

Easter and the Bible

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Acts 12:4

“Easter is considered the greatest of Christian holidays.” It is celebrated by millions of people each year. It is also understood as the “grandest and oldest feast in the Christian calendar”.

What makes this particular “holy day” so great is that people celebrate it in remembrance of Christ’s resurrection. As a result a great majority among Christian denominations celebrate Easter religiously.

Many places of worship use this Sunday as a grand display of drama and music centering on the resurrected Christ. In fact, many think it odd — possibly apostate — for a Christian church NOT to celebrate Easter religiously.

Yet, Easter is a manmade religious event; it was not instituted by Jesus Christ or His apostles.

In this lesson we will look at:

- The historical origin and evolutionary practice of Easter.
- What the Bible reveals about Easter.
- Individual and congregational conclusions.

Historical background

The origin of Easter:

The word Easter is derived from the Saxon word “*Eastra*: the goddess of spring, in whose honor sacrifices were offered about Passover time each year. By the 8th century Anglo-Saxon’s had adopted the name to designate the celebration of Christ’s resurrection.” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary).

Easter (Gr. *Pascha*) the Passover, and so translated in every passage except Acts 12:4. (Unger’s Bible Dictionary).

“Mistranslated ‘Easter’ in Acts 12:4. ... The term Easter is not of Christian origin. ... (it) was not instituted by Christ. ... (this was an) attempt to adapt Pagan festivals to Christianity.” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary).

Evolutionary practice of Easter:

As early as the eighth century, the word “Easter” was used to designate the annual Christian celebration of the resurrection of Christ.

Secular history says there was a mingling between Pagans and Christianity in the 2nd century. Secular history says Christianity tried to influence the pagan world with the mixture of Christ’s resurrection to the celebrations of the pagan festival.

By the 4th century the Catholic Church (via Constantine, Roman emperor) ruled on various circumstances surrounding Easter: technically, when it was to be observed.

History, however helpful, is fallible and does not equate with Biblical authority.

What the Bible says about “Easter”

As with any practice of the church: authority must be established for all we do.

Col. 3:17, *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”*

As the pillar and the ground of the truth, the Lord’s church is subject to its head:

1 Tim. 3:15, *“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”*

Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

- Eph. 5:23-24, *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”*
- Eph. 5:32, *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”*

Christians — who make up the body of Christ (His church) — do not assume God’s will.

1 Cor. 2:9-11, *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”*

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

Christians can only worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:23-24, *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”*

Thus, those in the body of Christ do all things according to His teachings.

2 John 1:9, *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”*

The only time the word “Easter” is used is in the King James Version of 1611.

Acts 12:4, *“And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.”*

The Greek word “pascha” is unanimously noted as an errant translation. There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this (Albert Barnes).

The proper translation of “pascha” is “Passover.” This was a feast the Jews, according to Old Testament law.

Exo. 12:12-14, *“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. ~Feast of Unleavened Bread And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”*

Acts 12:4 (or any other New Testament scripture) DOES NOT reference Easter as a New Testament practice by Christians in the first century.

NIV translation of Acts 12:4, *“After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.”*

Because the Bible is silent regarding this observance it would be wrong for the church to assume such as a religious practice.

Most important to note: as Christians we are to worship the Lord in Spirit and truth.

Since the New Testament scriptures are silent about Easter, the church belonging to the Lord does not celebrate/practice this as a religious holiday.

Conclusion.

While Easter is a most popular and well intended holy day of Christ's resurrection in the religious world, God, however, is completely silent about this day.

As Christians, our desire is to serve our Lord by faith — by His revealed Word which is silent on this matter — thus excluding this holy day.

We observe Christ's death and resurrection on the first day of every week, not once a year.

