopotamia, the divine couple appear as Ishtar and Tammuz, in Egypt, as Isis and Osiris. (Vol. 2, p. 265)

## An Ancient Egyptian Easter

Consider the Easter story as it originated in Egypt. According to tradition, the goddess Isis was married to her brother Osiris. Osiris was killed and pieces of his body were scattered over the land of Egypt. When Isis received word of the death of her brother-husband, she set out on a journey to retrieve the pieces. Once she found them, Isis began casting spells in an attempt to bring Osiris back to life.

According to the legend, she partly succeeded and appealed for one last night with Osiris. During that evening, she conceived a son named Horus; however, Osiris departed to take his place in the heavens along with his father, Ra, the sun god.

Tradition holds that Osiris was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven during the time of the vernal (spring) equinox. It was at this time that the death and resurrection of pagan gods were claimed to have taken place. This is only one of several legends concerning the resurrection of a man who had joined the ranks of the gods but it stands as a model which has been used throughout the Christian world. Tragically, such Pagan myths cloud the truly miraculous story of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, especially when their symbols and customs are promoted by professing Christian ministers and their churches.

## Easter – It's Symbols and Customs

The symbols and customs of Easter convey powerful images of this holiday. Consider the Easter egg, bunnies, hot cross buns and sunrise services, just to name a few. These symbols stand as a constant reminder of the Easter season.

Throughout history, religions have used symbols and traditions as a means by which to perpetuate their beliefs. Symbols are designed to add both meaning and appeal to seasons and events. The symbols associated with Easter have great appeal to this holiday's celebrants. However, after careful examination of these symbols and traditions, a much different picture emerges. As unbelievable as it may seem, these symbols can be traced to the pagan world and were used extensively in the worship of false gods. Consider the words of Compton's Encyclopedia.

Many Easter customs come from the Old World... colored eggs and rabbits have come from pagan antiquity as symbols of new life... Our name "Easter" comes from Eostre, an ancient Anglo-Saxon goddess, originally of the dawn. (Vol. 4)

The symbols of Easter, as appealing as they may be, have nothing to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ but rather find their roots in religions that reject the God of the Bible. Consider the following symbols associated with the celebration of Easter.

### The Easter Egg

One of the most prominent symbols associated with Easter is the egg. Every year, unsuspecting children are taught to decorate this symbol with bright colors and designs. Sometimes, the eggs are hidden and everyone is encouraged to seek out these "treasures" and place them in baskets. Even the White House hosts an annual Easter egg hunt. But from where did this custom originate? And what does it have to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ? It is important to understand that Easter eggs have absolutely nothing to do with biblical Christianity but rather trace their origin to the pagan world. This fact is confirmed by the Encyclopedia Britannica.

...at Easter, popular customs reflect many ancient pagan survivals connected with spring fertility rites, such as the symbols of the Easter egg and the Easter hare or rabbit. (Vo. IV, p. 605)

The Encyclopedia of Religion states that the Easter egg was used prominently in pagan fertility rites.

... the egg is a powerful symbol of fertility, purity and rebirth. It is used in magical rituals to promote fertility and restore virility; to look into the future, to bring good weather; to encourage the growth of crops and to protect both cattle and children against misfortune. All over the world it represents life and creation, fertility and resurrection... (and) was linked with Easter. (1987, p. 37)

The egg has been a sacred symbol to numerous pagan civilizations and was used prolifically in religious ceremonies in Egypt. Alexander Hislop, in his book *The Two Babylons*, relates an interesting chronicle of its use in religious practices.

From Egypt these sacred eggs can be distinctly traced to the banks of the Euphrates. The classic poets are full of the fable of the mystic egg of the Babylonians; and thus its tale is told by Hyginus, the Egyptian, the learned keeper of the Palatine Library at Rome, in the time of Augustus, who was skilled in all the wisdom of his native country: "An egg of wondrous size is said to have fallen from heaven into the river Euphrates. The fishes rolled it to the bank, where the doves having settled upon it, hatched it, and out came Venus, who afterwards was called the Syrian Goddess" (Astarte). (p. 109)

In addition to its use in the religious ceremonies in Egypt, the egg was also a powerful religious symbol throughout Asia and Europe.

