

View

"...having the eyes of your heart enlightened..." Ephesians 1:18

"The Origin of Easter," page 2

Welcome Visitors!

You are our honored guests and we are pleased that you have chosen to visit us today. Our goal is to do everything according to God's word, including respecting its silence. This is a church of Christ; we are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church and we have no earthly "headquarters." The five elders oversee this work and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily aimed at our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don't understand something, please do not hesitate to ask one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God's word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

Please fill out a visitor's card and put it in the collection plate. Thank You

Schedule

The Lord's Day

9:30 AM – Classes

Auditorium: Authority

Room 13/14: Parenting

10:30 AM – Assembly

Speaking today: David Posey

Ecclesiastes: From Vanity to Victory

2 PM Class at the Building

Room 13/14

Minor Prophets

5 PM (building)

Fruit of the Spirit

Weekly Young Adults Class

Tonight at the Posey's: 5 PM

Tuesday, 10 AM

10 AM at the Building: Ephesians 6

Wednesday, 7 PM

Auditorium: Authority

Room 13/14: Parenting

Men's Saturday Morning Meeting

7 AM, second Saturday of the month (see Tyler Wade)

Information

Children's Classes

We have classes for children from 18 months and up. Please see the map in the hallway or ask any of the members which room is appropriate for you and/or your child. There are several Bible studies in progress on Sunday afternoon and evening. Check with David Posey if you have questions.

Restrooms

There are two sets of restrooms: one off the first hallway to the right of the lobby and another at the end of the first hallway to the left. Ask anyone and they'll be happy to point you in the right direction.

For Small Children

There is a special room for nursing mothers and a separate "cry room" at the rear of the auditorium. You enter them from the first hallway to the right, across from the restrooms.

Online

You can find copies of class material and archives of previous editions of the View and listen to sermons online at www.folsomchurch.com. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/folsomchurch>

View & Junior View

Be sure to pick up a copy of the View and Junior View; both are sent out weekly, plus there are some hard copies printed on Sundays and available in the foyer.

Disclaimer

The opinions, interpretations and views that appear in the View are those of the author alone and do not necessarily represent the views of the elders and other members of the church of Christ at Folsom.

“Easter”

Should I or shouldn't I? That's the question I ask myself every year around this time. Should I or shouldn't I preach on the resurrection on this Sunday, known as “Easter” by the world?

For most preachers in Protestant denominations, this question is already decided. After all, today is “Easter Sunday.” Today is the day the “Christian world” celebrates the resurrection and honors the risen Christ. Why wouldn't we preach on it?

I'm not going to preach on the resurrection today. Why? It's simple: this particular Sunday is no different for us than any other Sunday. Every first day of the week is the day we celebrate the resurrection and honor the risen Christ. But some of our brethren have decided that these “religious holidays” — including “Lent” and Christmas — are OK and they talk about them using the same terms and descriptions that the world uses.

The problem is that “Easter” is not mentioned in the Bible anywhere, except in a mistranslation of Acts 12:4 in the King James Version (“Easter” is put for “Passover”).

“Not mentioned in the scriptures” — isn't that all we need to know? If it's not in the Bible, how do we justify observing it as a holi- (“holy”) day? The logic for observing it as a special religious holiday can be used to support all kinds of religious aberrations. If you think that this is just a “church of Christ” thing, think again. Here's an excerpt from David C. Pack (who is not a member of any church of Christ) on the origin of Easter:

Easter has long been known to be a pagan festival and America's founders knew this. A children's book about the holiday, *Easter Parade: Welcome Sweet Spring Time!*, by Steve Englehart, p. 4, states, “When the Puritans came to North America, they regarded the celebration of Easter—and the celebration of Christmas—with suspicion. They knew that pagans had celebrated the return of spring long before Christians celebrated Easter... for the first two hundred years of European life in North America, only a few states, mostly in the South, paid much attention to Easter.” Not until after the Civil War did Americans begin celebrating this holiday: “Easter first became an American tradition in the 1870s” (p. 5). Remarkable! The original 13 colonies of America began as a “Christian” nation, with the cry of “No king but King Jesus!” The nation did not observe Easter within an entire century of its founding. What happened to change this?

Where Did Easter Come From?

Here are some other quotes to consider:

Does the following sound familiar?

Spring is in the air! Flowers and bunnies decorate the home. Father helps the children paint

beautiful designs on eggs dyed in various colors. These eggs, which will later be hidden and searched for, are placed into lovely, seasonal baskets. The wonderful aroma of the hot cross buns mother is baking in the oven waft through the house. Forty days of abstaining from special foods will finally end the next day. The whole family picks out their Sunday best to wear to the next morning's sunrise worship service to celebrate the savior's resurrection and the renewal of life. Everyone looks forward to a succulent ham with all the trimmings. It will be a thrilling day. After all, it is one of the most important religious holidays of the year.

“The problem is that ‘Easter’ is not mentioned in the Bible anywhere, except in a mistranslation of Acts 12:4 in the KJV.”

Easter, right? No! This is a description of an ancient Babylonian family—2,000 years before Christ—honoring the resurrection of their god, Tammuz, who was brought back from the underworld by his mother/wife, Ishtar (after whom

the festival was named). As Ishtar was actually pronounced “Easter” in most Semitic dialects, it could be said that the event portrayed here is, in a sense, Easter. Of course, the occasion could easily have been a Phrygian family honoring Attis and Cybele, or perhaps a Phoenician family worshipping Adonis and Astarte. Also fitting the description well would be a heretic Israelite family honoring the Canaanite Baal and Ashtoreth. Or this depiction could just as easily represent any number of other immoral, pagan fertility celebrations of death and resurrection—including the modern Easter celebration as it has come to us through the Anglo-Saxon fertility rites of the goddess Eostre or Ostara. These are all the same festivals, separated only by time and culture.

