

# THE FALLACIES OF EASTER

By Charles Halff

Is Easter a pagan or a Christian holiday? Where did Easter, Lent and Good Friday originate? Do Easter eggs, bunny rabbits and hot cross buns have any connection with Christ's resurrection? Was our Lord crucified on Wednesday or Friday? These are some of the questions that I want to try to answer in this brief study.

I realize that many people have a very sentimental attachment to Easter. It's hard to break from tradition. So, I ask you to study this subject with me as open-mindedly as you possibly can. The Apostle Paul complimented the Berean Christians and said, *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* Acts 17:11. Let's be like the Bereans. Let's search the scriptures. I don't want you to take my word for anything I don't want you to believe a thing just because I'm preaching it. The Bereans didn't take Paul's word for what he was preaching. They checked up on what Paul said by the Scriptures. They looked into the Scriptures, the Old Testament Scriptures. That's all they had. And as they searched the Scriptures, they saw that what Paul was preaching was the truth. And so beloved, let's take the Word of God above everything else and then we can't go wrong. I'll stand on the Word of God even when this old world is on fire.

## The Sign of Jonah

Now the first fallacy in connection with Easter is that Christ supposedly died on a Friday. May I say, beloved, that Jesus did not die on Good Friday, bad Friday, or any other Friday. The truth of the whole matter is that the Lord Jesus died on a Wednesday. Let's turn to Matthew 12:40 and notice Christ's own prophecy pertaining to His death, burial and resurrection:

*"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly (or as it reads in the Hebrew – 'in the sea monster's belly'), so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."*

There is no clearer truth in all the world than Jesus' own specific prophecy of His death, burial and resurrection. Eleven different times our Lord said that He would remain in the grave three days and three nights, and He gave us one type setting forth the length of time that He would be in the grave. He said that just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, that He would spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, but the fish couldn't hold him . . . and our Lord was in the grave three days and three nights, but the grave couldn't hold Him!

Now listen, beloved. If Jesus was crucified on Friday afternoon and was raised on Sunday morning as is commonly believed and taught, then His Word failed. He said that He would be in the grave three days and three nights, and you can't figure more than two nights from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning to save your life.

Now some of you are probably saying, *“What difference does it make whether our Lord was crucified on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or any other day?”* Well beloved, it makes all the difference in the world. The Bible teaches that Jesus spent three days and three nights in the tomb. And it is necessary that we believe the Bible if we are Christians. We may not understand all the Bible, but God expects us to believe it all because it is His Word. And we’re to study all the Bible, not just sections or portions or passages that we particularly like.

Beloved, Jesus fulfilled the type of Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. That’s what the Scripture says in Jonah 1:17. And Jesus became the anti-type of Jonah.

Sometimes people say, *“Didn’t the Jews count part of a day as a whole day or part of a night as a whole night?”* Let me say this, beloved. Whenever you have the expression *“day and night”* mentioned together in the Hebrew Scriptures, it always means a full day and a full night. I can give you several Scriptures along that line. For instance, if you will turn to Esther 4:16; Esther 5:1; I Samuel 30:12-13 and, of course, Jonah 1:17, you will find the expression *“three days and three nights.”* And in every instance, it means full days and full nights – not part of a day and part of a night.

You know, Jesus defined what a day is. If you will turn to John 11:9, you will find that our Lord said, *“Are there not twelve hours in a day?”* Well if there are 12 hours in a day, then there are 12 hours in a night. And so three days and three nights would be 72 hours. Anything short of 72 hours would not fulfill the type of Jonah or the words of our blessed Lord.

### **The Resurrection Not on Sunday**

Another fallacy connected with Easter is that Christ supposedly arose on a Sunday morning. The truth of the matter is that our Lord arose from the dead late on a Saturday afternoon. Let me give you the Scripture:

*“In the end of the Sabbath, (late on the sabbath, R.V.) as it began to dawn TOWARD the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the Sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it . . . And the angel . . . said unto the women . . . I know that ye seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is NOT here” for He is RISEN . . .”*  
Matthew 28:1-6.

Now please take note of two things. First, the tomb was ALREADY EMPTY when the women came to it. Second, the women visited the tomb very late on Saturday just as Sunday was beginning. If we carefully consider each of the four Gospel records, one fact stands out beyond any question. When Mary of Magdala and the others came to the sepulcher to anoint the body of Jesus, that is, when they came to the grave, Jesus was ALREADY GONE.

Here we have the secret of the whole matter. Now if Jesus rose from the dead just as Sunday was beginning, and the prophecy of Matthew 12:40 said that Christ had to be entombed

three days and three nights, then it is perfectly obvious that our Lord was crucified on Wednesday and His body had to be placed in the tomb before 6 P.M. on that day. Then His body remained in the tomb through Thursday (night and day), and was raised from the dead just as Sunday was beginning (Matthew 28:1), or what we now would call Saturday evening about 6 o'clock. This fulfilled the prophecy of Matthew 12:40.

