

The Surprising Origin of EASTER!

Where did Easter come from? How did it become connected with the resurrection of Messiah? What does the resurrection have to do with bunny rabbits, colored eggs, and other symbols of the spring fertility goddess? Here we reveal the shocking, incredible origins of EASTER!

Yahweh's Word says unequivocally: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, (opposer) and satan, (adversary) which DECEIVETH THE WHOLE WORLD: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels (messengers) were cast out with him" (*Rev. 12:9*).

Does God mean what He says? God says the "WHOLE WORLD" is deceived. Which SYSTEM today is deceiving the whole world?!? Where did it come from?

The apostle John, in his first epistle, wrote: "And we know that we are of God, and the WHOLE WORLD *lieth in wickedness*" (*I John 5:19*).

That doesn't leave much room for doubt or wriggling or scrunching around to avoid admitting the truth. This means the vast overwhelming majority in the world are DECEIVED! Millions upon millions upon millions!

Only a few, a very few, at this time, have been called to have their minds opened to understand and grasp the truth of Yahweh. Yeshua (Jesus) called them a "little flock." He said: "Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (*Luke 12:32*).

This means that the vast visible Church which calls itself Christian has actually been deceived by the God-opposing, adversarial, rebellious, "SYSTEM" of END-TIME BABYLON, which John, metaphorically calls the devil (or opposer)!

In this article, we will see how the devil (this corrupt system) has supplanted the truth of God, and foisted off its own doctrines upon a gullible and naive world, which thinks it is really "Christian." You will be astonished -- and amazed -- at how thoroughly this 'devil' has done his dirty work!

You will see how a cardinal belief of modern "Christianity" is totally in error -- how a major pillar of the professing Christian world crumbles before the onslaught of the Word of God.

Please do not judge before you have all the facts! Read on -- and you will be dumbfounded and shocked! But the Word of God is very plain.

Easter -- Christian or Pagan?

What do colored eggs and bunny rabbits have to do with Christ and His teachings? Have you ever wondered? Where did the Easter parade and hot-cross buns come from? What about Easter sunrise services?

Millions of people assume that these time-hallowed customs are Christian and must therefore date back to the early Christian Church. Yet few know the real origin of Easter, or why the Christian-professing world, today, observes this particular holiday.

The true story of the origin of Easter is intriguing. In this article, we will explore the earliest beginnings of the celebration of the spring festival called Easter, discover the origins of many of today's Easter customs, and see the amazing manner in which this ancient custom wove its way into the fabric of modern Christianity. No story is more astonishing.

Day of a Pagan Goddess

The English word Easter and the German *Ostern* come from a common origin (*Eostur, Eastur, Ostara, Ostar*), which to the Norsemen meant the season of the rising or growing sun -- the season of new birth. The word was used by ancient Europeans to designate the "Feast of New Life" in the spring.

The word long antedates Christianity. Originally, it referred to the celebration of the spring sun, which had its birth in the East and brought new life upon the earth. The ancient Teutonic goddess of spring was addressed as *Eostre*. Easter, then, antedates Christianity by centuries.

But what about the myriad customs that surround this day -- the chocolate bunnies, the Easter eggs, the parades?

Again, you may be surprised to learn that red, blue, yellow or green eggs, as symbols of the renewal of life, were part of a custom that goes back centuries before the birth of Christ. Eggs, a symbol of fertility in many lands, are easily traceable to ancient pagan lore. So is the famous Easter bunny. (Only the chocolate rabbit is modern.) This rapidly breeding and multiplying animal was an ancient symbol of fecundity. And so modern children, eagerly hunting for Eastern eggs supposedly deposited by a rabbit, are

unknowingly following an ancient fertility rite.

What about the Easter parade? Does that, too, date back to the days of antiquity when pagans paraded in the springtime, donning new hats and clothes to honor their goddess of spring?

The answer is yes. Scholars can trace the Easter parade to similar rites in ancient Germany, Greece, and even India.

Hot-cross buns, interestingly enough, were eaten by pagan Saxons in honor of Easter, their goddess of light. The Mexicans and Peruvians had a similar custom. In fact, the custom of eating hot-cross buns was practically universal in the ancient pagan world!

Easter fires, although not a widespread phenomenon today, are still lit in some northern European countries, notably Germany. This practice is clearly traceable to pagan antiquity.

