

Thoughts on Easter

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The word *Easter* is the anglicized form of the name of a Teutonic mythical goddess, Esostre, Ostana, or Ostern, — the goddess of spring and the dawn. The venerable Bede (A.D. 673–735) declares that the festival of Easter derives its name from this goddess that was worshipped of old in Britain. The first celebration of Easter, according to Williston Walker in *A History of the Christian Church*, was in A.D. 154 or 155 in the city of Rome. This perhaps comes as a surprise to many who believe that Easter in its entirety is but a continuation of the Jewish Passover. Perhaps it is also a surprise to the great majority of the religious world that has been led to believe that its origin is in the Bible.

The date of the Easter celebration has been among the major religious controversies since the close of the second century. Some wanted to base its observance on the lunar calendar, while others believed it should be based on the solar calendar. The disagreement became so heated that Constantine called the Council of Nicaea in 325 to settle on one date for the celebration. The apostate Roman Catholic church was divided over this controversy, among other things, and to this day the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches observe Easter at different times. Now both Protestant and Roman Catholic bodies observe the same date which was fixed by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. This date is determined by the first full moon that falls on or next after the vernal equinox.

In Acts 12:4 in the King James version the word *Easter* makes its only Biblical appearance. This same word was translated *Passover* in every, other passage where it appeared in this version, but perhaps to humor the Church of England, translators substituted *Easter* here. In the context, the passage obviously refers to the Jewish Passover. Even in the Douay-Rheims (Catholic) version this is recognized, and “Easter” is not mentioned. Neither is it to be found in any other version of the Bible.

Just as the word *Easter* is not found in the New Testament, neither is its practice. Scripture not only fails to mention Easter, but it is also silent on such related subjects as Lent, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, et al. To find such observances one must search elsewhere. Lyman Coleman (Presbyterian) says, “these festivals became an incongruous mixture of Judaism, paganism, and Christianity. These festivals had their origin in a corrupt age of the church and are a manifest token of degeneracy” (*Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, p. 542). *Encyclopedia*

Britannica states, "There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic fathers. The sanctity of special times was an idea absent from the minds of the first Christians" (Vol. VIII, p. 828; 14th ed.). This authority summarizes by saying, "The Lord nor his apostles enjoined the keeping of this or any other festival."

Not only are "festivals" not enjoined in the New Testament, but the New Testament condemns their observance. Paul wrote in Galatians 4:10-11,

Ye observe days and months, seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor, upon you in vain.

Such is condemned again by Paul in Colossians 2:16-18.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's. Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,...

Festivals of this sort have been borrowed by the papists from Judaism, mixed with paganism, and called "Christianity." It is almost beyond belief that Protestant churches thus have bowed to Rome.

The fundamental facts of the Gospel are summarized in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: "...Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." The Lord did not just leave us the record of His death and resurrection to remind us of Him, however. He instituted a Supper to be kept in remembrance of His death (1 Cor. 11:23-29). The New Testament church observed the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week as recorded in Acts 20:7. It is more than coincidental that the Lord's Supper was observed on the same day of the week that Christ rose from the dead. When Christians then assemble on the first day of the week, we not only remember Christ's death in His Supper, but also His resurrection by the very day of our assembly. There is therefore no need for the festival called "Easter," for every Lord's Day's worship assembly should commemorate all and more than "Easter" allegedly does only once a year.

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