

“EASTER” Every Sunday

They Are Not Scriptural

CHRISTMAS AND EASTER were not days observed by the church of the New Testament. Search your New Testament Scriptures from cover to cover. You cannot find just once where these days were observed (and the Lord in the Great Commission instructed the apostles to teach men “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” Matthew 28:20). Hence, if the Lord had wanted us to observe such days in the church, we would have a record of them in the writings of the apostles and other inspired men (John 14:26; 16:13; II Timothy 3:16,17). (But we are suspicious that, like the secular world, religious publishing houses promote these days to sell their products).

The Origin of Christmas and Easter

A hint as to the origin of the observance of Christmas can easily be seen by the observant person in the etymology of the word itself. Notice “Christmas” = CHRIST + MASS. (You figure this one out for yourself). And for those who think they have found Scriptural authority for Easter in Acts 12:4 of the King James Version of the Bible, a second thought is in order. For those who have made the King James Version an idol (and it is deserving of veneration, but not idolatry), we are sorry to say, this could have been better translated (check your other versions and the original language). The Greek word in the original is *pascha* (PASSOVER), even as the writer Luke says, “Then were the days of unleavened bread” (Acts 12:3). It is weird to have the word “Easter” associated with the resurrection of Christ, as it had reference to a pagan festival in the springtime observed in connection with the heathen goddess Eastre. It is almost like the Devil is making fun of the birth and resurrection of Christ, tagging revered truths with idolatrous labels. How strange it is that things like this get started and supposedly “intelligent” people keep hanging on to them.

The Resurrection Understood

However, for practical purposes we understand what people mean when they use the word “Easter” today. They have reference to the day they remember the resurrection of Christ from the grave, which brings us to our following line of thought.

Psalms 118:22-24, A Great Prophecy

A marvelous prophecy is found in Psalms 118:22-24. It reads, “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD’S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD had made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” This Scripture is quoted more than once in the New Testament. Among the references is Acts 4:11, with the verse right before it throwing light upon its meaning: “Be it known

unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, *whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead*, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. *This is the stone which was set at naught by you builders, which is become the head of the corner.*” Yes, obviously he is referring to the prophecy in Psalms. The stone being rejected (set at naught, refused) ties in with the crucifixion of Christ, and it being made the head of the corner ties in with the resurrection of Christ.

The last part of the passage in Psalms 118, although it is not quoted in Acts, applies to the glorious event spoken of here: “Whom God raised from the dead.” The Psalms reference reads, “This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalms 118:24). What a day that was!

The First Day of the Week

Really, what day was it when Jesus came forth from the grave? “Now *upon the first day of the week*, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of Jesus...” (Read Luke 24:1-3; Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-9; John 20:1). Mark 16:9 very plainly states, “Now *when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week...*” So, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ occurred on what we call Sunday, the first day of the week, which followed Saturday (the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week).

The first day of the week is emphasized in reference to the resurrection appearances of Jesus and the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Notice John 20:1. (1) “*The first day of the week* cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre” (verse 1). (2) “*Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week*, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you” (verse 19). (3) “*And after eight days* [being the first day of the week] again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you” (verse 26). It seems the writer makes a special point of mentioning the first day of the week.

Early Church Met on This Day

It is interesting to notice that the early church met on the first day of the week, instead of the Sabbath (and the first day of the week, Sunday, is universally recognized until this day in “Christendom”). Acts 20:7 reads, “*And upon the first day of the week*, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” Paul instructed the Corinthians, “*Upon the first day of the week* let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (I Corinthians 16:2). Christians no longer observed the Sabbath because that “handwriting

of ordinances” (the O.T. law) had been taken out of the way, God “nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:14). Consequently, Paul said, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of any holyday, or of the new moon, or of the *sabbath days*” (Colossians 2:16). Some churches in Galatia were observing the Sabbath and other days. Paul solemnly wrote to them, “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Galatians 4:10,11).