The mystic egg of Babylon, hatching the Venus Ishtar, fell from heaven to the Euphrates. Dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt, as they are still in China and Europe. Easter, or spring, was the season of birth, terrestrial and celestial." (Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought, pp. 211-212)

Tragically, despite knowing of its pagan origin, the church at Rome willingly adopted the egg as its own symbol of the resurrection.

The church did not oppose this, though many egg customs were pre-Christian in origin, because the egg provided a fresh and powerful symbol of the resurrection and the transformation of death into life. (The Encyclopedia of Religion, 1987, p. 37)

Hislop, in his work *The Two Babylons*, explains that it was the normal practice of the Catholic church to integrate paganism into its liturgy. This was done to attract pagan converts.

To conciliate the pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome, pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals amalgamated, and, by a complicated but skillful adjustment of the calendar, it was found no difficult matter, in general, to get Paganism and Christianity - now sunk far in idolatry - in this as in so many other things, to shake hands. (p. 105)

It is clear that the church of Rome did not find it difficult to embrace pagan practices and integrate them into their own worship. But God warns against such a practice. The great prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer. 10:2). Even Jesus warned that it was possible to worship God in vain.

In vain do they worship Me, seeking after doctrines the commandments of men. (Mk. 7:7)

Jesus went on to say, "You make the law of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mt. 15:6). The point to this is that God never instructed man to gather eggs and decorate them. As fun as this activity may be to children and parents alike, its origins are pagan and this God hates.

## The Easter Bunny

The bunny is one of the most cherished symbols of Easter. These cuddly creatures are included in numerous bedtime stories and have endeared themselves to children around the world. But how did the bunny become such an integral part of a holiday designed to celebrate the resurrection of the Savior of the world? This question is answered reluctantly by the Catholic Encyclopedia.

The custom may have its origin in paganism, for a great many pagan customs, celebrating the return of spring (and therefore directly related to SUN-worship), gravitated

to Easter. The egg is the emblem of the germinating life of early spring... the Easter rabbit lays the eggs, for which reason they are hidden in a nest or in the garden. The rabbit is a pagan symbol and has always been an emblem of fertility. ( p. 227)

Other credible sources openly acknowledge that the Easter bunny has absolutely nothing to do with Christianity but rather the pagan world. That world worshiped fertility and rebirth and the rabbit played a critical part in this worship.

The Easter bunny had its origins in pre-Christian fertility lore. Hares and rabbits were the most fertile animals our forefathers knew, serving as symbols of abundant new life in the spring season. (Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs, 1958, p. 233-6)

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* indicates that the bunny was associated with the beginning of life and was a symbol of fertility.

Like the Easter egg, the Easter hare came to Christianity from antiquity. The hare is associated with the moon in the legends of ancient Egypt and other peoples... The hare came to be associated with... the beginning of new life in both the young man and young woman, and so is a symbol of fertility and the renewal of life. ("Easter Bunny")

According to *Reader's Digest*, the rabbit has been depicted in Christian art as representing fertility and lust because they are so prolific.

Children's stories in many countries tell how Easter eggs are brought not by a chicken but by hares and rabbits. These long-eared hopping mammals have represented fertility in many cultures because they breed so quickly. In traditional Christian art the hare represents lust, and paintings sometimes show a hare at the Virgin Mary's feet to signify her triumph over temptations of the flesh. Yet as a symbol of life reawakening in the spring – often portrayed as the innocent and cuddly Easter bunny – the rabbit co-exists in many places with the solemn Christian rites of Easter. (Readers' Digest Book of Facts, 1987, p. 122)

It is interesting to note that rabbits do not lay eggs. This fact escapes children because they are misled by adults more committed to perpetuating a tradition than to teaching God's truth.

