

The Real Meaning of Easter

Spring is a time when things all become new again. You know, the seasons of the year didn't go unknown by the ancients. They built their calendar on the seasons. Most of the ancient calendars, for example, the Persians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and all the other ancient empires, began their calendars in the spring, on what we call the spring equinox. This is when the days and nights are of equal length. You know, during the winter, the nights get very long and the days get very short. In the summer, it is the exact opposite. Well, the spring equinox is that point in time when the days are getting longer, and the nights shorter, and they become equal. That usually falls on March 21st on our Gregorian calendar. But most of the ancients began their new years in March. And, in fact, our own calendar originally started in March. I don't know if you are aware of that or not. The Roman calendar originally started in March.

What does September mean? Seventh. What does October mean? Eighth... November means ninth, December means tenth. December was the tenth month of the year, and the reason for that was because the year started in the spring, in March. But it got changed somewhere along the line, so we celebrate it differently.

Well, each of these ancient cultures, because they didn't know the One True God, had pagan idols, mythological gods and goddesses that they worshiped. And these gods and goddesses had some that represented the seasons, and the like. But they believed that these were real entities. And, of course, there was the goddess of the spring, the goddess of sex and fertility. The Babylonians and Assyrians called her **Ishtar**. The Egyptians called her **Isis**. The Sidonians called her **Ashtoreth**. The Greeks called her **Astarte**, or **Aphrodite**. The Romans called her **Venus**. The Germans called her **Ostera**. The Anglo-Saxons called her **Easter**. And can you tell the similar pronunciation even among these different nations? These are all essentially the same goddess of sex, fertility, and spring.

And of course they have various myths about this goddess that we see named in all these different languages. The Babylonian myth goes like this... Ishtar had a sister, and she was the goddess of the 'underworld' or 'netherworld'... what we call hell.

I want to read a passage from the Encyclopedia.

“...Ishtar set out for the underworld (hell) they believe perhaps to claim it as her own. She passed through 7 gates into that underworld and each one was required to leave a garment or an ornament so that when she passed through the seventh gate she was entirely naked. Despite the warnings about her presumptions, she did not turn back but dared to sit herself on Arish Kigul’s throne. (That was her sister.) Immediately, the Indokai of the Underworld judged her, gazed at her with eyes of death and she became a corpse and was hung up on a nail.”

And you can see that the mythology obviously comes from the fact that spring time eventually into fall and everything dies. The mythology revolved around the death of Ishtar, or Easter.

Well, Ishtar had a son by the name of Tammuz. And Tammuz was not only her son, but he was also her lover. According to the mythology, her son Tammuz then had to descend into the netherworld in order to secure the release and resurrection of his mother/lover, Ishtar.

Now the pagan Babylonians had a name for this. First it was called, “Weeping for Tammuz”. They would get together, particularly the women, just before the spring Equinox and pretend to be crying, probably some actually did cry, because Tammuz has gone down into the netherworld and “we don’t know what has become of him”, and “we don’t know if he can rescuer Ishtar and bring her back to life.”

Then the festival concluded with the worshipping of the sunrise, which represented Ishtar being resurrected back to life and spring coming again.

Believe it or not, this is the story of Easter. It was around long before the Christ. This is the real meaning of Easter. It has been celebrated by many different cultures with their little slant on the mythology.

Pope Gregory I (590-604 AD) decided to send Catholic missionaries out to evangelize the Anglo-Saxon people, which if you are of English decent, many of you come from.

I want to read something else from the encyclopedia.

“...Pope Gregory I (the Great) ordered his missionaries to use old religious rights and festivals and absorb them into Christian rituals wherever possible. The Christian celebration of the resurrection of Christ is ideally suited to be merged with the pagan feast of Easter.

And many of the traditions were adopted into the Christian festivities.”

So what we see happening here is the Roman Catholics decided the best way to make converts out of the pagans is not to tell them to forsake all of their pagan idolatry, but to simply put Christian names on them. Then make it a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, the Christ while they were celebrating the resurrection of Ishtar or Easter.

Let me talk about bunnies and eggs now. The bunny was the symbol of the Anglo-Saxon version of what we call Easter. That's obvious because bunny reproduce very quickly. So that is a good symbol of fertility. It's a good symbol of spring. Well, the ancient Persians and Babylonians colored eggs. The Persians especially decorated eggs in incredible ways. And these decorated eggs were gifts to the goddess Easter.

These are facts. Are you hearing me? These are facts. The research is very easily obtained in history books, the encyclopedia, the Internet. There is no question that Easter is of pagan origins. And it has been purposely mixed up with Christianity over the years.

A lot of Christians think it is perfectly harmless. We're going to go to the Bible and see what God thinks about this kind of mixing of paganism with the things of God. If we are followers of Christ, what God thinks about these kinds of things should matter a great deal.

