

WHERE DID “EASTER” COME FROM?

On Sunday 8th April this year (2007), much of the Christian world will celebrate “**Easter.**” This “holy day,” which every year falls on “the first Sunday after the first full moon that occurs on or after March 21st,” is traditionally observed as the day of the resurrection of Christ.

To most Christians “Easter” means The Resurrection. But a few questions are often asked by believers who are not content to blindly follow “the traditions” of the church.

* Does “Easter” mean resurrection? If not, why is a “Christian holy day” called Easter?

* Is the day marked as “Easter” on our calendars, the actual day of Christ’s Resurrection?

* Where did many of the strange Easter customs come from - customs that patently have nothing whatever to do with the resurrection?

These questions need to be asked and answered. Let’s first state the **Gospel truth**, which we whole-heartedly believe and uphold:

1 It is a glorious fact that Y’shua (Jesus) the Messiah died as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. And He died on the day called *Pesach* (Passover).

2 It is also a glorious fact that Y’shua rose again, physically, from the dead, three days after His crucifixion – on the first day of the week. The day of His Resurrection was the day called “Firstfruits” – the day when a sheaf of the Barley harvest was “waved” as an offering to the LORD. This took place during the 8-day Passover season. (Leviticus 23:10-12)

THE WORD “EASTER”

The word Easter is not a Bible word. True, it is used in Acts 12:4 in the Authorized Version, but this is one of the most glaring mistakes in the King James Bible. The word used in the Greek text is *Pascha* - the Greek form of *Pesach*. (The King James translated the same word as Passover, correctly, in 28 other passages.)

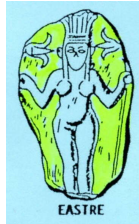
WEBSTER’S Dictionary says: “EASTER: the original name of the pagan vernal (spring) festival almost coincident in date with the paschal festival of the church < Eastre, dawn goddess.”

ALEXANDER HISLOP in “The Two Babylons” explains that Easter has a Chaldean origin, and is nothing else than the worship of the “Queen of Heaven” who went under the names of Eastre, Eostra, Ostara, Ishtar, Astarte, Beltis, Isis, H’isha, Ashtoreth, and others.

THE WORSHIP OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

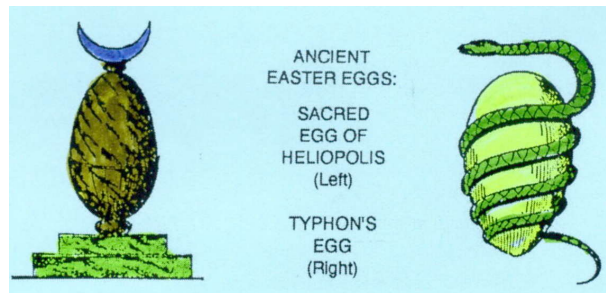
Easter was in fact a spring fertility festival celebrated by pagans right back to the days of the Tower of Babel.

The Easter symbols of hot cross buns, Easter eggs, Easter bunnies and lilies all have pagan origin.



The lily was a symbol of the goddess Eastre.

Buns or cakes were made and offered to the goddess Ashtoreth. The coloured eggs go back to the fertility rites of the Babylonians and Canaanites.



Ancient Israel was condemned because it worshiped the abominable Ashtoreth, the so-called Queen of Heaven.

In parts of Christendom we see a great travesty - the proclamation of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the "Queen of Heaven." But nowhere does the Bible call Mary the Queen of Heaven! Tragically the Catholic papal system has proclaimed Mary the "Mother of the Church", "the Queen of Heaven and Earth," and "the Queen of the Universe."

Actually, the "Mary" being exalted as the Queen of Heaven is a counterfeit. She is not the mother of our Saviour, but a more recent version of Eostre, the old satanic delusion.

The mother of our Saviour, Y'shua, was a dearly beloved and blessed maiden named **Miryam**, commonly called in English, Mary. And as she is my "elder sister," I must stand up for Miryam and her honour. Anyone who calls her "Queen of Heaven" does her great wrong. They are actually equating her with a demonic deity. Miryam is not the "Queen of Heaven", and she would never ever accept that title. Miryam called herself the bondservant of God her Saviour (Luke 1:47-48).

This "queenship" business is nothing but Satan's attempt to instal his delusion as the goddess of Christendom. True, the Catholic church does not call her a goddess, but it does infer this when they call her "the Mother of God."

