

# Easter Lesson

Intro: This is the day the world calls *Easter*. I want us to study it and the events associated with it, then notice it from a Bible standpoint.

## I. EASTER.

### A. Events associated with Easter.

1. Lent
  - a. Forty-day period excluding Sundays prior to Easter.
  - b. It begins with Ash Wednesday and ends at Holy Saturday.
  - c. K. W. Osbeck wrote, "The Lenten period should result in a spiritual self-examination and in rededicated living for each devout believer, preparing us for the celebration of our risen Lord."
2. Ash Wednesday
  - a. Ashes are placed on the forehead (usually in the sign of a cross)
  - b. It is to remind people that man is but dust and that the *faithful* must do penance.
  - c. Ash Wednesday is observed on the seventh Wednesday before Easter.
3. Holy Saturday: the day before Easter.
4. Passion Sunday, Palm Sunday
  - a. Achtemeir (*Harper's Bible Dictionary*) wrote, "Passion Sunday, in the liturgical year the second Sunday prior to Easter and the Sunday that begins the Lenten season of Passiontide. With the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the period of Lent was simplified, for the Roman Catholic church, and the Sunday prior to Easter, formerly known as Palm Sunday, was renamed Passion Sunday. Other churches have also made this change, and on occasion both names are retained as Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday), or Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday."
  - b. Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter
    - (1) Observes the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem
      - (a) Jews took branches of palm trees laid them in his path and cried Hosanna: Blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.
      - (b) John 12:12-13 "<sup>12</sup> On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, <sup>13</sup> Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."
    - (2) With Palm Sunday we then have the beginning of Holy Week
5. During Holy Week
  - a. Holy or Maundy Thursday.
    - (1) Memory of the last supper Jesus ate with His apostles.
    - (2) Achtemeir (*Harper's Bible Dictionary*) points out, "'Maundy' comes from Latin 'mandatum (novum),' the words in John 13:34 (Vg) used in the service of foot washing observed in the Catholic Church on the Thursday before Easter."
  - b. Good Friday, memorializes Jesus' crucifixion.

6. Mardi Gras.
  - a. It means “Fat Tuesday.”
  - b. Comes before Ash Wednesday (which is a period of sacrifice).
  - c. A day of fleshly satisfaction before giving up their luxuries.
  - d. It derived its name from the custom of leading a fat ox in a procession in celebration of the day.
- B. There is nothing of these things mentioned in the Bible as something we observe today.**
  1. James Orr (*ISBE*) wrote, “There is no trace of Easter celebration in the New Testament.”
  2. As such, we have no authority for observing these religiously.
- C. When should Easter be observed?**
  1. There was extensive disagreement on this for centuries.
  2. Early Jewish “Christians” observed it on the specific date of Nisan 14: same as the Jewish Passover.
  3. Gentile “Christians” celebrated it on Sunday regardless of what day of the month it fell on.
    - a. As time passed more tended to observe it on Sunday instead of Nisan 14.
    - b. The Nicean Council (AD 325) determined Sunday should be the day.
  4. However, which Sunday?
    - a. No set Sunday was set and it was left to the bishop of the Alexandrian Church to determine the date each year.
    - b. Bromiley (*ISBE*) wrote, “By the 7<sup>th</sup> cent the practice of the Church had become reasonably uniform. The time agreed upon was the first Sunday following the full moon that comes on or after the vernal equinox. The date of the equinox was set at Mar. 21. This allowed for a variation in Easter dates from Mar. 22 to Apr. 25. The uniformity of practice which prevailed for a number of centuries was again disturbed for a time with the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1582.”
- D. Origin of the term *Easter*.**
  1. There does not seem to be a consensus on the term’s origin.
  2. Vine says “The term Easter is not of Christian origin. It is another form of *Astarte*, one of the titles of the Chaldean goddess, the queen of heaven.”
  3. Easton says, “Originally a Saxon word (*Eostre*), denoting a goddess of the Saxons, in honour of whom sacrifices were offered about the time of the Passover. Hence the name came to be given to the festival of the Resurrection of Christ, which occurred at the time of the Passover.”
  4. Achtemeir (*Harper’s Bible Dictionary*), and most others, basically agrees with Easton by saying, “The name ‘Easter’ derives from the Anglo-Saxon goddess of Spring (*Eostre* or *Ostara*).”
  5. *Easter* is not a Bible term and originally had nothing to do with the Bible.
- E. Origin of Easter.**
  1. In the origin of the term *Easter* we find the origin of the celebration of Easter.
  2. Easter was a pagan festival held in the honor of the goddess of Spring—*Eostre*.
    - a. Vine sums it up by saying that Easter “was introduced into the apostate Western religion, as part of the attempt to adapt Pagan festivals to Christianity.”

- b. James Orr indicates how the Catholic Church was able to bring the pagan festivals into *Christianity* when he adds, “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.”
3. Thus, the origin of the Easter celebration was a combination of paganism and Judaism.
4. Regarding Eostre (the goddess of Spring), since Spring was a time to celebrate the breath of new existence, there came an association with some other things:
  - a. Easter eggs symbolized new life.
  - b. Bunny rabbits who are prolific in reproducing represented fertility.

## II. EASTER IN THE BIBLE

### A. There is nothing in the Bible regarding Easter.

### B. Faith

1. Christians walk by faith; 2 Cor. 5:7 “<sup>7</sup> (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)”
2. Faith comes by hearing God’s Word; Rom. 10:17 “<sup>17</sup> So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”
3. Since there is nothing in God’s Word about Easter, we cannot do it and walk by faith.

### C. All our actions are to be by the authority of Christ.

1. Col. 3:17 “<sup>17</sup> 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.”
2. There is no authority from Christ for Easter.
3. It is sinful for the church to celebrate/observe Easter in any way.

**Conclusion:** Easter was started by a sinful organization that stands in opposition to Christ and His church: Roman Catholicism. We, as Christians, need to leave it to Satan and his forces and do only what God authorizes.