

# Passover or Easter?

Rod Reynolds

**What do bunny rabbits, Easter eggs, and hot cross buns have to do with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? Actually, NOTHING! As is widely acknowledged, “Easter is a pagan festival” (Heather McDougall, *The Guardian*, April 3, 2010). So should Christians observe Passover or Easter?**

Most Churches that claim to be Christian keep as holy days festivals that Jesus never kept. At the same time, they don't keep the holy days he did keep. One of those festivals kept by Jesus that ceased long ago to be observed within popular Christianity is the Passover.

So why do we keep Passover and not Easter?

The most common term used in the New Testament for a follower of Jesus is *disciple*. (Greek: *mathetes*, a learner). “A ‘disciple’ was not only a pupil, but an adherent; hence they are spoken of as imitators of their teacher...” (*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 171). Christ's disciples were to not just hear, but to follow his example and *abide* in his word (John 8:31; Ephesians 5:1-2).

Jesus ate the Passover, and said we are to do it in remembrance of him (Luke 22:7-19).

Paul gave the predominantly Gentile church in Corinth instructions on how to eat the “Lord's supper,” the Passover, not as a riotous banquet but as a solemn remembrance of his suffering and death (1 Corinthians 11:23-28).

The lambs slain for the Old Covenant Passover were emblematic of Jesus Christ, who is referred to as the lamb numerous times in the New Testament, hearkening to the significance of the Passover sacrifice of Jesus Christ for Christians. (1 Corinthians 5:7).

So following the example of the Savior Jesus Christ and in obedience to his command we keep the New Testament Passover as a memorial of the willing sacrifice of his life to save our lives.

A second reason we keep the Passover is because in doing so we are following the example of the original and true Church of God.

The Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-20).

The historical record is clear on this point. The New Testament apostles followed

the teachings and example of Jesus Christ in keeping the Passover annually at its appointed time - not Easter.

"The earliest Christians celebrated the Lord's Passover at the same time as the Jews.... By the middle of the 2nd century most churches had transferred this celebration to the Sunday after the Jewish feast" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Christianity," Multimedia Edition, 1998). "In the 2nd century, the Christian [Passover] celebration was transferred to the Sunday following the 14-15 Nisan, if that day fell on a weekday" (*The New Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*, "Easter," 1993).

A third reason that we keep Passover and not Easter is that Easter is a blend of corrupted Biblical and pagan traditions.

The name Easter is ultimately derived from the Babylonian name (Ishtar) for the great mother goddess — the queen of heaven. This goddess was worshiped the world over under a variety of names.

In the Babylonian myths Tammuz and his consort Ishtar (Easter) were resurrected together each year "that with their return all nature might revive" (*The New Golden Bough*, p. 285). Tammuz is a Sumerian term meaning "true son." He was also known as *Adon*, or Lord, among the Babylonians, and the same deity came to be worshiped by the Greeks as Adonis (*ibid.*, p. 286). In various cultures at certain times of the year there were lamentations and weeping associated with the death of the god. In the Phoenician sanctuary of Astarte at Byblus the death of Adonis [or Tammuz] was mourned every spring with weeping, wailing and beating of the breast. But it was believed he rose from the dead the next day (*ibid.*, p. 289).

Many of the popular symbols associated with the Easter observance are not Christian at all, but are rooted in paganism. This includes the "Easter bunny," "Easter eggs," and hot cross buns. For more details see our article, "[Why Do We Keep the Passover?](#)"

The root of the Easter celebration is pagan, not Christian. Jesus Christ never commanded the Church to have a festival observing his resurrection, but the Bible explicitly commands his disciples to observe the Passover as a memorial of Christ's death. It took the apostate Church several centuries to settle on a consistent date for the celebration of Easter, further evidence that it was not of apostolic origin.

God commanded his people not to imitate or adopt heathen customs for his worship. "...do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way" (Deuteronomy 12:30-31). Paul asked, "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My

people.' Therefore 'Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord.'" (2 Corinthians 6:16-17). Many other Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments warn Christians not to involve themselves in idolatrous customs.

Our booklet *When Is the Biblical Passover?* provides a detailed explanation concerning the Passover, and its history. Download it now free of charge.

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Messenger Church of God  
PO Box 542  
Peculiar, MO 64078  
USA