Now remember that the Jewish day always began at sundown, about 6 P.M. Our day begins at midnight, but the Jewish day began at sunset. In Leviticus 23:32 the Lord said, "From even unto even shall ye celebrate your sabbath."

Now when the women came to the sepulcher, it was not on Sunday, the first day of the week, but late on Saturday afternoon. Notice what the Scripture says: "*In the end of the Sabbath (Saturday), as it began to dawn (draw on) toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.*" Matthew 28:1.

The word "dawn" here is translated from the Greek word "epiphosko." Parkhurst's Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament defines this word as follows: "to draw on" or "to approach." When the women came to the sepulcher, it was late on the Sabbath (Saturday evening) drawing on *toward* the first day of the week.

In George Ricker Berry's Greek Interlinear translation, we have this rendition of Matthew 28:1: "Now late on the Sabbath as it was getting dusk toward the first of the week." If Matthew 28:1 had been translated this way in our Bible, it would have helped to clarify the time of Christ's resurrection. The resurrection was not in the morning, but at dusk (Saturday evening) – as the Jewish day was coming to an end.

Please keep in mind that the women made two visits to the sepulcher. Matthew records the first visit of the women the next morning, early Sunday morning, about daylight. It is all so clear when you let the Word mean what it says instead of trying to make it fit a theory.

### **When Was Christ Crucified?**

Next, we find that Christ did not die on Friday but on Wednesday. We have already found that the resurrection took place late Saturday just as the new Jewish week was beginning. Well, if we go back three days and three nights – the length of time that our Lord was in the grave – we come to Wednesday afternoon. Wednesday is the only day on which our Lord could have been crucified. No other day will fit the known facts.

Now let us see exactly when Christ was crucified. According to John 19:31, our Lord was crucified on the Day of Preparation, that is, the preparation of the Jewish Passover.

Notice:

*"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."*

The Passover always began on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the Jewish month of Nisan (Leviticus 23:5), and the day following or the 15<sup>th</sup>, was always a High Day Sabbath. This was not the weekly 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath, but the annual Passover Sabbath.

Notice:

*“In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD’S Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread. In the first day (the fifteenth) ye shall have an Holy convocation; Ye shall do no servile work therein.”* Leviticus 23:5-7.

Thus it is fixed that this 15<sup>th</sup> day was ALWAYS a sabbath regardless of the day of the week. This is the High Day Sabbath mentioned in John 19:31.

Now the Scripture makes it plain that Christ was crucified on the day preceding this High Day Sabbath. This was called the PREPARATION DAY.

Here it is in a “nutshell.” Jesus ate the Passover in the first hours of Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup> – just after 6 P.M. (We would call this Tuesday night.) Then He went to the Garden – was arrested – tried – and the next day crucified – still Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup>. He was crucified on the same day in which He ate the Passover.

Jesus, therefore, as the Lamb of God, died for our sins on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the Jewish month of Nisan (which corresponds with our April). This had to be on a Wednesday if we go back three days and three nights from Saturday evening – the time when our Lord came out of the tomb.

### **What Time Did Christ Die?**

Now at what time of day did Christ die? Around three in the afternoon.

Notice:

*“And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.”* Luke 23:44, 46.

When it says the ninth hour it means the ninth hour since the break of day. Or in other words 3 o’clock in the morning and died for our sins at 3 o’clock that Wednesday afternoon and was buried the same day that He was crucified.

### **Easter Not in the Bible**

Easter is a fallacy because it is not in the Bible. The word “Easter” occurs only one time in the Bible in Acts 12:4, and even there the correct translation of the word should be

“Passover.” You might as well go ahead and have holy beads, holy bells and holy water as to have Easter. Now you know that none of these things are commanded in the Word of God.

Now beloved, if you are a Christian you should go by the Bible. God’s people are supposed to be “Bible people.” In II Timothy 3:17 we read that the Word of God thoroughly furnishes us unto all good works, so if God had intended for us to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, He would have put it in His Word. God tells us in His Word how we are supposed to give money for His cause, how we are to celebrate the Lord’s Supper; but when it comes to observing Easter, you won’t find that in the Word of God.

### **Easter is a Pagan Holiday**

Easter is a fallacy because every reputable encyclopedia states that our modern day Easter customs come from paganism. Webster’s New International Dictionary, first edition, states that the name “Easter” comes from the Anglo-Saxon Eastre, the name of “a goddess of light or spring, in honor of whom a festival was celebrated in April.” Catholic authorities agree.