## Hot Cross Buns

Hot cross buns have been a long-standing tradition during the Easter season. But from where did this tradition originate? According to Alexander Hislop, this traditional food is also inextricably linked to the pagan world.

The hot cross buns of Good Friday, and the dyed eggs of Pasch or Easter Sunday, figured in the Chaldean (Babylonian) rites just as they do now. The "buns" known too by that identical name, were used in the worship of the queen of heaven, the goddess Easter, as early as the days of Cecrops, the founder of Athens – that is, 1500 years before the Christian era. One species of sacred bread which used to be offered to the gods, was of great antiquity, and called Boun. (Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p. 108)

Hislop later explains that the sign of the cross placed on these pastries has nothing to do with Christianity or the resurrection but rather was prominent in the Babylonian Mysteries.

...the so-called "sign of the cross" and the worship bestowed on it, never came from Jesus or His apostles. The same sign of the cross that Rome now worships was used in the Babylonian Mysteries... That which is now called the Christian Cross was originally no Christian emblem at all, but was the mystic Tau of the Chaldeans and Egyptians. (ibid, p. 199-200)

The great prophet Jeremiah was inspired to write a scathing indictment against the nation of Judah. In this indictment, God warned His people that their ongoing practice of pagan rites would not go unpunished. Notice these abominations included the making of this special bread to the queen of heaven.

Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. Do they provoke Me to anger? saith the Lord: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, Mine anger and My fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched. (Jeremiah 7:17-20)

With these words, God is declaring that He is serious about idolatry. No matter how well intended this practice may seem, God condemns it.

## The Easter Lily

One of the most prominent symbols associated with Easter is the lily. This beautiful flower adorns the altars of virtually thousands of Christian churches every Easter. But what does this symbol have to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and when did the custom of using this flower as an ornament of faith originate? As surprising as it may seem, this too has its roots in the pagan world. According to *Grolier's Encyclopedia*, the Easter lily is a symbol of spring, when everything becomes new.

On Easter people go to church services and delight in the sight of great masses of Easter lilies that decorate the altars. For the Chinese the peony is the king of flowers and symbol of spring. But to the people in church on Easter Day, the fragrant lily with its trumpet shaped blossoms is the symbol of purity and the welcome harbinger of spring. (1966, Vol. 17)

But from where did this symbol come and when was it embraced as a symbol of worship? *Unger's Bible Dictionary* provides some extraordinary insight concerning this question. It characterizes this symbol as typical of that which was embraced by pagan worshipers in the Canaanite world.

Characteristically Canaanite, the lily symbolizes grace and sex appeal and the serpent fecundity. (p. 412)

It is important to understand that this flower has no place in the worship of the risen Christ. It was borrowed from the pagan world. Despite its beauty, it is a symbol embraced by a God-rejecting culture—and its image of sex and fertility have no place in the worship of the Savior of the world.

## Sunrise Service

One of the most common practices associated with Easter is the sunrise service. Every year, millions of professing Christians come together before sunrise and participate in what they believe is the worship of the risen Christ. Generally, Easter sunrise services are filled with great pageantry and drama. Choirs provide beautiful music declaring "He is risen" while ministers give moving messages about the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. To many, sunrise services are regarded as a religious experience and many well-intended Christians find participation in these services inspiring.

Most believe the Easter sunrise service has its origin in the scriptures. The common belief is that Jesus was risen before dawn on "Easter Sunday." This, however, is not true as will be explained later in this booklet. Further, it is important to understand that nowhere in the scriptures are Christians instructed to worship at sunrise in celebration of the risen Christ. However, the Bible does describe an event in

which 25 men turned their back towards God's temple and worshiped the sunrise. God called this act of sun worship an abomination that would be dealt with in His fury.

He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and lo, they put the branch to their nose. 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, yet will I not hear them. (Ezk. 8:13-18)

## The Third Day

The most common belief concerning Easter centers around the day of Jesus' crucifixion and that of His resurrection. The popular view is that Jesus was crucified on "Good Friday" and rose on "Easter Sunday" at dawn. Virtually all major Protestant denominations as well as the Catholic church embrace this belief. But is it the truth? Or, is this just another fable that has gone unchecked by millions of professing Christians?