If Easter is not found in the Bible, then where did it come from? The vast majority of ecclesiastical and secular historians agree that the name of Easter and the traditions surrounding it are deeply rooted in pagan religion.

Now notice the following powerful quotes that demonstrate more about the *true* origin of how the modern Easter celebration got its name:

“Since Bede the Venerable (*De ratione temporum* 1:5) the origin of the term for the feast of Christ's Resurrection has been popularly considered to be from the Anglo-Saxon *Eastre*, a goddess of spring...the Old High German plural for dawn, *eostarun*; whence has come the German *Ostern*, and our English Easter” (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, Vol. 5, p. 6).

“The fact that vernal festivals were general among pagan peoples no doubt had much to do with the form assumed by the Eastern festival in the Christian churches. The English term “Easter” is of *pagan origin*”

Albert Henry Newman, D.D., LL.D.
A Manual of Church History, p. 299.

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THE CULTURE COLUMN

Politics

According to historians, from the day of Pentecost when Christ established his church up until WWII, members of churches of Christ were almost universally apolitical. They did not view worldly politics as something worthy of their time or interest.

There was good reason for this. There is a striking lack of political involvement by characters in the New Testament. Jesus famously said to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). This should surprise us a bit since the Roman emperors of Jesus’ day were incredibly corrupt and evil. Jesus never encouraged political involvement and rarely, if ever, commented on civil law.

Paul and Peter both wrote that we must obey the governing authorities but, beyond that, they did not comment on political issues. Some find this surprising since slavery, abortion and corruption in government were common in those days.

This apolitical attitude changed dramatically during and after WWII, however. The rise of Hitler and the attack on Pearl Harbor was so egregious that virtually all Americans, including Christians, participated enthusiastically in the war effort. But since the decision to go to war is a political decision, many Christians began to get involved in politics. And the rest is history.

But how politically-charged should a Christian be? Today’s political climate is about as ugly and divisive as it has ever been. Regardless of where you stand on issues, there are compelling arguments against actively supporting any political party.

I’m concerned that what may divide churches in the future will not be due to doctrinal issues, but political and cultural issues: divisions about whether we should support certain candidates. Or, home-schooling vs. public schools; vaccinators vs. non-vaccinators, etc.

One thing for sure: Jesus was not a member of a political party and he steered clear of commenting on purely political matters. His sermons cut across party lines and sometimes offended everyone (John 6:60-66; Luke 4:20-29). You can’t categorize Jesus’ teaching under a political label.

If people today would just listen to the teachings of Jesus, politics as we know it would never be the same. But there is no reasonable expectation that that will ever happen. And so, as Christians, we are well-served by taking all political talk, positions and posturing with a huge grain of salt and spend more time reading the words of Jesus than watching (and getting worked up by) talk shows on TV.

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“On this greatest of Christian festivals, several survivals occur of ancient heathen ceremonies. To begin with, the name itself is not Christian but pagan. Ostara was the Anglo-Saxon Goddess of Spring” (Ethel L. Urline, *Festival, Holy Days, and Saints Days*, p. 73).

“Easter—the name Easter comes to us from Osera or Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, for whom a spring festival was held annually, as it is from this pagan festival that some of our Easter customs have come” (Hazeltine, p. 53).

“In Babylonia...the goddess of spring was called Ishtar. She was identified with the planet Venus, which, because...[it] rises before the Sun...or sets after it... appears to love the light [this means Venus loves the sun-god]...In Phoenecia, she became Astarte; in Greece, Eostre [related to the Greek word Eos: “dawn”], and in Germany, Ostara [this comes from the German word Ost: “east,” which is the direction of dawn]” (Engelhart, p. 4).

As we have seen, many names are interchangeable for the more well-known Easter. Pagans typically used many different names for the same god or goddess. Nimrod, the Bible figure who built the city of Babylon (Gen. 10:8), is an example. He was worshipped as Saturn, Vulcan, Kronos, Baal, Tammuz, Molech and others, but he was always the same god—the fire or sun god universally worshipped in nearly every ancient culture. The goddess Easter was no different. She was one goddess with many names—the goddess of fertility, worshipped in spring when all life was being renewed.

The widely-known historian, Will Durant, in his famous and respected work, *Story of Civilization*, pp. 235, 244-245, writes, “Ishtar [Astarte to the Greeks, Ashthoreth to the Jews], interests us not only as analogue of the Egyptian Isis and prototype of the Grecian Aphrodite and the Roman Venus, but as the formal beneficiary of one of the strangest of Babylonian customs...known to us chiefly from a famous page in Herodotus: Every native woman is obliged, once in her life, to sit in the temple of Venus [Easter], and have intercourse with some stranger.”

So, there you have it. This is all pretty well documented in other sources. But the main point is the first point: if the Bible doesn’t authorize a holiday, then we have no business observing it as a religious holiday. This goes for Christmas, Lent, and every other holiday on the religious calendar. The only day set aside for Christian observance is the first day of every week.

However, having said all that, I am happy when anyone, for any reason, decides to attend a church and worship God, if even for a day. It indicates that there is a belief in God. Perhaps some seed will be sown on a good heart and a deeper commitment will result.

So, we appreciate the opportunity to welcome all comers, regardless of the motive for coming. We exalt Jesus here, each and every day of our lives. We meet to honor Him and worship God every Sunday, as they did in the first century (Acts 20:7). We always treat our visitors as honored guests and hope that they will find our services edifying.

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