

"EASTER...WHAT A DECEPTION!"

If we get up before dawn on Sunday morning, the 23rd of April, 2000, and look out our front window, what might we see? Perhaps a neighbor family pulling out of their driveway while it is yet dark? Could those people be on their way to take part in something at "sunrise"-- perhaps a huge outdoor theater somewhere? Probably, but it will certainly depend on the weather. If it's raining, then those involved will head for a previously designated alternate location where they will be protected from the elements. But in any case, the big event will still take place at sunrise, and has come to be known as the annual "Easter" sunrise service.

Ever wonder how such a thing came about? Why would anyone want to organize an event that would force a mother and father to feel obligated to get up hours earlier than usual, and in many cases, drag their children out of bed before 5:00 clock in the morning, to bathe them and dress them up in some colorful new clothes? And in most cases, the family doesn't even have a chance to eat breakfast before they leave home! Where did this kind of thing originate, and for what reason? And what about that word, *Easter*?



From Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: "Easter (*estre, eastre*) the **prehistoric** name of a **pagan spring festival**; a feast observed on the first Sunday after the full moon on or next after the vernal equinox in commemoration of Christ's resurrection." And from The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary: "*Eostre*, **goddess of dawn**, whose festival was celebrated at the spring equinox." Hmmm! Oh, yes! We recall seeing somewhere that the words Easter, Eostre, oestrus are all the same, and it is from these words that our English word estrogen (the female sex hormone) is derived. Hardly surprising, as we see the overtones of fertility worship in the following pages.

Have you ever been to a sunrise service? On one occasion, the writer and family were huddled close together on hard (and damp) wooden bleachers, shivering with cold, waiting for the sun to rise. We could not hear the "preacher," because the speakers were not working properly, and worst of all, it had rained.....and we knew more was on the way. Actually, we never did really see the "sun-rise," but at a pre-determined time, somebody got us all to stand up, and there we were..... facing the east! (As it started to rain...) For some reason, we were not comfortable with any of it, so that's the only time we ever went.

Since then, like many others, we've learned a few things concerning Easter, one of them having to do with watching the sun come up.....looking "toward the east." This practice is condemned in the Bible! Notice: "*He said also unto me, "Turn thee yet*

again, and thou shalt see great abominations that they do." " What abominations? " *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 alter 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." (Eze. 8:13,16) The sun always rises in the east - doesn't it? It's not a very big leap to call this a type of "sunrise service."*

In addition, "Easter" is really nothing more than the English pronunciation of *Ishtar*, the Babylonian goddess of love and war, also called the "Queen of Heaven." God told one of his prophets to stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, "Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will dwell in this place." " **Notice!** "Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven, and they pour out libations to other gods in order to spite Me." (Jer. 7:18 Emphasis added.) Here we have the origin of "Hot Cross Buns!" It's true! Tasty little sweet buns marked with a cross, and devoted to a pagan goddess. And today folks out there are still baking or buying them! Let's see.....facing the east during a sunrise worship service? Hot-Cross Buns? Anything else? Yes, we're afraid so.

Were any of your friends or relatives involved in the observance of "Lent" this year? It appears to be a 40 day season in which people "give up" certain things. The writer remembers a friend in by-gone days that would always give up one of her favorite desserts - ice cream, and for that particular lady it had to have been quite a sacrifice. But with a little different twist, we heard recently about the fellow that rather sarcastically said he was going to "give up egg-plant for Lent," something that was definitely not part of his usual diet. Not much of a sacrifice, but he was going through the motions.....wanting to take part in his church's "custom." It's a rather peculiar custom, though, as the word Lent cannot be found in the Bible!

Instead we find Lent has taken the place of another practice from pagan Babylon! In this pagan fable, when the husband of *Ishtar*, Tammuz, died, the people were ordered to weep and fast for 40 days. But wait! Can we find the word *Tammuz* in the Bible? Notice: "Then he brought me to the entrance of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and behold women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz." (Eze. 8:14 NAS) It's important that we remember now, that God considered this as one of "the greater abominations!" (Eze. 8:13 NAS) And in addition to the weeping of the women, both men and women fasted.....and part of their fast including going without meat and.....eggs.