A small booklet called “My Rosary” came to my hand some time back. It is a Catholic production, bearing the Imprimatur of Francis Cardinal Spellman, the Archbishop of New York.

The booklet teaches children to say the Rosary. It starts, “The word Rosary means a garland of Roses. The Rosary is a bunch of sweet flowers that we give to our Mother. Each rose is a prayer. Together they make our Rosary.” It ends with the words, “Jesus rises from the grave and appears to His Mother. Jesus ascends into Heaven. The Holy Ghost comes down upon Mary and the Apostles. Mary dies, and her pure body is taken up into Heaven.



Mary is crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.”

The booklet includes a picture of children worshipping Jesus and Mary. One picture shows Mary in the clouds bathed in the light of a triangle and eye, which is the unmistakable “eye of Horus.” And the picture has the words Father, Son and Holy Ghost on the sides of the triangle to give it a “Christian” connotation.

Horus is the hawk-god, an Egyptian form of Baal. His mother was the goddess Isis, which is another form of Eostre. How subtly Satan has been able to foist his concept of a Queen of Heaven upon the Roman church, and to get even Protestant Christians all over the World to employ the name and symbols of the pagan goddess, “Eostre!”

“EASTER”: THE PAGAN BACKGROUND

Easter is generally acknowledged to have superseded an old pagan festival in honour of a Germanic **spring goddess Eostre**. The name migrated westward from Asia into Europe with the Germanic people, and describes a deity equivalent to Ashtoreth of the Canaanites, the moon-goddess, so-called queen of heaven and mythical wife of Baal. Her origins can be traced to ancient Babel (Babylon).

According to the Catholic Encyclopaedia, “A great many pagan customs celebrating the return of **spring**, gravitated to Easter.” Some examples ...

LENT and the FAST OF TAMMUZ

“LENT,” (the 40-day partial fast leading up to Easter that some Christians observe) is reminiscent of the pagan fast of **Tammuz**, which is also mentioned in scripture: YHWH said to Ezekiel: “You will see still greater abominations which they (Israel) are committing. Then he took me to the door of the gate of the House of YHWH

which was towards the north; and see this! *he saw* sat women there weeping for Tammuz.” (Ezekiel 8:13-14).

In paganism the first day of spring (1st Nisan or Abib) in the ancient Hebrew calendar, a new moon, marked the end of a season equivalent to Lent, known as the Fast of Tammuz.

Tammuz is effectively a type of **Baal**, who was said to have died a violent death and passed into the underworld. Whereupon his wife/mother, a type of Ishtar or Ashtoreth, pursued him there, in order to have him released. During the resultant winter all vegetation died and animal reproduction ceased. In order to bring about her return, humans fasted and mourned for a period of **forty days**, known as the Fast of Tammuz. According to legend, on the day of her return, accompanied by her resurrected husband/son, spring began.

HOT CROSS BUNS

Another relic of the cult of Easter/Ashtoreth to which Scripture refers are the “Hot cross buns” of Easter.

“The (Israelite) women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven ... that they may provoke me to anger.” (Jeremiah 7:18). And the women asked, “Did we make (the queen of heaven) cakes to worship her ... without our husbands’ *consent*?” (Jeremiah 44:19).

The Hebrew word *khavan*, here translated “cakes,” only appears these two times in the whole of Scripture.

Alexander Hislop demonstrates that the English word “bun” is derived from the same root, which denotes a bread made to stand erect by **leavening**. He goes on to quote other ancient sources: “One species of sacred bread which used to be offered to the gods, was of great antiquity, and called ‘Boun.’

“A worshipper offered one of the sacred cakes called Boun which was made of fine flour and honey. Thus the worshipper was consecrated to his or her deity, in this case the queen of heaven/Easter, in a parody and a perversion of the pattern of the worship of the Lord, who expressly forbade the use of either leaven (a raising agent) or honey (a sweetener) in a burned (hot) cereal offering. To do so was to bring the Lord’s curse upon oneself. Therefore, at the Passover meal on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus took **unleavened bread** and said, “This is my body (the sacrifice) which is given for you.”

Yet it is on Good Friday, the Christian equivalent of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that countless Christian households eat “Boun.”