### The Only Sign

The gospel of Matthew describes an event in which Jesus was challenged by the religious leaders of His day to give a sign that would prove He was the Messiah.

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. (Mt. 12:38)

Jesus responded to these religious leaders by providing the only sign He said would be given.

But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Mt. 12:39-40)

Notice that Jesus Himself clearly stated that the only sign He would give to prove He was the promised Messiah was that He would be in the grave "three days and three nights." With this understanding, how could Jesus have been crucified on "Good Friday" and resurrected on "Easter Sunday"? It is virtually impossible to get three days and three nights between Friday afternoon and Sunday at dawn.

Furthermore, how could Jesus have been raised at sunrise when He died near sunset? Once again, if Jesus was buried toward the end of the day as virtually all authorities admit, and He was in the grave three days and three nights, then He would have risen toward the end of the day, 72 hours, or three days later. Otherwise, His words are false and He is not the Messiah. If Jesus' words are true, then the vast majority of professing Christians are worshiping Him in vain because He was not resurrected early Easter Sunday as so many believe. Some argue that the Bible says Jesus was raised Sunday morning before daylight. This is based on the gospels' account of certain women visiting Jesus' tomb "early on the first day of the week" (Mk. 16:1-4). However, when they arrived, the tomb was empty. They were then informed by an angel, "He is risen" (Mk. 16:6).



Notice, however, the angel did not say when Jesus rose, only that He had risen. Consider for a moment: if the women had not visited the tomb until Monday or Tuesday, the angel's declaration would have been no different: "He is risen." This angelic being is only announcing what has taken place, not when it took place. Remember Jesus Himself already said how long He would be in the grave: "three days and three nights," exactly 72 hours (Mt. 12:40).

## Three Days and Three Nights Not an Idiom

There are some who contend that Jesus' words in Matthew 12:40 are a Hebrew idiom and can mean "any part of a day." Therefore, a late Friday burial and an early Sunday resurrection would be consistent with the scriptures.

However, this argument is simply not true. Although the Bible does contain idiomatic phrases, this is not one. Virtually all credible scholars acknowledge that when the number of nights is included as well as the number of days, it is no longer an idiom but a statement of fact. Consider the words of E. W. Bullinger.

The fact that "three days" is used by Hebrew idiom for any part of three days and three nights is not disputed; because that was the common way of reckoning... But, when the number of "nights" is stated as well as the number of "days," then the expression ceases to be an idiom, and becomes a literal statement of fact. (*The Companion Bible*, Appendix 144)

The plain truth is that Jesus was never crucified on "Good Friday" or resurrected on "Easter Sunday." This belief is not driven by the scriptures but rather by the traditions of men.

## When Was Jesus Crucified?

Every year, millions of Christians honor the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on what has come to be known as "Good Friday." On this day, many cultures actually re-enact the crucifixion. But how could Jesus have been crucified on a Friday when the scriptures declare he was resurrected before the women visited His tomb Sunday morning? Remember Jesus' own words that state how long He would be in the grave.

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Mt. 12:39-40)

There are some who will argue that the scriptures themselves prove Jesus was crucified on a Friday. They invoke Mark 15:42-47, which states that Jesus was crucified the day before the Sabbath and Luke 23:50-54 which states that His crucifixion took place "as the Sabbath drew on." However, the Sabbath being referred to in these scriptures was not the weekly Sabbath, but rather a high Sabbath. Notice the words of the apostle John.

The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. (Jn 19:31).

The Bible indicates that there are seven "high days." These days are described in Leviticus 23 and were kept by the Jews in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' death as well as the New Testament Church that would emerge under the leadership of Peter and the disciples.

The specific Sabbath being referred to in Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19:31 was the First Day of Unleavened Bread. This Holy Day took place in the first month on the fifteenth day of the month of the Hebrew calendar. In the year Jesus was crucified this day took place on Thursday. This being the case, Jesus would have been crucified on a Wednesday and buried at the end of the day. It is important to understand that this particular week, there were two Sabbaths - a high Sabbath (Thursday) and the

weekly Sabbath (Saturday). Both these Sabbaths come into play during the time of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection - but how?

