

THE SABBATH SCOOP

VOLUME 27

APRIL 2014

NUMBER 1

Easter: a Pagan Fertility Festival!

Easter doesn't really celebrate Jesus' resurrection! It's a warmed over pagan springtime fertility festival!

By Gregory Dullum

Many Christians will celebrate Easter on April 20, thinking they are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They will be wrong. They will actually be celebrating a pagan festival whose springtime fertility symbols have been given new Christian meaning.

Easter's Pagan Origins

"But it was in spring, in the season of new life and revival when, from time immemorial, the pagan peoples of Europe and Asia held their Spring Festivals, re-enacting ancient regeneration myths and performing magical and religious ceremonies to make the crops grow and prosper. Vernal Mysteries, like those of Tammuz and Osiris and Adonis, flourished in the Mediterranean world when our Lord lived and moved in it, and farther north and east there were others, less well known but no less vividly alive. Inevitably, some of their cherished rites and symbols were carried forward into the Easter customs of the new dispensation. Many of them have survived into our day, unchanged because of their timeless and universal nature, yet subtly altered in their new surrounding to bear a Christian significance.

"Easter eggs, for instance, are deeply rooted in pagan antiquity, and so are our hot cross buns and Easter Hare....

"Even our English name for the festival seems to show heathen traces, for the Venerable Bede tells us that it is derived from Eastre (or Eostre), a northern Goddess of Spring and the Dawn, whose principal celebrations were held about the time of the Vernal Equinox" (*Easter and its Customs* by Christina Hole, 1961, pp. 9-11).

Carnival

Easter is linked to an earlier celebration called Carnival. Carnival, which con-



Drawing courtesy of NAPS

Long before the Christian era, eggs were regarded as symbols of continuing life and resurrection. The Easter Bunny is a symbol of fertility, renewal and the return of spring. Fireworks on Easter Eve are passed off as the Easter Bunny burning wildflowers to make dyes for Easter eggs.

cludes with Mardi Gras in February, was originally a pagan fertility celebration.

In ancient Egypt, agriculture depended upon the annual inundations of the Nile River. "The goddess Isis, sister-wife of the murdered Osiris [known as Adonis to the Greeks and Tammuz to the Babylonians], in mourning the death of her husband wept into the Nile every year, thus causing a plentiful supply of water and satisfactory crops. In her own right, and by her marital relation with Osiris, god of resurrection and reincarnation, Isis became a goddess of fertility, honored by parades, public demonstrations, and the use of a ceremonial boat, [today we call these parade "floats"] which symbolized the reproductive principle in agriculture. The cult of Isis spread widely in Egypt and across the Mediterranean to Greece and Italy....

"Among the early rites presumably related to the history of carnivals was the Greek ceremony in honor of Dionysus, a god of fertility. In the 6th century B.C. an effigy of this god was driven through the streets of Athens on a boat mounted on a platform structure, accompanied by masked persons, dancers, and singers of scurrilous and satir-

ical songs.... the parade was a form of phallic worship, venerating the male organ of generation" ("Carnival," *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1964, vol. 5, pp. 639c-639d).

"In Spain, Portugal, Hungary, South Germany, and some other European countries, Shrovetide marks the splendid climax of Carnival, with its many pageants, its rural revelries, its parades of giants and burnings of effigies, and the inevitable pranks and mischief. Carnival itself is something more than a pre-Lent season of rejoicing in the lands where it is well-established. It is a spirit that runs like wildfire through the areas affected, and which is personified in a variety of different figures, real or counterfeit....

"This is the season of freedom from ordinary rules, of noisy fun and masquerades, practical jokes and ridicule. Mischief is an integral part of the festivities, as are the organized processions and dances" (Hole, pp. 19-20). During Carnival, people behaved like demons!

Shrove Tuesday

Carnival concludes with the Tuesday known as "Shrove Tuesday," "Pancake Tuesday," "Fat Tuesday," or, in French, "Mardi Gras." It was a time when pancakes and other meals were prepared with the purpose of using up fats prior to the austere time of Lent.