Well, I want to take you to some passages in the Old Testament first. And remember, God does not change. Malachi 3:6 says, "I am the Lord, **I do not change...**" God's character **does not** change. We are told this in both the Old and New Testaments. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and **forever.**" So if God said it before, it still applies today; no matter what today's churches and traditions tell us.

So I want to see what God has to say. But before I do this, I want to read two verses. And these two verses explain my motivations as to why I am telling you these things. Most pastors go around and talk about Christ and His resurrection, but they ignore these other things. I cannot ignore it. My father taught me to put God and His Christ before all else.

I want to read a verse in Ezekiel. This is God telling Ezekiel one of the reasons why the Babylonian captivity came.

Ezekiel 22:26 NKJV - "Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known *the difference* between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

You see, God required, in fact, all of the Law teaches us a very important lesson. It teaches us that some things are clean because they are dedicated to God. You couldn't take a bowl that was used in the Temple of God home to eat a bowl of oatmeal with it. Why? Is there anything wrong with oatmeal? No. But there had to be a separation between the things that were for God, the Holy God, Jehovah, and the common things.

And part of the job of priests, and today's pastors, is to teach you the difference between the holy and unholy, the clean and unclean. Not that the unclean is necessarily evil, but that the unclean has **no** place with the things of God.

When Ezekiel is later prophesying of the future when Christ's kingdom will be established, and God is going to get rid of all of those preachers and teachers that taught evil to His people. They will be replaced with those who will teach and preach properly. God says something about those people. And this is a prophesy about the future of Christ's coming kingdom in Ezekiel 44:23.

Ezekiel 44:23 NKJV – "And they shall teach My people *the difference* between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean."

This is my motivation. I could do like most pastors in today's churches and not say anything about this. But I think it is my responsibility as a Christian. And one day we are all going to be judged before God on whether or not we have fulfilled our responsibilities properly.

What you do with the information I give you is between you and God. I have done my part.

Let's look at my first point. Go to Leviticus 17:7.

What does God think about Paganism? What does God think about pagan rituals? In Leviticus God is talking about His people because they had begun to turn away from God and take part in pagan rituals.

Leviticus 17:7 NKJV – “They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons, after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute **forever** for them throughout their generations.”

Now turn to Deuteronomy 32. I want you to notice, that when God talked about His people sacrificing to various pagan deities, He said they were sacrificing to demons. And that is because behind every one of these pagan gods, including Ishtar, our Easter, there is a demon.

Speaking of Israel again, this is a part of the Song of Moses.

Deuteronomy 32:16 NKJV - They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign *gods*; With abominations they provoked Him to anger.

Deuteronomy 32:17 NKJV - They sacrificed to demons, not to God, *To gods* they did not know, *To new gods*, new arrivals That your fathers did not fear.

Now I want to show you some of the results of the Israelites partaking in pagan rituals mixed with the things of God... what Christianity today does with Easter and Christmas. Let's see what happened to them as far as God was concerned. Go to 1 Kings 11.

Most of you should already know the story of King Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived... at least when he was young. When he got old he got real stupid.

1 Kings 11:4 NKJV - For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of his father David.

1 Kings 11:5 NKJV - For Solomon went after **Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians**, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

1 Kings 11:6 NKJV - Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not **fully** follow the LORD, as *did* his father David.

1 Kings 11:7 NKJV - Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is* east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon.

1 Kings 11:8 NKJV - And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

Now the Bible does specifically say that Solomon actually worshipped these false gods. But he provided the means by which to build temples and altars all over Jerusalem and Israel for his wives and the people of God to worship

them. This was enough to bring out God's fury and punishment. So what happened?

1 Kings 11:9 NKJV - So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

1 Kings 11:10 NKJV - and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded.

1 Kings 11:11 NKJV - Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came down to destroy the Temple and destroy Jerusalem and take the people he didn't kill as slaves. It got so bad that the women began to eat their own babies.

You can read all about Nebuchadnezzar in 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. He is one of the most talked about pagan leaders in the Bible.

If God never changes, which the Bible clearly says, do you think God is going to take it any more lightly when we involve paganism in His worship today? I don't think so. But that is just my opinion.

Turn in your Bible to Ezekiel 8 please. It's going to get really ugly now.

Ezekiel was one of the prophets of God that was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar in his first trip to Jerusalem. And Ezekiel was told by God to tell His people in the captivity why God had done this to them... why God had allowed this to happen to them... why He judged them. Here is what happened...

Ezekiel 8:6 NKJV - Furthermore He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations."

Now what he is saying is, the people of Israel had taken pagan practices and brought them right into God's Temple. This was the very temple that Solomon had built. God was furious about this. And look what He said

they... “make Me go far away from My sanctuary”. God is leaving His house here.

Let’s continue.

Ezekiel 8:7 NKJV - So He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, there was a hole in the wall.