## The Key Is In the Spices

The gospel of Mark reveals that spices were bought by certain women who planned to visit Jesus' grave and anoint His body.

And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. (Mk. 16:1)

Notice the spices were purchased "when the Sabbath was past." However, the gospel of Luke indicates that the spices were prepared by these women prior to the Sabbath.

And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment. (Lk 23:56)

Notice that these two verses indicate that there was a Sabbath prior to the spices being bought (Mk. 16:1) and a Sabbath following the preparation of the spices (Lk 23:56). With this in mind, the following chronology outlines the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- Jesus Christ is crucified Wednesday afternoon, the eve of the First Day of Unleavened Bread, a high Sabbath. (Mk. 15:42; Jn. 19:31)
- Certain women see where Jesus is buried. (Mk. 15:47)
- These women return home and keep the high Sabbath Wednesday evening to Thursday evening.
- When the Sabbath is past, the women purchase spices and prepare them. This took place on Friday. (Mk. 16:1)
- Friday evening, the women rested on the weekly Sabbath, according to the commandment. (Lk. 23:56)
- Early Sunday morning, they went to the grave to find Jesus had risen, just as He said. That resurrection took place late Saturday afternoon, exactly 72 hours after He was laid in the grave. (Lk. 24:1-3)

As much as the professing Christian world wants to believe in a Friday crucifixion, it simply isn't true. The Biblical record as well as the very words of Jesus Christ state otherwise.

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Mt. 12:39-40)

## The Truth About Lent

For many professing Christians, the Lenten season is a period of great significance. This period lasts forty days and pictures a time of self-denial and sacrifice. Many professing Christians believe Lent derives its roots from the story of Jesus fasting forty days and forty nights in the wilderness when being tempted by Satan the devil (Mt. 4:1-2). However, Jesus' fast did not take place during the pre-Easter season (late winter, early spring) but rather in the late summer and early fall. Additionally, nowhere does the Bible command such a practice. This being the case, where did Lent originate? Alexander Hislop, in his book *The Two Babylons*, provides some extraordinary insight into this custom.

The forty days' abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshipers of the Babylonian goddess. Such a Lent of forty days, "in the spring of the year," is still observed by the Yezidis or pagan devil-worshippers of Koordistan, who have inherited it from their early masters, the Babylonians. Such a Lent of forty days was held in the spring by the pagan Mexicans, for thus we read in Humboldt [Mexican Researches, v.i. p. 404] where he gives account of Mexican observances: "Three days after the vernal equinox... began a solemn fast of forty days in honor of the sun." Such a Lent of forty days was observed in Egypt, as may be seen on consulting Wilkinson's Egyptians. This Egyptian Lent of forty days, we are informed by Landseer, in his Sabeen Researches, was held expressly in commemoration of Adonis or Osiris, the great mediatorial god." (p. 105)

Clearly, Lent is not a season enjoined by the scriptures but rather a time connected to devil worship. Once again, something that appears so pious actually mocks the very God it claims to worship.

## How Could Everybody Be Wrong?

The most common question concerning the legitimacy of Easter is "how can all the hundreds of Christian denominations with their millions of members be wrong?" The answer to this question is painful to swallow but true. They are deceived by a devil that is more cunning than man can possibly imagine. Notice what the Bible says about the Satan's power to deceive.

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:9)

Notice that Satan has deceived the whole world – not some of the world, not most of the world, but the whole world. Perhaps his greatest deception is that he has convinced man that he is not deceived. In the world today, most people don't even believe Satan exists. How's that for deception?

## Satan: An Angel of Light

At this point it is important to understand that Satan does not look evil. He is not ugly or dark as many assume. Satan is bright and very appealing. Notice the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Church at Corinth.