"Today, except in Carnival-keeping countries, the words 'Shrove Tuesday' suggest, first and foremost, pancakes. Although being dependent on Easter, it is a movable feast, it falls normally in February, or at latest, in the first few days of March. The Roman *Fornacalia*, or Feast of Ovens, fell in February also, and it may be that our pancakes are the direct descendants of the small wheaten cakes eaten then.... pancakes are still

EASTER

Continued on Page 2

Easter

Continued from Page 1

with us and, in innumerable homes, restaurants and hotels, they remain the principal delicacy of Shrove Tuesday” (Hole, p. 16). It’s not wrong to eat pancakes for breakfast most days, but if we *celebrate* Shrove Tuesday by *making a point* of eating pancakes *on that day*, we are CONTINUING a pagan tradition!

Ash Wednesday

Following Fat Tuesday is Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, when some professing Christians have their minister rub ash on their foreheads in the shape of a cross, a pagan symbol used long before Christ.

“Centuries before the Christian era, the cross was honored as a religious symbol by the people of Babylon. It is seen on their oldest monuments. Historians say it was a symbol associated with Tammuz....

“ ‘The same sign of the cross that Rome now worships was used in the Babylonian Mysteries,’ says [Alexander] Hislop [in his book, *The Two Babylons*], ‘...that which is now called the Christian cross was originally no Christian emblem at all, but was the mystic Tau of Chaldeans and Egyptians—the true original form of the letter T—the initial of the name of Tammuz’ ” (*Babylonian Mystery Religion* by Ralph Woodrow, 1970, p. 51).

Lent

Between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday is a 40-day fast called Lent. Professing Christians who observe Lent give up one item (usually a food) for 40 days and call this a fast. The Bible NOWHERE *commands* this fast. It actually condemns it (in its original pagan form) as “weeping for Tammuz” in Ezek. 8:13-14.

“Under the names of Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, and Attis, the peoples of Egypt and Western Asia represented the yearly decay and revival of life, especially of vegetable life, which they personified as a god who annually died and rose again from the dead. In name and detail the rites varied from place to place: in substance they were the same....

“The worship of Adonis was practiced by the Semitic peoples of Babylonia and Syria, and the Greeks borrowed it from them as early as the seventh century before Christ. The true name of the deity was Tammuz: the appellation of Adonis is merely the Semitic *Adon*, ‘lord,’ a title of honour by which his worshippers addressed him....

“In the religious literature of Babylonia Tammuz appears as the youthful spouse

or lover of Ishtar, the great mother goddess, the embodiment of the reproductive energies of nature.... [E]very year Tammuz is believed to die, passing away from the cheerful earth to the gloomy subterranean world, and that every year his divine mistress journeyed in quest of him.... During her absence the passion of love ceased to operate: men and beasts alike forgot to reproduce their kinds: all life was threatened with extinction....

“Laments for the departed Tammuz are contained in several Babylonian hymns, which liken him to plants that quickly fade....” (*Adonis, Attis, Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion* by Sir James Gregory Frazer, 1961, pp. 6, 8-9).

Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday begins “Holy Week” for professing Christians. It is supposed to mark the day Christ triumphantly entered Jerusalem before his final Passover.

However, Jesus did not enter Jerusalem on a Sunday. He entered it on a Friday, very likely after sunset. Passover, in the year Christ was crucified (A.D. 31) was on a Wednesday (Tuesday after sunset). Jesus’ triumphal entry occurred five days before Passover (John 12:1, 12-14).

There is NO COMMAND in the Bible to observe the day of Christ’s triumphal entry. We are told to observe God’s holy festivals and neither add to them nor take away from them (Ex. 12:14, 23:15; Deut. 12:32).

Maundy Thursday

Holy Week for professing Christians continues with “Maundy Thursday.” This is an oddly named festival that makes us wonder if we heard it correctly—is it Monday or Thursday? Couldn’t the Catholic Church make up its mind when it made up this celebration?

“Maundy Thursday is said to derive its English name from *mandatum*, a command, in reference to the new commandment of love which Our Lord gave to His Apostles at the Last Supper” (Hole, p. 35).

Once again, this observance (Maundy Thursday) is NOT commanded in the Bible. What *is commanded* to be observed is the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:4-8, Ex. 12:14-20). And yet, God’s feasts were NEVER included in professing Christianity’s “Holy Week.” Isn’t it odd that the Festivals God commands to be kept are REJECTED by professing Christians, who *keep their own observances instead*? How reminiscent of Mark 7:9!

Good Friday

Maundy Thursday is followed by another

oddly named festival called Good Friday. This, professing Christians believe, is the day upon which Christ was crucified. So what’s “good” about it? Why isn’t it called Bad Friday?

