



NEW TESTAMENT
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES OF AMERICA, INC.

EASTER

A study of Easter includes far more than the doctrine of Christ's Resurrection.

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.

Easter is the principal festival of the Christian church that celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his Crucifixion. (from Aramaic פסחא, paṣḥā' and Hebrew פסח, peṣaḥ, the Passover festival)

There is no trace of an Easter celebration in the New Testament, though some would see an intimation of it in 1 Corinthians 5:7. The Jewish Christians in the early church continued to celebrate the Passover, regarding Christ as the true paschal lamb, and this naturally passed over into a commemoration of the death and resurrection of our Lord, or an Easter feast. The Council of Nicaea in 325, decreed that Easter should be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox (March 21). The rule was finally adopted, in the 7th century, to celebrate Easter on the Sunday following the 14th day of the calendar moon which comes on, or after, the vernal equinox which was fixed for March 21. It cannot occur later than April 25, nor earlier than March 22.

The Easter feast has been and still is regarded as the greatest in the Christian church, since it commemorates the most important event in the life of the Son of God.

There are some important points to study:

1. The chronology of Holy Week
2. Jesus strictly guided us to remember His death by communion
3. His command to be baptized and symbolically illustrate the supernatural miracle which true Christians experience
4. The Resurrection of the Son of God reveals the final piece to the puzzle as to why He came, i.e. Jesus has risen so believers could be born again of the same power
5. Why the worship of the Lord properly changed to Sunday

All these teachings are inextricably linked because each is dependent on the others, and there is cause and effect in each part.

Without the Resurrection, we are not saved.

1 Corinthians 15:17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Romans 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Easter (continued)

The English word comes from the Anglo-Saxon Eastre or Estera, a Teutonic goddess to whom sacrifice was offered in April (though the roots extend much deeper to ancient Babylon), so the name was transferred to the paschal or Passover feast. The word does not properly occur in Scripture, although the King James Version has it in Acts 12:4 where it stands for Passover, as it is rightly rendered in the Revised Version (British and American). This is an unfortunate and absurd translation, as Easter was a pagan festival observed long before Christ. Eastre or Estera is not a Christian name, but is derived from Ishtar, one of the Babylonian titles of an idol goddess, the Queen of Heaven (even this title of a pagan goddess was transferred to Christian tradition by another religion).

The Saxon goddess Eastre is the same as the Astarte, the Syrian Venus, called Ashtoreth in the Old Testament. It was the worship of this woman by Israel that was such an abomination to God (1 Samuel 7:3; 1 Kings 11:5,33; 2 Kings. 23:13; Jeremiah 7:18; 44:18). The Israelites were commanded not to worship her, for she was a goddess of fertility and many lustful rites were associated with her worship.

1 Samuel 7:3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, **then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you**, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

The fable of the egg declares that "an egg of wondrous size fell from heaven into the river Euphrates; the fish rolled it to the bank, where doves settled upon it and hatched it; and out came Astarte, or Ishtar, the goddess of Easter."

Easter eggs which play a great part in this day's celebration among many, were common in all heathen nations. The use of painted and decorated Easter eggs was first recorded in the 13th century. The church prohibited the eating of eggs during Holy Week, but chickens continued to lay eggs during that week, and the notion of specially identifying those as "Holy Week" eggs brought about their decoration. The egg itself became a symbol of the resurrection. Just as Jesus rose from the tomb, the egg symbolizes new life emerging from the eggshell. In the Orthodox tradition, eggs are painted red to symbolize the blood Jesus shed on the cross. The custom of associating a rabbit with Easter arose in Protestant areas in Europe in the 17th century but did not become common until the 19th century. The Easter rabbit was said to lay the eggs as well as decorate and hide them. Cultures are affected by religious traditions.

All Christian traditions have their own special liturgical emphasis for Easter. The Easter sunrise service, for example, is a distinctive Protestant observance in North America. The practice may derive from the Gospel narrative of Jesus' Resurrection, which states that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb "while it was yet dark" (John 20:1) or as dawn was breaking (Matthew 28:1 and Luke 24:1). **It is a service of jubilation that takes place as the sun rises to dispel the darkness.**

Holy Week: The Chronology of the Week

Most often called the Week of His Passion

The traditional celebration of Good Friday is not born out in Scripture

The Passover becomes the focal point. Jesus prepares to celebrate with His disciples and so it's entitled the Last Supper. He must go to Jerusalem for this feast. However, the Passover is a special holiday and didn't necessarily coincide with regular sabbaths (traditional Saturday Jewish worship). Like Christmas is never changed to a Monday or Friday holiday, so the Passover and the Sabbath would never be combined for convenience sake.

John 19:31 The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

1. Sunday - Jesus enters Jerusalem by way of Bethany and Bethphage riding an ass.
2. Sunday Eve - He returns to Bethany (Monday evening also) and then returns the next day.
3. Monday and Tuesday are filled with teachings, but they celebrate the Passover feast on Tuesday night.
4. He then exits to the Mount of Olives and goes to the Garden of Gethsemane.
5. Jesus is betrayed by Judas and the soldiers come for Him and lead Him away. So begins the long night of beatings and humiliations at the hands of the soldiers.
6. Wednesday ends with Him being crucified. He is hastily buried before sunset.
7. Thursday - a special Passover sabbath called a high day (a yearly event no matter what day it falls on).
8. Friday - they buy and prepare the spices (His death was unexpected).
9. Saturday - they wait out the Sabbath.
10. The sun sets, they go to the sepulcher sometime that night or early morning to find the tomb empty.
11. This is the only way to explain the three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
12. He is risen on Sunday morning which effectively changes the special day of worship for Christianity to Sunday and not on the Sabbath day.
13. Sunday becomes the Christian Sabbath.
14. Easter is always linked to the Passover and even its timing is set as a specific formula as evidenced in the first centuries following Christ's death.
15. It was not by Constantine's decree in 300 AD as affirmed by another religion that continues to worship only on Saturday.

Matthew 12:39-40 But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; **so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

Communion

Jesus commanded us to commemorate His death in partaking of Communion

Luke 22:19-20 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. 20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. **For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.**

In this manner we are told how we are to properly commemorate His death - through Communion. This is all centers around the Passover - the special Feast of the Jews to commemorate that slaying of the Lamb and the blood being placed on the door posts and the lintel. Christ is our Passover Lamb, and we escape the Judgement of God because He died for us.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. **For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast,** not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Baptism

Jesus Himself commanded that believers be baptized in water.

Matthew 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

The Resurrection of Christ is the greatest element of Christianity. No other religion proves their Creator (or founder) died for them and rose again. Salvation hinges our entire Christian experience and is what sets Christians apart. It's why Easter is a big day, and there's so much more. We do not just reform, we are changed by His Resurrection power.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.