EASTER EGGS

The custom of giving Easter eggs to one’s friends is also traceable to paganism and Ashtoreth. Her cult involved ritual prostitution as a fertility rite, hence the association with eggs. Babylonian mythology relates a tale of an egg of monstrous size which fell from heaven into the Euphrates and hatched into the goddess Astarte, the Babylonian equivalent of Ashtoreth.

In ancient Egypt, the egg was associated with the sun-god (type of Baal) and dyed eggs were used as sacred offerings at the Easter season. In pagan northern Europe eggs were coloured and used as symbols of the goddess of spring. Similarly, because of their promiscuity and characteristic springtime mating activities, the hare and the rabbit also became emblems of fertility and of Ashtoreth/Easter. Hence the “Easter Bunny.”

These are just three of the many customs associated with the return of spring/Ashtoreth, which have gravitated to Easter.

HOW DID THE CHURCH ADOPT EASTER?

Let me quote Richard Peterson, a British Christian missionary who has worked amongst Jewish people in Israel and elsewhere, from his excellent review of how “the church” changed from observing Passover and established Easter in its place:

THERE IS NO CLEAR New Testament evidence that the earliest Christians kept the day of Jesus’ resurrection as either an annual Feast or Sabbath-day of rest.

Early Church tradition gives us a clue to the practices of the apostles. We hear that the apostles John and Philip, in Ephesus and Asia Minor (western Turkey), taught observance of Passover on the scriptural date of 14th Nisan/Abib, and that they taught it as a memorial of Jesus’ sacrificial death as the Passover Lamb of God.

The Didache, the earliest non-biblical record of church law, which was composed late in the first century, or in the early second c., neither gives instruction about nor mentions any observance related to Jesus’ resurrection.

Ignatius’ testimony that “the Lord’s Day” is now understood to be the day of Jesus’ resurrection indicates that, although some importance was attached to its memory, it was quite distinct from Passover.

The first Bishop of Rome who did **not** observe Passover according to the Jewish/scriptural calendar, was Sixtus (113-127 AD). From then on, the churches of Rome and Alexandria observed Passover on “Easter-Sunday,” but it was still strictly a memorial of Jesus’ passion and sacrificial death. But some churches in and around Rome continued to observe Passover according to the Jewish/scriptural calendar, as did the remainder of the Church in general.

The change in Rome to “Easter-Sunday” may have been expediency, due to the intermittent Jewish insurrections which took place throughout the rule of Hadrian and the fact that Hadrian therefore, “reserved his anger for the Jews.”

Gentile anti-Jewish feeling in Alexandria had been high for over half a century and, as a result of an uprising in 115 AD, even the great synagogue in Alexandria had been burned. Here also, the change of dates for celebrating Passover may have been partly prompted by expediency.

Before Sixtus there is no record that either Sunday or Passover were formally observed as a Christian memorial of the resurrection.

Epiphanius tells us that controversy over the date and interpretation of the Church's observance of Passover/Easter, "arose after the exodus of the bishops of the circumcision (the Jewish bishops)" from Jerusalem, following its destruction in 135 AD (after the Simon bar Kochba rebellion.)

Hadrian expelled all Jews from Jerusalem and forbade any Jew to enter Jerusalem on pain of death. Jewish believers left Jerusalem and dispersed, and the Jewish bishops were replaced by Greek bishops. As Hadrian had prohibited Judaism throughout the empire, including the eating of unleavened bread at Passover and observing any Jewish festival, the new bishops would not have been inclined to risk their lives by appearing to disobey him.

Therefore, the Jerusalem-Jewish church and its practices lost their dominant influence upon the churches of the Roman world, and the "power base," naturally, shifted to Gentile leadership in Rome. Nevertheless, the controversy continued until at least 365 AD.

Events came to a head when, in about 195 AD., Pope Victor I excommunicated Polycratus, bishop of Ephesus, and threatened the remaining bishops of Asia Minor, if they continued to celebrate Passover on the 14th of Nisan.

Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen and Eusebius give us the strong impression that, by this time, the majority of the western churches observed a remembrance of the resurrection of Jesus on Easter-Sunday, and that Easter-Sunday had largely displaced Passover observance.

The determination of the Church's leadership to bring about a unilateral separation of identify, was spelt out in 325 AD at the Council of Nicaea. The council decreed, "All brethren in the East who formerly celebrated Easter with the Jews, will henceforth keep it at the same time as the Romans."