And what about Easter sunrise services? They too go back to the pagan custom of prostrating before the rising spring time sun. The goddess of light, Eastre or Oстера, was identified with the rising sun.

Throughout the Middle Ages, this pagan custom was continued, "A universal celebration was held in the Middle Ages at the hour of sunrise. According to an old legend, the sun dances on Easter morning or makes three cheerful jumps at the moment of rising, in honor of Christ's Resurrection....All over Europe people would gather in open plains or on the crests of hills to watch the spectacle of sunrise on Easter Day. The moment of daybreak was marked by the shooting of cannon and the ringing of bells... In most places the crowds would pray as the sun appeared....From this medieval custom dates our modern SUNRISE SERVICE held by many congregations in this country on Easter Sunday" (Weiser, *The Easter Book*, pp. 158 -- 159).

Plainly, then, today's Easter has its roots deep in ancient paganism -- centuries before the birth of Christ -- and its rites have scarcely changed.

Says Ralph Woodrow in *Babylon Mystery Religion*:

"The word itself, as the dictionaries and encyclopedias explain, comes from the name of a Pagan Goddess -- the goddess of Spring. Easter is but a more modern form of Ishtar, Eostre, Oстера, or Astarte. Ishtar, another name for Semiramis of Babylon, was pronounced as we pronounce "Easter" today! And so the name of the Spring Festival, "Easter," is definitely paganistic, the name being taken from the name of the Goddess." (p. 152).

The "Easter egg" was a sacred symbol of the ancient Babylonians. They believed an old fable about a huge egg which supposedly fell from heaven into the Euphrates River. From this egg, says the legend, the goddess Astarte (Easter) was hatched. From

Babylon the idea of the mystic, sacred egg spread abroad to many nations.

Admits the *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

The egg as a symbol of fertility and of renewed life goes back to the ancient Egyptians and Persians, who had also the custom of colouring and eating eggs during their spring festival (article, "Easter").

Thus eating Easter eggs is actually a modern form of participation in ancient spring fertility rites, and the worship of the goddess of fertility, "Easter"!

The Romans called the name of this goddess of sexual fertility "Venus," and it is from this name that we derive the modern English words "venereal" and "venereal disease."

What about the Easter "Rabbit"?

This symbol, too, comes from ancient paganism. Says the *Britannica*:

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....Through the fact that the Egyptian word for hare, UM, means also "open" and "period," that hare came to be associated with the idea of periodicity, both lunar and human, and with the beginning of new life in both the young man and young woman, and so a symbol of fertility and of the renewal of life. As such, the hare became linked with Easter...eggs (*ibid.*).

Says Alexander Hislop regarding the festival of Easter:

Then look at Easter. What means the term Easter itself? 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*, p. 103).

Admits the *World Book Encyclopedia*, "Its name may have come from *Eostre*, a Teutonic goddess of spring, or from the Teutonic festival of spring called *Eostur*" (article, "Easter," vol. 6, p. 25).

Speaking of the Easter egg, this same authority says: "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 that the earth had hatched from a giant egg."

Adds Hislop:

"Such is the history of Easter. The popular observances that still attend the period of its celebration amply confirm the testimony of history as to its Babylonian character.

The hot cross buns of Good Friday, and the dyed eggs of Pasch or Easter Sunday, figured in the Chaldean 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,” says Byrant, “which used to be offered to the gods, was of great antiquity, and called Boun.” Diogenes Laertius, speaking of this offering being made by Empedocles, describes the chief ingredients of which it was composed, saying, “He offered one of the sacred cakes called Boun, which was made of fine flour and honey.” The prophet Jeremiah takes notice of this kind of offering when he says, “The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven.” The hot cross buns are not now *offered*, but *eaten*, on the festival of Astarte; but this leaves no doubt as to whence they have been derived.” (Hislop, p. 108).

And what about the Easter egg?

Again, Alexander Hislop tells us plainly:

“The origin of the Pasch eggs is just as clear. The ancient Druids bore an egg, as the sacred emblem of their order. In the Dionysiaca, or mysteries of Bacchus, as celebrated in Athens, one part of the nocturnal ceremony consisted in the consecration of an egg. The Hindoo fables celebrate their mundane egg as of a golden colour. The people of Japan make their sacred egg to have been brazen. In China, at this hour, dyed or painted eggs are used on sacred festivals, even as in this country. In ancient times eggs were used in the religious rites of the Egyptians and the Greeks, and were hung up for mystic purposes in their temples. From Egypt these sacred eggs can be distinctly traced to the banks of the Euphrates.”