Ezekiel 8:8 NKJV - Then He said to me, "Son of man, dig into the wall"; and when I dug into the wall, there was a door.

Ezekiel 8:9 NKJV - And He said to me, "Go in, and see the **wicked abominations** which they are doing there."

Ezekiel 8:10 NKJV - So I went in and saw, and there; every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls.

There were engravings of these pagan idols on the Temple walls of God.

Ezekiel 8:11 NKJV - And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up.

These were pagan rituals as well. They were doing them in God’s house.

Ezekiel 8:12 NKJV - Then He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, "The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land.""

Ezekiel 8:13 NKJV - And He said to me, "Turn again, *and* you will see **greater abominations** that they are doing."

Now God is going to show Ezekiel what He considers even greater abominations.

Ezekiel 8:14 NKJV - So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the Lord's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.

Do you remember who Tammuz is? It was Ishtar’s son/lover.

Ezekiel 8:15 NKJV - Then He said to me, "Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Turn again, you will see **greater abominations** than these."

And now in God's eyes it gets even worse.

Ezekiel 8:16 NKJV - So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshipping the sun toward the east.

This is how Muslims worship, to the east. They were supposed to worship to the west. It is significant that their backs are facing west. It symbolizes that they have turned away from God. They were facing east and worshipping Sol Invictus, the sun god, whose birthday is December 25th. You guessed it. Christmas. Most of the traditions associated with Christmas, including decorating trees, which was forbidden by God in **Jeremiah 10:1-4**, the exchange of presents, wreaths, and even gingerbread cookies, are adaptations of Roman pagan rituals during the month of December, (Saturnalia, a pagan Roman holiday, and the birthday of Sol Invictus, the Unconquered Sun). God not only forbid the worship of pagan gods, but also forbid the use of pagan items and practices in the worship of Him.

Deuteronomy 12:1 NKJV - "These *are* the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth.

Deuteronomy 12:2 NKJV - "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree.

Deuteronomy 12:3 NKJV - "And you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place.

Deuteronomy 12:4 NKJV - "**You shall not worship the LORD your God *with such things.***

Deuteronomy 12:29 NKJV - "When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land,

Deuteronomy 12:30 NKJV - "take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, '**How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.**'

Deuteronomy 12:31 NKJV - "**You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way;** for every abomination to the LORD which He

hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

But we are supposed to be on the topic of the pagan holiday of Easter which Christians celebrate. Look back at Ezekiel 8.

Ezekiel 8:17 NKJV - And He said to me, "Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose.

Ezekiel 8:18 NKJV - "Therefore **I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity**; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, **I will not hear them.**"

Those are some scary words... not just for them. I think it goes for us as well. Some pastors say, this is the Old Testament. This doesn't apply to us. This is the age of grace. Churches always talk about love and grace. But they forget to talk about their responsibilities to God, or His justice for their actions. Let's see what the New Testament says.

The Apostle Paul was talking about whether or not it was acceptable for the Christians in Corinth to go over to a pagan temple while they were having a feast. The Christians were saying, "We don't actually believe in that stuff, we're just going for the food." What does Paul say about that? Go to 1 Corinthians 10.

1 Corinthians 10:19 NKJV - What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything?

1 Corinthians 10:20 NKJV - Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

Paul is saying here, when you participate in those things, you are having fellowship with demons... the demons behind those pagan mythologies and gods. As a Christian, you have no business doing that.

1 Corinthians 10:21 NKJV - You **cannot** drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you **cannot** partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

You either stand with Jesus, or lay down with demons, because they will be destroyed. The two cannot be mixed. You have to make up your own mind.

Are you going to drink of the cup of demons, or the cup of Christ? And Paul is talking about Communion, by the way.

1 Corinthians 10:21 NKJV - You **cannot** drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you **cannot** partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

1 Corinthians 10:22 NKJV - Or do we **provoke the Lord to jealousy**? Are we stronger than He?

Do you see Paul using the exact terminology as did Moses in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 32?

I want to close with this passage... go to 2 Corinthians 6.

2 Corinthians 6:14 NKJV - Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:15 NKJV - And what accord has Christ with Belial? (**a pagan deity**) Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

2 Corinthians 6:16 NKJV - 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."

2 Corinthians 6:17 NKJV - Therefore "**Come out from among them And be separate**, says the Lord. **Do not touch** what is unclean, And I will receive you."

Now let me ask you a question. Is that a conditional statement? No. It is definitive. It is a command.

"Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

What does that imply? It implies that you will **NOT** be received if you do these things.

The Scriptures are in agreement from beginning to end on this topic.

2 Corinthians 6:17 NKJV - Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

2 Corinthians 6:18 NKJV - "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

2 Corinthians 7:1 NKJV - Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from **all** filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness** in the **fear of God**.

And it is interesting that he takes some promises out of the Old Testament and he says that they are ours.