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (1Cor. 11:14-15)

Satan appears to be beautiful. His ministers appear to be beautiful. His festivals and seasons appear to be beautiful. They appeal to all the physical and emotional senses. But the truth is they are abhorrent to God because they reject His truth and embrace a lie. These holidays call the holy "profane" and the profane "holy."

Today, Christianity rejects God's Sabbaths and festivals. These days have great meaning and outline God's plan of salvation. Tragically, they have been maligned as "burdensome." They are called "Jewish feasts," or "those Old Testament feasts." However, it is important to understand that nowhere in the scriptures are God's Sabbaths and Holy Days done away. The New Testament declares that God's Church kept His Holy Days (see Acts 12:4; 20:4-6; 1Cor. 5:7). The early Church never kept Easter. Notice the striking words of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic Fathers. The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had

foreshadowed. Thus, the Passover, with a new conception added to it, of Christ as the true Paschal Lamb and the first fruits from the dead, continued to be observed. (p. 828, Eleventh Edition)

## Christianity's Greatest Deception

One of Christianity's greatest deceptions is the belief that man can choose for himself how he will worship God. The common belief is that somehow, God has such respect for the attitude in which something is done that the action becomes irrelevant.

Most professing Christian ministers are fully aware of the true origin of the tradition we call Easter. However, they believe that even though this tradition was once deeply rooted in paganism, it now experiences a "newness of life" in Christ. This is simply not true. Jesus' own words declare that although man can choose whether or not he will worship God, he cannot choose how he will worship Him. The gospel of John records an event in which Jesus spoke to a woman of Samaria and explained a profound truth about the worship of His Father.

God is a spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. (Jn. 4:24)

Easter is not the truth! Further, Jesus also indicated that God could be worshiped in vain when man's traditions enter into our worship of God.

He answered and said unto them, "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.'" (Mk. 7:6-7)

While giving the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also explained that it was possible to practice a false Christianity. He then stated that those who engaged in such a practice would not be permitted to enter into God's Kingdom.

Not every one that saith unto Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father Which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works?" And then will I profess unto them, "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." (Mt. 7:21-23)

Consider the reaction of those who were not permitted entrance into God's Kingdom. They were stunned because they thought they could choose how God was to be worshiped.

### A Final Thought

Is Easter Christian? The simple answer is "no." Despite all its beauty and pageantry, Easter is pagan to the core. Its symbols and traditions do not honor Christ or His sacrifice. On the contrary, they actually mock it. The apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, issued a stern warning which every true Christian should take very seriously.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Gal. 6:7)

The God of the Bible takes very seriously the way He is worshiped. Those who believe it is ok to borrow from the traditions of the pagan world and incorporate such things into the worship of God or His Son should consider Jesus' admonition on this subject: "God is a spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). It is important to understand that nowhere in the New

Testament do we find God's Church celebrating Easter. God's people throughout the Bible honored His festivals. The New Testament Church kept the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread (1 Cor. 5:7). They also kept His other festivals which God commanded as holy convocations (Lev. 23:1-2). God's Holy Days were never abandoned at the cross. On the contrary, they take on greater meaning. Man's attempt to replace God's festivals and Holy Days with customs that come directly from the pagan world represents an act of rank arrogance.

## A Lesson From Ancient Israel

Fifteen centuries before Jesus was born, the children of Israel were led out of Egypt with a high hand. At that time, God knew they would ultimately enter lands occupied by pagans such as the Amalekites, the Hivites, Perizzites, and Jebusites. These people practiced forms of worship that were abhorrent to God and were light years from the faith God was going to give to this once-enslaved people. Therefore, God issued a stern warning concerning the assimilation of false religions into the Israelites' worship of the one true God.

Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise." Thou shalt not do unto the Eternal thy God: for every abomination to the Eternal, which He hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. (Deut. 12:30-32)

This admonition by God is as binding today as it was when the Eternal first gave it. It is not up to man to decide for himself how God is to be worshiped. That is God's job. The decision He gave to us is whether or not we would obey.

## WHAT IS YOUR DECISION?