Hislop continues:

“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, and hatched it, out came Venus, who afterwards was called the Syrian goddess” -- that is, Astarte. Hence the egg became one of the symbols of Astarte or Easter; and accordingly, in Cyprus, one of the chosen seats of the worship of Venus, or Astarte, the egg of wondrous size was represented on a grand scale.” (*The Two Babylons*, pp. 108-109).

Pre-Easter Lent

Prior to Easter, most churches observe a period of forty days which they call “Lent.” Where did this forty day period of abstinence come from? Is it Christian in origin?

What is the truth about Lent?

The festival of the Passover, observed by the early New Testament Church of God, was preceded by no Lent. Where, then, did Lent come from?

You will be shocked to know the answer:

“It ought to be known,” said Cassianus, the monk of Marseilles, writing in the fifth century, and contrasting the primitive Church with the Church in his day, “that the observance of the forty days had no existence, so long as the perfection of that primitive Church remained inviolate.” Whence, then, came this observance? The forty days’ abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshippers 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 Spring by the Pagan Mexicans, for thus we read in Humboldt, where he gives account of Mexican observances: “Three days after the vernal equinox...began a solemn fast of *forty days* in honour 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 *Sabean Researches*, was held expressly in commemoration of Adonis or Osiris, the great mediatorial god (*The Two Babylons*, Hislop, pp. 104-105).

Writes Alexander Hislop:

Among the Pagans this Lent seems to have been an indispensable preliminary to the great annual festival in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Tammuz, which was celebrated by alternate weeping and rejoicing, and which, in many countries, was considerably later than the Christian festival, being observed in Palestine and Assyria in June, therefore called the “month of Tammuz;” in Egypt, about the middle of May, and in Britain, some time in April. 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 far sunk in idolatry -- in this as in so many other things, to shake hands (ibid.)*.

Says Hislop, “This change of the calendar in regard to Easter was attended with momentous consequences. It brought into the Church the grossest corruption and the rankest superstition in connection with the abstinence of Lent.” He declares:

That Christians should ever think of introducing the Pagan abstinence of Lent was a sign of evil; it showed *how low they had sunk*, and it was also a cause of evil; it inevitably *led to deeper degradation*. Originally, even in Rome, Lent, with the preceding revelries of the Carnival, was entirely unknown...

Socrates, writing about 450 A.D. in Rome, said that by that time the people of Rome fasted before Easter about three weeks. But about the year 519 at the Council held in Aurelia in the time of Hormisdas, Bishop of Rome, a decree was made that Lent should be solemnly kept before Easter, and the way was being prepared for the full introduction of the Chaldean Lent of six weeks, or forty days.

Thus the debauchery of the riotous pre-Lent feasting and merrymaking of Rio’s Carnival, and the Mardi Gras of New Orleans, and related feasts around the world, all stem back to ancient paganism, along with Lent itself, and Easter as well.

It does no good to deny the truth. The real question is, do we *love the truth* more

than our own preconceived ideas and prejudices and practices which we may have been steeped in from our very youth?

Which is more important to you: The truth? Or your own way?

Easter Sunrise Services

What about Easter sunrise services? Don't they come from honoring the resurrection of Christ at sunrise, early Sunday morning?

That is what the devil (that wicked, pagan system of Babylon) would like you to think -- and that is what he has the whole world is believing! But that assumption is flagrantly FALSE!

When Mary Magdalene came to the tomb of Jesus early Sunday morning, the first day of the week, *while it was yet dark* (see **John 20: 1**), the tomb of Yeshua was already empty! He was not there! He had ALREADY risen!

Biblical history shows that Jesus was actually crucified and died on the stake, late afternoon, on a Thursday. See our article "How Long Was Jesus in the Grave?" He Himself foretold that He would be in the grave *three days and three nights*, even as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights (see Matthew 12:40). According to Jewish reckoning, that could mean parts of 3 days and three nights, inclusive. This would be counted as part of Thursday, day, Thursday night, Friday day, Friday night, Saturday (day three), and part of Saturday night (night three).