Easter can be traced back to the days of the Phoenicians, Babylonians and Chaldeans, who lived thousands of years before Christ. These pagan nations kept a spring festival in honor of the goddess Astarte, or Ishtar, the goddess of spring and rebirth. The historian, Alexander Hislop, in his “The Two Babylons” states plainly that Easter “is not a Christian name. It bears its Chaldean origin on its very forehead. Easter is nothing else that Ishtar.”

### **Modern Easter Customs**

Easter is a fallacy because it is filled with pagan practices. Now I know that some of you might say, “We are celebrating the resurrection of Christ.” All right, let me ask you a question. What do Easter eggs, bunny rabbits and hot cross buns have to do with the resurrection of the Son of God? They don’t even have the slightest connection.

Easter was a mythological character of the Babylonian religion which was in existence thousands of years before Christ. She was supposed to be the goddess of spring; she was supposed to have rabbits that laid eggs. Now the eggs symbolized a new life and the colored eggs signified a wish for a bright new year ahead. Both the rabbit and the egg are pagan symbols of sex and fertility.

The origin of modern “hot cross buns” is sufficiently explained in Jeremiah 7:18 and 44:17-19: *“The children gather wood and the fathers kindle the fire and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.”* Surely God’s anger is still being provoked when Christians take up these heathen customs in connection with the resurrection of His beloved Son.

### **Easter Sunrise Services**

What about Easter sunrise services? Did you know that this is revealed in the Bible as the most abominable kind of idolatry in the sight of God? Listen:

*“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 to the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east . . . and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.”* Ezekiel 8:15-18.

Here you have God condemning Israel for taking part in “sunrise services,” and yet multiplied thousands of people will get up early on Easter morning to watch the sun come up over the horizon at some Easter sunrise service thinking that they are celebrating the resurrection of Christ. Why, God calls this the most abominable of all worship! The pagans believed that on Easter morning the sun danced for joy, and when you attend an Easter morning sunrise service, do you realize you are actually perpetuating the worship of an old pagan goddess?

### **What About Lent?**

Sometimes people ask me what I think about Lent, fasting and other such customs that go along with Easter. Let’s read I Timothy 4:1-5. *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times (we must be in them now) some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”* Now notice where these doctrines come from – the devil. *“Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.”*

The prophecies of God’s Word always come true. Here it says that in the last days some would forbid marriage, and some would forbid the eating of meat. We are living in that day now. Even many of the so-called Protestants are observing Lent – abstaining from meat on certain days. They have given heed to “seducing spirits” and have not followed the Bible.

There is much misunderstanding about fasting, but there need not be. When Jesus and His disciples fasted, they did so because they were so consumed with spiritual things that they were not concerned with eating. But the Pharisees fasted because they thought there was some merit in it. I’m afraid that is the reason most people fast today. They feel they are helping to earn their salvation. Yet the Scriptures tell us we cannot merit God’s favor by works but only through faith in the finished work of Christ.

The Lord Jesus tells us how to fast in these words: *“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”* Matthew 6:16-18.

Many people who fast today want to make a big show of it. They brag about the great sacrifice they are making. But God says that our fasting should be done in secret, and then He will reward us openly.

### **Observing Days Forbidden**

I am opposed to Easter, Lent and Good Friday because God's Word absolutely forbids the observing of any holy days in this dispensation of grace. Listen:

*"Ye observe days, and months, and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you a labour in vain."* Galatians 4:10-11.

That sounds like the observance of Easter, doesn't it? Here the Apostle Paul absolutely forbids the observing of days, months and seasons. God is not pleased with people who become concerned about Him only once a year and live like the devil the rest of the time. The outward form means nothing unless Jesus has come into your heart and made you a new creature. And what people need today is not social reform, not just a religion, not the observance of days, but they need Jesus the Saviour.

### **Do Pagan Customs and Doctrines Stink?**

Those who work in packing houses where hogs and chickens are picked and packed, do not smell those foul odors at all. Their sense of smell is all dead. So, it is with Christians in a pagan world. From childhood we have never known that most of our religious customs were strictly pagan. When you discover the truth about these holidays it becomes quite shocking, and then you begin to realize how our customs really stink in the sight of God.

Some will say, "We can't help it if we were born into a pagan world. We can't help it if we were reared and steeped in pagan doctrines and customs." Oh, yes you can! Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32. There is only one righteous thing that you can do with these pagan holidays and that is to repudiate them and have no part in them. The glorious bodily resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is a blessed indisputable fact, but the celebration of Easter is a wicked ungodly thing.

I'm so glad that I can preach to you a Christ who lives all year around. There are no special holy days for the child of God. If you are a Christian, every one of your days should be holy unto the Lord. When we're saved, we should serve the Lord 365 days a year. God doesn't want you to remember the resurrection of His Son at just one season of the year – He wants you to remember that glorious resurrection every single day of your life. Christ is risen! Christ lives! Christ is coming again! Christ is coming to rule the world in righteousness!