It was also underlined in Constantine's Nicene conciliar letter, "It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast (Passover/Easter) we should follow the practice of the Jews."

St. Ephraim the Syrian (about 363 AD) wrote in a similar vein, "My brethren, keep far from the unleavened bread in which is symbolized by the sacrament of Judas. Flee, my brethren, from the unleavened bread of Israel, for beneath its whiteness lies hidden shame. Do not accept, my brethren, the unleavened bread of this people whose hands are stained with blood."

To avoid resemblance to the Jewish Passover, John Chrysostom (386 AD) refused to give an annual remembrance of Jesus' resurrection any more significance than any other occasion on which the Lord's Supper was celebrated.

Jerome's letter from Bethlehem to Augustine (about 400 AD) spells out just how estranged from its origins the Church had become. "The ceremonies of the Jews are pernicious and deadly. Whoever observes them, whether Jew or Gentile, has fallen into the pit of the devil."

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The above gives us some idea of how the Biblical Passover, which the early believers celebrated, was later rejected in favour of a “holy day” with a popular pagan name.

Now, it is not wrong to celebrate the resurrection of the Saviour. Indeed, we must proclaim that glorious fact, for it is part of the Gospel. As the apostle Paul says:

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance, that the Messiah died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

It is not wrong to celebrate the resurrection of Y’shua on the Sunday after Good Friday, and on every worship day, but we should not label the Resurrection with a pagan name and continue saddling it with pagan symbols and practices. It is ridiculous to wish people “Happy Easter.” Why would you want to wish people a “Happy Queen of Heaven”?

Yes, most Christians do it in ignorance. But once you know the Truth, follow Him! Why not use a greeting like, “Christ is risen,” or “Jesus is alive, and He’s coming back again!”

Easter is one word that ought to be eliminated from our Christian vocabulary! And so ought the pagan customs and symbols. We should resist the commercial pressure to buy Easter bunnies and Easter eggs, even though they are only chocolate ones.

Y’shua told us to take the bread and the cup in remembrance of Him. And as Paul says:

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Master’s death until He comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

This is one feast we should love!

“For our Passover *Lamb*, the Messiah, has been sacrificed *for us*. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old yeast, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Some people will say, “Well, we celebrate the Passover every week, or month, whenever we have the Lord’s table. So why must we celebrate an annual Passover?”

Well, **it is not a must!** But it can be a real blessing to have an annual “special” - a Passover meal of remembrance. Certainly the sacrifice of the Lamb of God is the most central part of the believer’s faith.

Some will say, “It is not so easy to celebrate Passover on the Biblical date. Often it does not fall on a weekend or public holiday; and usually we don’t know what the correct date is anyway.”

True, and it is not a **must** that you celebrate Passover on the exact date. Believers in Messiah are not under the Mosaic Law, but under the Law of the Spirit of Life and Freedom.

The Biblical date of Passover is often very close to Good Friday, but sometimes it may be a couple of weeks later. (This year, 2007, Passover is on April 3, and Good Friday is on April 6.)

Passover is traditionally held in the evening so it should not necessarily require a holiday.

A Passover celebration may be held by a church or assembly, or a home fellowship; or it may be celebrated by a family circle. But it is more than simply an evening meal. It is a season of fellowship, with the reading of the Scriptures and teaching on "Christ our Passover." Conversation around the table should not be mostly casual talk, but conversation centered around Passover and Messiah. There will be the singing of psalms and appropriate worship songs and prayers. And children should be encouraged to ask questions on theme.

But some will ask, "Is Good Friday not good enough? Isn't that the equivalent of Passover?"

Good Friday services usually focus on the sufferings of the cross, and they can be a blessing as you remember what the Saviour has done. But here is a suggestion; have a family Passover meal on the Biblical date, or if you prefer, on the evening before Good Friday.

In fact, some families like to follow the example of Y'shua and His disciples, and have a "Upper room" Passover on the evening before the crucifixion day.

This "Upper Room" experience would in fact prepare you for the larger fellowship worship and remembrance on Friday. And then, if there is a true Resurrection celebration on Sunday, it would complete the cycle – The Upper Room, Calvary, and the Empty Tomb.

No, **this is not a must**, unless the Holy Spirit puts the desire in your heart. But the apostle seems to take it for granted that believers **will** celebrate the Passover . . .

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