“In English-speaking countries it is Good Friday, which is usually thought to be a corruption of God’s Friday” (Hole, p. 40).

The Bible instructs us to observe the day of Christ’s crucifixion, but it is to be observed on the 14th day of the first month of God’s sacred calendar (Abib 14), NOT on the Friday before Easter (Deut. 16:1, John 13:1, 1 Cor. 5:7-8).

Passover, although one of God’s festivals, was NOT a HOLY DAY. People *could work on this day*. In fact, it was called a *preparation day*, because as soon as it was over, a holy day—the First Day of Unleavened Bread—began (John 19:14)!

There are superstitions connected with Good Friday, which lead professing Christians *not to work* on that day! “One very common manifestation of this feeling was, and still is in some instances, a reluctance to do customary work then, either from a genuine respect for the religious festival, or for superstitious fears that to do it will somehow bring misfortune.

“Until very recently, miners refused to go down the pit on Good Friday, believing that some disaster would follow if they did.... Farmers did not work with horses, and along the coasts, fishermen stayed ashore, considering it both impious and ill-omened to put to sea on that day.

“A very widespread belief, by no means extinct yet, was that it was extremely unlucky to wash clothes or linen on Good Friday. Legend says that whoever does so will find the water stained with blood, or the clothes hung on the line spotted with it, and that misfortune of some kind, perhaps a death in the family, will follow”

The SABBATH SCOOP

228 O’Connell Drive
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701-3332

Editor

Gregory Dullum

Circulation Managers:

Craig Evans • Raleigh Collins

Ed Crook • Gregory Dullum

© Copyright Gregory Dullum 2014

PRINT CIRCULATION: 82 • COST PER ISSUE: FREE
www.thesabbathcoop.org

The Sabbath Scoop is an independent publication. Opinions expressed are those of the editor (based upon more than 48 years attending the Church of God and four years of Ambassador College plus additional personal Bible study), not of any church or organization. Donations to cover costs of paper, toner, postage and Web site are gratefully accepted. You may e-mail the editor at: cbjprodept@socket.net. Unless otherwise noted, Bible quotes are from the New King James Version, ©1983, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

(Hole, pp. 41-42).

Hot Cross Buns

“Eating hot cross buns is one of the few Good Friday customs that has taken root in America.... Most people believe that this cross is a purely Christian emblem, connected with the day on which the cakes are traditionally eaten. It may, however, be far older. The cross was a pagan symbol long before it acquired everlasting significance from the events of the first Good Friday, and bread and cakes were sometimes marked with it in pre-Christian times.

“Two small loaves, each with a cross on it, were discovered under the ruins of Herkulaneum, the city that was overwhelmed by volcanic ash in A.D. 79. It is, of course, just possible that they were made for some isolated Christian citizen, but it is not very likely; it is far more probable that the crosses here had a pagan meaning, like those which appeared on cakes associated with the worship of Diana. If, as seems possible, the little wheaten cakes that are known to have been made at primitive Spring Festivals were similarly marked, our hot cross buns can claim a long and deeply interesting lineage, running back to very remote times” (Hole, pp. 43-44).

It is *very likely* that hot cross buns are CONDEMNED in the Bible as cakes baked to the queen of heaven (Jer. 7:18).

Easter Clothes

“It is customary almost everywhere to put on new clothes at Easter, a whole outfit if possible, but if not, then at least a new hat, or a new pair of gloves” (Hole, p. 53). Can there be a pagan origin to this custom? Surprisingly, YES! There is a superstition that if Easter observers wear only old clothes on this day, “the crows would befoul his or her garments, and bad luck of a more serious kind will follow” (ibid.).

Wearing new clothes on Easter is nothing more than continuing a pagan Spring Festival custom: “Long before Christianity came to the world, people put on fresh, new garments at the Spring Festival, for joy that the winter was past” (ibid.).

Easter Eve Bonfires

In some countries, people hold Easter Eve bonfires and shoot off fireworks. In some rural districts of Holland, boys chase girls around the bonfires and throw soot on them, to “bring them luck.” Actually, this began as a fertility rite: “In fact, it is the direct survival of an ancient fertility rite, but probably few of the onlookers, or the young people most nearly concerned, remember that now” (Hole, p. 59).