But can you count three days and three nights, or a portion of them, between Friday afternoon and Sunday sunrise? Of course not! That would only give you Friday day (part of the day), Friday night, Saturday day, and part of Saturday night – two days and two nights! If you 'stretch' the Scripture to include Sunday morning, day, you still have only three days and two nights!! It just doesn't fit, no matter how you slice it!

Thus the idea that Jesus was crucified on a "Good Friday" is blatantly false! Jesus was not crucified on a Friday at all. The Friday crucifixion-Easter resurrection is a fable of this corrupt, pagan Babylonian system, palmed off on an errant Christianity!

Be sure to read our article 'How Long Was Jesus Really in the Grave?' for the proof from the Bible, the calendar, and astronomy, that Jesus was crucified Thursday and resurrected early Sunday morning, before sunrise!

Where did "Good Friday" actually come from?

At this point you probably won't be surprised to learn that it also came from paganism. That's right. Friday was regarded by the Romans as the sacred day of Venus and was called *dies Veneris*.

The word “Friday” itself comes from the name of “Freya,” who was regarded as the goddess of peace, joy, and *fertility* by the pagans. Fish was regarded as being sacred to her, and was a symbol of fertility or fecundity. Fish have a very high reproduction rate, a single cod spawning upwards of nine million eggs, a million eggs for the flounder, and 700,000 for the sturgeon.

Hence the custom of not eating fish on Friday stems also from ancient pagan times, in honor of the goddess of fertility, Freya, or Venus. The fish was also regarded as sacred to the goddess Ashtoreth, and in ancient Egypt the goddess Isis is sometimes represented as having a fish on her head. Strange, isn't it, how all these customs go back to ancient *paganism!*

But what about Easter sunrise services? Aren't they Christian?

We have already seen that Christ did not arise from the dead at sunrise Easter morning -- not at all! On the other hand, there was an ancient pagan custom of holding a sunrise service in the spring to worship the risen sun-god, Baal, Tammuz, or Nimrod!

The Bible condemns this practice. Notice in the book of Ezekiel:

“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.*” (*Ezek. 8:13-16*).

When is the sun toward the east? In the morning! These men were holding a sunrise service, worshipping toward the rising sun! At the very temple of God, they were mixing in pagan religious rites, customs and ceremonies!

Writes Ralph Woodrow:

Rites connected with the dawning sun -- in one form or another -- were known in many ancient nations. Those who made the Sphinx in Egypt, built it to watch for the rising sun in the east. From Mount Fujiyama, in Japan, prayers are made to the rising sun...(*Babylon Mystery Religion*, p. 156).

In the Mystery religion of Babylon, the false savior Tammuz was worshipped with various spring rites. According to the legend, when he was slain, he went into the underworld and couldn't be brought forth unless the whole world wept for him. Through the weeping of his mother Easter, or Semiramis, he was mystically revived, his resurrection symbolized by the budding of new vegetation in the spring. Each year the pagan spring festival celebrated this resurrection story.

The resurrection of Tammuz through Ishtar's grief was dramatically represented *annually* in order to

insure the success of the crops and the fertility of the people....Each year men and women had to grieve with Ishtar over the death of Tammuz and celebrate the god's return, in order to win anew her favor and her benefits (*Festivals, Holy Days and Saints' Days*, p. 89).

In *Ezekiel* chapter 8 we saw women weeping for Tammuz, one abomination in God's sight, and the very next abomination was men in the temple of God worshipping toward the rising sun!

It is perfectly obvious that Ezekiel was speaking of this same ancient pagan celebration of the weeping for Tammuz, and the observance of this pagan spring festival.

Says Woodrow:

“Now since the true saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, *in reality* did rise (not merely in nature, plants, etc.); and since his resurrection was in the *spring* of the year -- though slightly earlier than the pagan festival of olden times -- it was not too hard for the church of the fourth century (now greatly departed from the true faith anyway) to merge the pagan spring festival into Christianity -- attaching the various phases of it to Christ. In this way, it would appear to be a *Christian* festival, yet at the same time, it would retain many of its ancient customs.” (*op. cit.*, p. 157).

Thus did paganism become engrafted upon Christianity -- a practice which God calls an **ABOMINATION** to Him!