Eggs are another symbol of fertility. *Astarte* (Syrian for *Ishtar* or *Easter*) was said to have been hatched from a large egg that dropped out of the sky into the Euphrates River. (How far fetched is that? Of course this whole Easter deception had to be hatched by someone with a big imagination!) Since eggs were considered sacred to this "goddess," eggs were not eaten during the 40 day period of mourning for *Astarte's* loss of her husband, *Bel* (or *Baal*). It should be easy to see that the decorating and coloring

of "Easter eggs" got its start from this pagan custom. We even have chocolate eggs today! (One year someone gave us one that seemed to have a "yolk.")

Now we ask you.....what do sunrise services, hot-cross buns, fasting for 40 days, and milk chocolate eggs with yolk-like centers have to do with Jesus' resurrection? The answer - absolutely nothing! But all those things have to do with the worship of a pagan mother goddess, Ishtar, or as her name is pronounced even today - **Easter!** (Do you ever wonder about the fact that the Papacy has never made any attempt to change the name of the day they say is supposed to be in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Very strange, wouldn't you say?)

The Easter Bunny? Quite popular this time of the year, with parents not only buying stuffed rabbits to give their children as gifts on Easter, but even allowing their children to believe there is such a thing as a live Easter bunny - and that those bunnies lay eggs! Really! Yes, the popular, but prolific Easter bunny has been around since the days of the pagan goddess, Ishtar, but back then rabbits were sacrificed in her honor - since the rabbit is a symbol of.....you guessed it! Fertility.

But what does God say about all these so-called religious "customs" that go along with the observance of Easter? One Scripture comes to mind, in which God warned the Hebrews not to follow the abominable customs of the heathen Canaanites. He said, *"beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise? You shall not behave thus toward the Lord your God, for every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods;"* (Deut. 12:30-31 KJV) And further on we read, *"Whatever I command you you shall be careful to do, you shall not add to nor take away from it."* (Deut. 12:32 NAS) But that's exactly what happened with God's people! They stopped "being careful to do" only that which God had commanded! And to make things worse, God's people started adding the "customs" of the Canaanites! Further - we may be quite certain that God would not want us to adopt any of the customs or practices of the ancient Babylonians or Assyrians either!

Can we imagine that God would be pleased with those that are commemorating the resurrection of His only begotten Son - on **a day devoted to the worship of the sun**.....or to a **pagan goddess of fertility, Ishtar**? In fact, God, the Father, has never asked His people to celebrate the resurrection at all - on any day of the week. A celebration of the resurrection is not taught in the Bible, but people do as they choose. They celebrate a day of their own making, in the way they please, while ignoring the request and example of their Savior.

Among the many millions of Christians in the world today, there are very few that gather to commemorate Jesus'™ death (The Christian Passover), as Jesus Himself requested (Luke 22:19), or to participate in the foot-washing ceremony instituted by Jesus for His disciples. (John 13:14-15) Strange.....isn't it? Jesus set an example for us, and hardly anyone pays attention. Paul, Peter, and all the early Christians followed that example, but within the period of just a few hundred years it had become more popular

to follow the ways of the pagan societies in which they lived. Christians turned their backs on the Passover, and started obeying the dictates of the Papacy in Rome, simply because the Passover was "too Jewish." But wait! wasn't our Lord.....Jewish? Who in the world would want to deceive us - away from the truth found in Jesus? It is none other than that "serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world!" (Rev. 12:9)

And while we're pondering these things about Easter, and our personal responses to what we learn, it might be helpful for all of us to remember the warning that God gave His people as they were about to enter the promised land, "*Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. **Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.***" (Deut. 4:1) And God also spoke these words - which surely were meant not only for Israel thousands of years ago, but for His people here and now..... "*Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them....."* (Deut. 4:9) We are God's people too! May God help us to learn what is true and what isn't, and provide us with the courage to teach that truth!

Sources:

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