The bonfires, fireworks and bell-ringing

on Easter Eve may still be thought of as bringing luck, but in reality are a form of pagan merriment: “...and who knows how many of those present cherish at least a half-belief that the ritual may really bring them luck, as it did to their far-off European ancestors? The explanation of this pagan merriment, which is given to the local children, is that the Easter Rabbit is burning wild flowers to make dyes for the Easter eggs” (Hole, pp. 59-60).

Easter Eggs

“Easter eggs have a very long ancestry... the giving of real eggs, colored or gilded, at Easter, and also at pre-Christian Spring Celebrations, is infinitely older. Long before the Christian era, eggs were regarded as symbols of continuing life and resurrection. The ancient Persians, Greeks and Chinese exchanged them at their Spring Festivals...

“The custom of coloring eggs at Easter may well be as old as the festival itself, continuing with only a change of dedication from the earlier pagan usage” (Hole, pp. 61-62).

Easter Hare

And what about the Easter Hare who supposedly brings the colored eggs?

“[H]e was once sacred to the European Spring-Goddess whom we have already met under her Anglo-Saxon name of Eostre” (Hole, p. 69).

Hares don't lay eggs, but rabbits and eggs are both symbols of fertility. “But the principle everywhere is the same, and at this time, if at no other, the beautiful hare reappears in his ancient guise, as the living emblem of fertility, renewal, and the return of spring” (Hole, p. 70).

Sunrise Services

Professing Christians often celebrate Easter with a sunrise service. They think they are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. Once again, they are wrong.

Jesus rose from the grave just before sunset, three days and three nights after he was put there. He was buried on Wednesday evening and rose on Saturday just before sunset. To believe anything else is to reject the only sign that Jesus was the Christ (Mat. 12:39-40).

So what are these professing Christians worshiping at sunrise on Easter? Exactly what it looks like. The sun. God condemns this in Ezek. 8:16-17.

The entire Easter spring festival package, from Carnival to Easter Sunday, is warmed over paganism with a sprinkle of truth tossed in. God tells his people not to worship Him the way the pagans worshiped their gods (Deut. 12:30-32).

True Christians don't follow *the crowd*. They follow GOD. They put pagan practices behind them and observe the spring holy days *commanded in the Bible* and kept by God's people in Old and New Testaments: Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

What Is and Isn't Leavening?

As we strive to get all leavening out of our homes prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:15, 19), which begins at sundown on April 14, it helps to know what we are looking for. Ingredient lists can be confusing!

Leaven is an ingredient incorporated into bread dough which causes the dough to rise through the release of CO₂ through either a chemical process (such as baking powder or baking soda) or through a metabolic process of fermentation (such as yeast).

The following ingredients are leaven: **leaven, leavening** (Some processed foods just say “leaven” or “leavening”), **yeast** (including wild yeast in sourdough starter), **crackermeal** (crumbled crackers mixed with the meat in some cans of ravioli), **baking soda** [also listed as **sodium bicarbonate** (saleratus), **potassium bicarbonate** (potash), **ammonium carbonate** (baker's ammonium) or **ammonium bicarbonate**

(hart-shorn)], and **baking powder**.

Not leavening are: **autolyzed yeast** and **autolyzed yeast extract** (flavoring), **sodium phosphate** (used in cooked chicken) **corn meal** (corn flour in tamales), **torula yeast** (a dead yeast used for its nutritional value or to add flavor), **potassium carbonate** or **sodium carbonate** (found in dried Ramen noodle soups), **brewer's yeast** (a dead yeast used for nutritional value), **cream of tartar** (an acid often combined with baking soda), **tartrate powder** (a phosphate or sulfate powder usually added with cream of tartar), **alum** (a metallic double salt usually added with cream of tartar), **sorbitan monosterate** (flavor and texture enhancer), **polysorbate 60** (a preservative), **egg whites** (will cause dough to puff up with hot air but does not release carbon dioxide), and **steam or hot air** (such as in popovers or angel food cake—however, some store-bought angel food cakes have other leavening agents).

JOHN THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED

John is beaten for preaching Jesus; he meets the heretical Simon Magus and is introduced to the apostle Paul.

By Gregory Dullum
Part 19

Apostles Put on Trial

The high priest and Jewish leaders had arrested John and the other 11 apostles and had cast them into prison. During the night, they were released by an angel and told to go into the temple to continue preaching.