The Earliest Easter Story

From the literature of the ancient Summerians in Mesopotamia comes the earliest legend of the death and resurrection of a pagan deity -- the first Easter story.

Tammuz, whose name meant “true son of the deep waters,” was married to the goddess Inanna or Ishtar (pronounced Estar), the “mother goddess” who represented Mother Earth. According to the legend, when Tammuz died, Inanna was grief-stricken and followed him to the underworld to the realm of Eresh-Kigal, queen of the dead. In her absence, the earth lost its fertility, crops ceased to grow, and animals ceased mating -- all life was threatened. Then Ea, god of water and wisdom, sent a messenger from heaven to the underworld to bring back Inanna or Ishtar. The messenger sprinkled Inanna and Tammuz with the water of life, giving them power to return to the light of the sun for six months of the year. Each year, therefore, Tammuz would again return to the realm of the dead for six months, Inanna would pursue him, and her grief would move Ea to rescue them.

This ancient legend, very widespread in the Middle East, traveled to Phoenicia and Syria, where Tammuz was called Adon and Inanna was called Astarte. In Greece, they became known as Adonis and Aphrodite. The original legend underwent many changes in its passage to other countries, but the essential theme of autumnal death and vernal resurrection remained. In Asia Minor, Adonis was called Attis and his wife-mother was Cybele, Rhea or Dindymene. The Egyptian myth of Osiris, who married (in this

version his sister) Isis, the Great Mother goddess of the Egyptian pantheon, springs from the same source.

The Egyptian Osiris, put to death by Set, was, it is said, brought back to life and emerged from a sarcophagus or from a broken egg. On rising from the dead, he became lord of the Tuat or underworld and the judge of the living and the dead. He was called "Eternity and Everlastingness," the one who would come again to reign upon the earth.

Says Alan W. Watts in *Easter, Its Story and Meaning*: "It would be tedious to describe in detail all that has been handed down to us about the various rites of Tammuz, Adonis, Kore, Dionysus, and many others....Some of them were celebrated at the vernal equinox, or thereabouts, and some at midsummer. But their universal theme -- the drama of death and resurrection -- makes them the forerunners of the Christian Easter, and thus the *first 'Easter services'*" (p. 58).

Writes James George Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, "When we reflect how often the Church has skillfully contrived to plant the seeds of the new faith on the *old stock of paganism*, we may surmise that the Eastern celebration of the dead and risen Christ was grafted upon a similar celebration of the *dead and risen Adonis*, which...was celebrated in Syria at the same season" (p. 345).

Frazer notes the striking similarities between the rites of Adonis and the Easter rites observed in Greece, Sicily, and southern Italy. He points out that ecclesiastical authorities were motivated to assimilate the rites of the risen Adonis to celebrate the risen Christ.

In analyzing the strange customs of the pagans and their astonishing similarity to certain "Christian" customs today, Watts was moved to write, "At first sight it is surprising to find so many of these stories and symbols of death-and-resurrection in so many different places. The points of resemblance between the Christ story, on the one hand, and the myth and ritual of ancient and 'pagan' cults, on the other, is at times *startling enough to look like a conspiracy*" (*op. cit.* p. 22).

A "conspiracy"?

The answer may be clearly seen in the historical record of how this festival crept into the professing Christian Church, and in comparing this festival with the evidence from the Bible.

The Biblical Tradition

Search through the Bible and you will find no evidence that either Christ, the apostles, or the New Testament Church ever observed Easter Sunday.

Admittedly, there is one verse in the King James Version of the Bible which mentions "Easter." In that verse "Easter" is a flagrant mistranslation! The original Greek

word used in *Acts 12:4* is *pascha* meaning “Passover.” Modern translations clear up this difficulty by translating the word properly.

Further, we have seen that the New Testament proves the time of Jesus' resurrection was not Sunday morning, anyway. There is absolutely no way you can squeeze three days and three nights -- see *Matthew 12:40* -- between Friday evening at sunset and Sunday morning at sunrise. Obviously, there is something wrong with the popular tradition.

But if the early Christians did not celebrate Easter, then what did they celebrate? Why did early translators mistakenly translate a word meaning Passover as “Easter”?