Day of Pentecost

(It is a matter of special interest that it was upon the first day of the week that the church was started. As we know, the church came into being with power on the first Jewish Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Matthew 16:18,19; Mark 9:1; Acts 2). Leviticus 23:15 and 16, having to do with the day of Pentecost, reads, “And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; even seven Sabbaths shall ye number fifty day; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.” A week of Sabbaths was to follow the Passover Sabbath, then the next day, fiftieth day, was the day of Pentecost, which means fifty. Of course the day that follows the Sabbath is the first day of the week. Therefore, not only was Christ resurrected from the grave on the first day of the week, the church was established on this day, too—*only a little later*).

“Easter” Every Sunday

What we are trying to say in this article is that the first day of every week (SUNDAY) is “Easter” (using the terminology of the world) to the New Testament Christians. The evidence points to the fact that the early church met on this day, instead of the Sabbath, in honor of the resurrection of Christ (and that day is commonly observed in “Christian” communities until now, although many have forgotten what the original significance was). “This is the day the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalms 118:24). Let us not detract from the Scriptures by emphasizing special days other than what the Lord would have emphasized.

The Lord’s Supper

New Testament Christians observe the Lord’s Supper the first day of every week (Acts 20:7) in remembrance of the death of Christ (I Corinthians 11:23-26), and how appropriate to remember his death on the day of his resurrection. Both are the great and cardinal doctrines of Christianity, neither being meaningful without the other.

REMEMBER: *Every Sunday* is “Easter” (resurrection day) to New Testament Christians. In the light of this, we admonish you with the Hebrews writer, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is: but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). What great, exciting and precious truths we celebrate as we gather together with those of like precious faith! AMEN!

(Check out additional thought on why “Easter” is found in Acts 12 of the KJV of the Bible in the following short article).

EXPLANATION OF “EASTER” IN THE KING JAMES TRANSLATION

IN THE 12TH CHAPTER of Acts we are told about Herod having the apostle James killed with the sword (the first apostle to be put to death). Seeing that it pleased the Jews, he apprehended the apostle Peter also. We are told that “then were the days of unleavened bread” (verse 3), and that Herod was “intending after *Easter* to bring him [Peter] forth to the people [the Jews]” (verse 4).

The Greek word behind this word translated “Easter” is *pascha*. The King James translation stands alone in rendering it as “Easter.” All other translations represent this word with “Passover,” and the context here in Acts 12 easily shows that it has reference to “the days of unleavened bread” (the Passover). Passover is what *pascha* means, but the King James scholars translated the word as “Easter.” Were they wrong in doing this? The answer is yes, and the answer is no. What is the story behind this?

The early church did not observe Easter. The Lord came forth from the grave on the first day of the week (Luke 24:1-3; Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-9; John 20:1), and instead of continuing to keep the Sabbath (Colossians 2:14-16; Galatians 4:9-11), the early church met on the first day of the week (evidently tied in with memory of the resurrection of Christ). (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). But as time went by and changes began to take place, an annual celebration of the resurrection came into being in addition to meeting on the first day of the week (which we still do). The name “Easter” (originally a pagan festival in honor of the goddess of spring) was not used at first to refer to this day. In the Greek speaking world the name that was applied to this day was *pascha*, the word for Passover, but having reference now to the day set aside to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. We can easily see how *pascha* could be switched over to this day by non-Jewish people, as the time frame is the same when it originally took place. And still today in modern Greece their word for “Easter” is *pascha*, which really is “Passover.”

As a matter of further interest, the Greek word in use today for Friday is *paraskeue*. In Mark 15:42 we read about “the *preparation*, that is, the day before the sabbath.” Friday was the day of preparation, as the Jews were involved in getting ready for the Sabbath. *Paraskeue* is the word translated “preparation.” This word was also carried over into the Greek speaking world, and it is their word for Friday.

So, were the King James scholars wrong in translating *pascha* as “Easter”? It seems they imposed a later meaning of the word *pascha* that was used in the Greek world. But for the Bible times in which the book of Acts was written, “Passover” best represents what is meant here.—*James E. Gibbons*

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