

Easter Is Coming

by Bryan Gibson

That's right—Sunday, April 20, will soon be here, and many churches are already making big plans to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. In the minds of many, this is “the most holy” of all religious holidays. Some churches, however, don't plan to do anything different on this Sunday than they would on any other Sunday. They will still assemble to worship the Lord, but they will not have a special Easter service.

The reason for this is really quite simple. Christ didn't give us the “go ahead” or the “say so” (i.e., the authority) to participate in this yearly observance of His resurrection. It may seem like a wonderful thing to do, but there's just nothing in the New Testament about it. He didn't issue a command to do it; didn't provide an example of churches observing it; and nowhere even implies that it should be done. If this one day is so holy, and this observance is such a good thing, you would expect to find something about it, somewhere in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Granted, the word “Easter” is found one time, in Acts 12:4, but only in the King James Version of the Bible. Every other reliable translation uses the word “Passover.” That's exactly how it should be translated, because the Greek word is *pascha*, and in the twenty-six other New Testament passages where this word is used, even the King James Version uses the word “Passover.” The surrounding verses give further confirmation—it was “during the Days of Unleavened Bread” (Acts 12:3), and it was something the Jews observed, not Christians.

“By what authority are you doing these things?” (Matthew 21:23)—that's the all-important question—about Easter, or any other religious practice. Keep in mind that authority can only come from one of two sources—“from heaven or from men” (Matthew 21:25); it's either “according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8), or “according to the commandments and doctrines of men” (Colossians 2:22). And the source of doctrine does matter—just listen to Jesus: “And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9, see also Colossians 2:8, 20-23; Titus 1:13-14). Make no mistake about it, this annual observance of Christ's resurrection is not from Christ; it's from man and therefore becomes vain worship (Jesus' words, not mine). Perhaps many who participate in this observance are sincere, but no amount of sincerity can change a commandment of men into a commandment of Christ.

“Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:25)—Jesus did authorize us to do something in remembrance of His death and resurrection, and it's called the Lord's Supper. He commanded us to do it (“do this”); told us what to eat (unleavened bread and fruit of the vine); gave instructions about the order and manner of observance, and even provided examples of His local churches doing it, on the first day of every week (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16-22; 11:17-34).

Yes, Easter Sunday is coming, and on this day many churches will do something Jesus DID NOT say to do. What is sadly ironic is that on most Sundays, many of these same churches will neglect what Jesus DID say to do.