Here is the answer. The Passover was a solemn holy day in ancient Israel (see *Exodus 12*). Israel's God “passed over” the enslaved Israelites and slew the firstborn children of their enemies -- of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The Passover was commemorated every year in the spring on the 15th of the Hebrew month Nisan, in the evening, by eating roast lamb and herbs (see *Exodus 12*). This was a statute instituted for observance forever (*Exodus 12: 14, 24*).

In the days of Christ, the Jews still observed the Passover. Christ and His disciples observed it. This solemn holy day is mentioned by name 48 times in the Old Testament, and 28 times in the New Testament. The apostle Paul states categorically, “For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us KEEP THE FEAST” (I Cor.5:7) – that is, the FEAST OF THE PASSOVER! For more information on the Passover, read our articles on “Should Christians Observe the Passover?” and “A New Look at the Passover!”

But what, you may wonder, does this solemn holy day have to do with Easter?

There is no record in the New Testament of the early Christians ever observing Easter. But there is evidence that, as Christ commanded, they continued observing the Passover each spring, *on the 15th of Nisan*, commemorating Christ's sacrifice for our sins! How, then, did Easter creep into the professing Christian Church?

Says historian and scholar Alexander Hislop:

“The difference, in point of time, betwixt the Christian Pasch, as observed in Britain by the native Christians, and the Pagan Easter enforced by Rome, at the time of its enforcement, was *a whole month*; and it was *only by violence and bloodshed*, at last, that the Festival of the Anglo-Saxon or Chaldean goddess came to supersede that which had been held in honour of Christ .” (*The Two Babylons*, p. 107).

“*The Age of Shadows*”

The correct translation of *Acts 12:4* shows that Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, acknowledged that the pascha or Passover was still in existence and being observed

when he wrote the book of Acts. Similarly, the apostle Paul indicated that Christians were observing the Passover when he wrote the epistle of I Corinthians (see *I Corinthians 5:7-8; 11:20-34*).

But after the New Testament was completely written and after all the original apostles had died, a change occurred. Church historian Jesse Lyman Hurlbut describes the age that followed as “the Age of Shadows.”

Says Hurlbut: “For fifty years after. . . Paul's life *a curtain hangs over the church*, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D. with the writings of the earliest church-fathers, we find a church *in many aspects very different* from that in the days of...Peter and...Paul” (*The Story of the Christian Church*, p. 41).

Hurlbut continues on page 60, “For fifty or sixty years after the death of . . . Peter and...Paul, the *history of the church is a blank*.”

What had happened? The answer is in the Bible -- a conspiracy to introduce pagan customs under the name “Christian” had been formed in the days of the apostle Paul (see *Gal. 1:6-9; II Cor. 1:13-15; II Tim. 4:3-4*). By the last days of the apostle John, this conspiracy had grown so great that in some areas, *true* Christians were being cast out of the established local churches! (*III John 9, 10*).

The Long Struggle

About A.D. 154, Polycarp, who had observed the Passover with the apostle John and other apostles, traveled to Rome to discuss the issue of Passover and Easter with Anicetus, the bishop at Rome. At the time, neither could persuade the other to give up his custom. Wrote the fourth-century church historian Eusebius:

“For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe it [the Passover], because he had always observed it with John, the disciple of our Lord, and the rest of the apostles, with whom he associated; and neither did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it [Passover], who said that he was bound to maintain the practice [Easter Sunday] of the presbyters before him” (*Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. V, Chap. XXIV).

Before Easter was universally adopted, there was a bitter and protracted controversy. In the days of Emperor Commodus (A.D. 180-192), when Victor became bishop at Rome (A.D. 190), the dispute became severe. Declared the historian Eusebius:

“There was a considerable discussion raised about this time, in consequence of a difference of opinion respecting the observance of the paschal season. The churches of all Asia, guided by a remoter tradition, supposed that they ought to keep the *fourteenth day of the moon* for the festival of the *Saviour's Passover*, in which day the Jews were commanded to kill the paschal lamb. . . . But . . . *it was not the custom to celebrate it in this manner in the churches throughout the rest of the world . . .*” (*Eccl. Hist.*, Book. V, chap. XXIII).

Even at this late date, the Churches of God in Asia dissented from the majority viewpoint. Polycrates, their leader, wrote to Victor, bishop at Rome, saying: “We, therefore, observe *the genuine day; neither adding thereto nor taking therefrom*” (chap. XXIV). He cited New Testament Christians, including Philip and the apostle John and asserted: “All these observed the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the gospel deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith” (*ibid.*).