Imagine the surprise when the officers went to collect the prisoners and they were gone! They reported back to the Sanhedrin, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" (Acts 5:17-23).

The Sanhedrin didn't know what to make of the situation until someone told them that the prisoners were standing in the temple teaching the people (vv. 24-25).

As John and the others taught the people in the early morning light, they saw Jewish officers approach. They expected to be handled roughly after their escape, but there was no violence. The officers respectfully requested that they accompany them. The apostles didn't know the officers were afraid of the people; the officers thought if they mistreated the apostles, the crowd would stone them (v. 26).

John and Peter once again found themselves standing before the Jewish rulers. This time they were accompanied by the other 10 apostles.

The high priest spoke out: "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us!"

Peter and the other apostles (including John) replied, "We ought to obey God rather than man." But that's not all they said! They verbally cut the Jewish leaders with the following comments: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom YOU murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. We are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit, [which] God has given to those who obey Him" (vv. 27-32).

Infuriated by these comments, the council sought to kill the apostles. They would have killed them, if not for one council member named Gamaliel. He was a teacher of the law who was held in respect by all the people. He ordered the

apostles to be put out of the room while they discussed the situation.

John and the others waited outside while Gamaliel told the Council that if this church were not of God, it would fall apart on its own. But if God truly were behind it, they would be fighting against God! They all agreed with him and invited the apostles back into the room.

John and the others had left the room expecting the council to order their deaths. When they re-entered the room, the council had settled down. They no longer spoke of death. And yet, the apostles did not get off with *mere threats* this time! The council had them physically BEATEN.

Feeling pain surge through his body, John once again heard the council demand that they stop preaching in the name of Jesus. Then, they were released.

Apostles Return to Preaching

Physically sore, John and the others found a great joy in being released. Instead of being killed, they had suffered some blows and were freed! They were free to preach some more! It seemed as if nothing could stop them from preaching!

And as for their suffering, they considered it nothing compared to the beating Jesus had taken. They considered it an honor to share in his suffering. And they returned to their daily preaching in the temple (Acts 5:41-42).

From that time on, the Sanhedrin initiated no more persecution against the Church of God. It kept hands off. Unfortunately, this was not true for the Diaspora, the Jews who had been dispersed throughout the Middle East, Asia Minor, Europe and Africa. And it was not true for the Romans and other Gentiles.

Deacons Appointed

One cannot deny that Peter had a prominent position in the early church. His name is still mentioned *first* among the apostles. His *sermons are quoted* in the book of Acts. And although all the apostles performed miracles, people waited for *Peter's shadow* to pass over them to be healed.

However, Peter was not a LONE ruler, making all the important decisions. He was neither the first pope nor the first pastor general. He was one of 12, and it appears that *all 12 apostles were involved in making major decisions*. We see an ex-

ample of this as the office of deacon is created in the church.

Jews at that time were divided into two groups, and both made up the early church. There were *Hebrews*, who were descended from the tribe of Judah. They spoke Hebrew, retained the Hebrew lifestyle, and lived in Palestine. There also were *Hellenists*, who included proselytes from other religions, and Jews who had settled in foreign lands, adopting the Greek civilization and language.

John and the other apostles became aware of a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews in the church. The Hellenists claimed their widows were not getting their fair share of the daily distribution, which may have included alms but most likely was food.

Peter didn't solve the problem himself. Note what happened: "Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore brethren, *seek out from among you* seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom *we may appoint* over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word'" (Acts 6:1-4, emphasis added).

The *apostles* did NOT choose the seven deacons! It was up to the brethren to *nominate* candidates. WHO *appointed* them? The brethren had NO AUTHORITY to put the seven into office. They were involved in *the selection process*, but it was up to the ESTABLISHED CHURCH LEADERSHIP—the apostles—to appoint the deacons.

Once the seven candidates were selected by the brethren, they were brought before the twelve, who prayed and laid hands on each of them (vv. 5-6). By the laying on of hands, the seven candidates were ordained to the office of deacon.

Church Scattered

One of the deacons was Stephen, "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). He was "full of faith and power" and "did great wonders and signs among the people" (v.8).

Jews from the Diaspora disputed with Stephen, and the matter ended up before the Sanhedrin. Stephen preached a sermon, concluding with this accusation: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the

Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murdered, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-53). These were NOT words to "win friends and influence people," as Dale Carnegie would say. It won no friends among the Jews but it did influence them—it moved them to martyr Stephen (vv. 54-60).