Upon receiving this letter, Victor, bishop at Rome, became furious. Reports Eusebius: “Upon this, Victor the bishop of the church of Rome, forthwith endeavoured to cut off the churches of all Asia, together with the neighbouring churches, a heterodox, from the common unity. And he published abroad by letters, and proclaims, that all the brethren there are wholly excommunicated” (*ibid.*).

Although at that time Victor was restrained from carrying out this threat, the controversy continued until as late as the fourth century.

Introduction of Easter

By the early fourth century A.D. nominal Christianity became established as a state religion of the Roman Empire. Almost everybody sought membership in the new Church and almost nobody was rejected. Says Hurlbut of this period:

“The services of worship increased in splendor, but were less spiritual and hearty than those of former times. The forms and ceremonies of paganism gradually crept into the worship. Some of the old heathen feasts *became church festivals with change of name and of worship*” (*ibid.*, p. 79).

One of those heathen feasts which were adopted by large numbers of professing Christians and endorsed by the leaders of the popular church was Easter!

Roman Emperor Constantine, who had been a devoted worshipper of the sun most of his life, and who did not embrace the “Christian” religion until his death bed, proposed the adoption of pagan customs by the Christians.

The church leaders of that day felt that for “Christianity” to conquer the world, it would be wise to compromise with pagans throughout the Empire. Since the common people were habituated to their pagan customs and reveled in their pagan holidays, church leaders devised a method to reconcile paganism and nominal Christianity. They simply “baptized” pagan customs, thereby making them “Christian” in appearance and name. The result? Pagans began to flock into the Church in droves. They kept the same days and performed the same rituals, but now they did it to “Christ” instead of to Astarte or Tammuz! They had not, however, understood what it meant to repent and become converted.

How, then, did Easter creep into the professing Christian Church?

Constantine presided over the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) at which the “Easter question” was taken up for settlement. In an attempt to conciliate the conflicting customs of “Christians” throughout the Roman Empire, he wanted his religious leaders to determine a universal date for the celebration of Easter so that all the peoples of his Empire would observe this festival on the same date. It was at the Council of Nicaea that the date of Easter was declared to be the first Sunday after the full moon following the spring equinox.

Why Easter Is Wrong

“Well, what difference does it make?” many might ask. “Sure, Easter Sunday is derived from heathen customs, but don't we observe it as a Christian holiday, in honor of Christ and His resurrection. I don't see anything inherently wrong or evil about that!”

In the first place, Easter does not commemorate the resurrection. The resurrection was not on Sunday. Nor was the crucifixion on any so-called “Good Friday.” And second, ***we humans are not free to select our own method of worshipping God!***

King Solomon was inspired to write: “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (***Proverbs 14:12; 16:25***). Jesus Christ said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (***Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4***).

The vitally important question is: What does God say about taking pagan practices and “making them Christian”?

Jeremiah 10:2 says: “Thus saith the Lord, ***Learn not the way of the heathen***, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.”

Those are plain words.

God says in the Bible that satan the devil “deceiveth the whole world” (***Revelation 12:9***). But, let's understand who or what this satan (adversary) really is! Do you want to go along with the world in its deception?

Speaking of the religious system and customs of this modern world, God says to His people: “***Come out, of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins***, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (***Revelation 18: 4***).

Should you simply go along with the crowd and attend Easter services? God says: “...what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (***II***

Corinthians 6:14-18).

God sent ancient Israel into captivity because that nation forsook His commandments and began following pagan ways and incorporating pagan traditions, customs, and superstitions into the worship of God (see *II Kings 17; Jeremiah 44; Ezekiel 8*). Should we imitate their mistake?

The question is whether or not we are willing to trustfully obey God, even when we do not fully understand why He tells us to do something. To learn this kind of obedience based on faith is of decisive importance not only for our life here and now, but also for all eternity.

Whether or not we observe pagan customs labeled “Christian” makes a great deal of difference to Yahweh. Therefore, let's get back to the pure, unaltered and unadulterated faith which was once delivered to the saints! Let's abandon these pagan traditions of Men and embrace the TRUTH! “Thy Word IS TRUTH!”

May Yahweh help you to see the light on this very important subject!