Stephen was not the only victim. His martyrdom initiated a great persecution against the Jerusalem church, causing *all but the apostles* to flee Jerusalem.

"At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.... As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison" (Acts 8:1, 3).

John and the other 11 apostles remained in Jerusalem as more than 5,000 brethren scattered, spreading the truth as they went. "Therefore, those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (v. 4).

Peter & John Meet Simon Magus

Some time later, the apostles in Jerusalem heard that many Samaritans had welcomed the truth as a result of the powerful preaching and miracles performed by Philip, another of the seven deacons. The Samaritans had been baptized but had not yet received the holy spirit.

It was NOT Peter's decision as to what to do next. The decision was made by the *ruling body of the church*—the twelve—and both Peter and John SUBMITTED to that authority: "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, THEY SENT Peter and John to them" (Acts 8:14, emphasis added).

Once again, we see Peter and John working together. Earlier they had healed a lame man in the temple, prompting their arrest and imprisonment, and now they were being sent to Samaria to take care of matters there.

When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they "prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet [it] had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (vv. 15-16).

One of the newly baptized Samaritans was Simon Magus, a former magician,

who claimed to be someone great (vv. 9, 13). "Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given [note that the word is plural; through BOTH Peter and John the spirit was given], he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit'" (vv. 18-19).

John said nothing. The offer may have left him speechless. He probably couldn't believe what he had heard. Peter, on the other hand, always seemed to be quick-tongued. He told Simon, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity" (vv. 20-23).

Simon did NOT repent. He did not *change*. He merely replied, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me" (v. 24).

What became of Simon after this meeting with Peter and John?

He broke from the true church and started his own. He took some parts of the truth, which he had heard from Philip, and mixed them with paganism and other erroneous beliefs. He wove them into a religious system of his own. He traveled with a whore named Helen (perhaps the woman mentioned in John 4:9) and claimed they were a god and goddess.

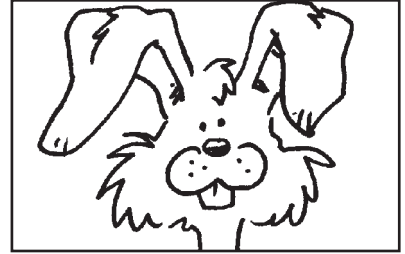
The church historian Eusebius (who lived approximately A.D. 263-340), tells us, "Simon, we are given to understand, was the prime author of every heresy. From his time to our own those who follow his lead, while pretending to accept that sober Christian philosophy through purity of life that has won universal fame, are as devoted as ever to the idolatrous superstition from which they have escaped: they prostrate themselves before pictures and images of Simon himself and his companion, the Helen already mentioned, and giving themselves to worshipping them with incense, sacrifices and libations" (*The History of the Church* by Eusebius, 1984, pp. 86-87).

The Dictionary of Christian Bibliography says Simon went to Rome A.D. 45 and established a false priesthood. He taught that everyone should love everyone, both spiritually and physically. He was called Jupiter and Helen was called

JOHN

Continued on Page 6

Fun Fact



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS
German immigrants get the credit for bringing the symbol of the Easter rabbit to America.

Witerature

Wit and wisdom to complement the truths of the Holy Bible can be found in secular writings.

You, Inc. by Harry and Christine Beckwith, Warner Business Books, 2007, p. 180.

Act, Don't Just Hear

"We assume that if we've heard something, we know it, and if we know it, we are acting upon it.

"But people constantly repeat advice because all of us constantly ignore it.

"This fact actually is a phenomenon: It's a form of magical thinking. We believe that when we hear something, we learn it, and that once we learn it, we believe we act on it.

"We don't.

"You will find a parallel to this in at least three-fourths of all companies. They have made a plan. Because of this, they believe they are executing the plan.

"But knowing is not doing. And knowing and thinking never is enough."

Rom. 2:13, James 1:22

Quotable Quotes

"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders but they have never failed to imitate them."

—James Baldwin

Memory Scripture

"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."

—Prov. 29:15

John

Continued from Page 5

Minerva. He began teaching antinomianism, that is, he began teaching against God's law. He claimed demons inspired the law to bind people. In other words, God's law was not to be kept.

After encountering Simon, what did Peter and John do?

"So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans" (Acts 8:25).

As time goes on, we have fewer details of John's life. The Book of Acts turns its focus to the life of Paul. Paul (originally called Saul) was a great persecutor of the church until Jesus Himself struck him blind while he was on his way to Damascus in about the year 33. After his conversion, Paul went to Arabia for a period of time, and was probably taught personally by Jesus (Gal. 1:12, 17, 1 Cor. 9:1). He then returned to Damascus, where he preached Christ for three years, until Jews tried to kill him (Gal. 1:18, Acts 9:19-23). Paul fled to Jerusalem, but was NOT welcomed by the brethren. They remembered him as a persecutor, going door-to-door, casting them into prison (Acts 9:26, 8:3). They *didn't believe* he had become a TRUE DISCIPLE.

John Meets Paul

John probably met Paul at this time (about A.D. 37), thanks to Barnabas. "Barnabas took him [Paul] and brought him to the apostles" (Acts 9:27).

John and the others listened to Paul's comments as he addressed them. "And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus" (v. 27).

John and the others accepted Paul as one of them and they spent some time together. "So he [Paul] was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus [his home town]" (vv. 28-30).

A time of peace settled over the church, and that time was used to prosper and grow. "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied" (v. 31).

(To be continued!)



Obama Policies Weaken U.S. Economy, Military

"President Obama on Tuesday [Feb. 18] ordered the development of tough new fuel standards for the nation's fleet of heavy-duty trucks as part of what aides say will be an increasingly muscular and unilateral campaign to tackle climate change through the use of the president's executive power.

"The new regulations, to be drafted by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Transportation Department by March 2015 and completed a year later so they are in place before Mr. Obama leaves office, are the latest in a series of actions intended to cut back on greenhouse gases without the sort of comprehensive legislation the president failed to push through Congress in his first term ("Obama Orders New Efficiency for Big Trucks" by Peter Baker and Coral Davenport, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, Feb. 18, 2014, pp. 1-2).

Although billed as a move to help the environment, man-made global warming (renamed climate change) is a hoax and action taken to prevent climate change fulfills a hidden agenda to weaken America.

Because of our disobedience to God, He promises to break the pride of our power (Lev. 26:19). Through this EPA regulation, Obama can help weaken this nation, eventually preparing us for national captivity (vv. 26-35).

In another story, we see the pride of our power broken *militarily*.

"Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel plans to shrink the United States Army to its smallest force since before the World War II buildup and eliminate an entire class of Air Force attack jets in a new spending proposal that officials describe as the first Pentagon budget to aggressively push the military off the war footing adopted after the terror attacks of 2001....

"A result, the officials argue, will be a military capable of defeating any adversary, but too small for protracted foreign occupations.

"The officials acknowledge that budget cuts will impose greater risk on armed forces if they are again ordered to carry

out two large-scale military actions at the same time. Success would take longer, they say, and there would be a larger number of casualties. Officials also say that a smaller military could invite adventurism by adversaries" ("Pentagon to Shrink Army to Pre-World War II Level" by Thom Shanker and Helene Cooper, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, Feb. 23, 2014, p. 1).

Saudis Call Moslem Brotherhood Terrorists

"Saudi Arabia on Friday [March 7] declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization....

"The Saudi decree equates the Brotherhood, which has long denounced violence, with widely designated terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and the Syria-based Nusra Front" ("Saudis Put Terrorist Label on Muslim Brotherhood" by David Kirkpatrick, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, March 7, 2014, p. 1).

The Muslim Brotherhood was behind the unrest and several government overthrows across North Africa from Egypt to Tunisia. It may be the impetus in forming an Arab or Muslim "king of the South" that will appear at the end time (Dan. 11:40-43).

Russia Threatens

"Russia massed troops and armored vehicles in at least three regions along Ukraine's eastern border on Thursday [March 13], alarming the interim Ukraine government about a possible invasion and significantly escalating tensions in the crisis between the Kremlin and the West" ("Russian Troops Mass at Border With Ukraine" by Steven Lee Myers and Alison Smale, *The New York Times*, www.nytimes.com, March 13, 2014, p. 1).

One of the signs leading up to Christ's return is that of "wars and rumors of wars" (Mat. 24:3, 6-7). Russia may be reuniting with former parts of the U.S.S.R. to form part of the "kings from the East" that will appear at the end time (Dan. 11:40, 44; Rev. 16:12).