

By His Stripes...

Why did Jesus have to suffer from 'stripes' before being crucified?

By Gregory Dullum

During the Passover service, we sit silently as the minister prays over a single piece of unleavened bread, and then breaks it into little pieces. As the bread snaps and cracks and crunches into little pieces, what goes through our minds? Do we picture the body of Christ being torn apart on his last Passover before He was crucified?

Why was Jesus WOUNDED and BRUISED, PIERCED THROUGH and CRUSHED? Why did He have to suffer from STRIPES? And what do we mean by the STRIPES of Jesus?

There are seven reasons why Jesus had to suffer before He was crucified. They are:

1. To fulfill prophecy (Ps. 22:12-18, Isa. 52:14, 53:3);
2. As a type of Passover bread (1 Cor. 11:23-24);
3. For our healing (1 Peter 2:24);
4. Because sin has physical consequences and the sin of the world was upon Him (Ps. 89:30-31);
5. To learn obedience (Heb. 5:7-8);
6. To understand our suffering (Heb. 4:15-16); and
7. To set an example for us (1 Peter 2:21-23). If you would like more details on these seven reasons, see the April 2006 *Sabbath Scoop*.

This month we'll focus on just ONE of those SEVEN reasons: for our healing. Notice the first mention of this in the Bible:

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

If we read this verse the way it's written in the *New King James Version*, we might think this is talking about some lofty spiritual experience Christ was having. In fact, there are people who spiritualize this whole ex-

The Roman scourge that was used on Christ was made of two or three leather thongs fixed to a handle and terminating in a number of small pieces of zinc or iron attached to them at intervals.

Drawing by Greg Dullum

perience away. Let's see what it really says.

"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him" (v. 3).

A Man of Sorrows

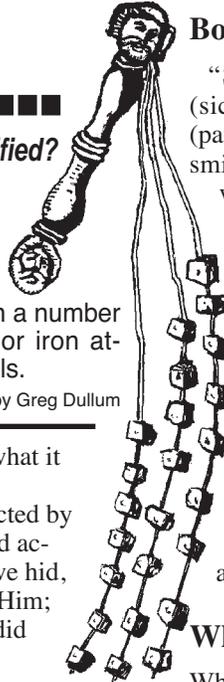
Why was Jesus called "A Man of sorrows?" Was He sad? Did He cry a lot? Jesus was sad at times, it's true. The shortest verse in the Bible says, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). But He was NOT a MAN OF *sadness*.

According to the marginal note to Isa. 53:3 in the *NKJV*, sorrows = pain. Jesus was a man of PAIN. We all know what pain is! It's a very physical experience! It's when our nerves SCREAM OUT to warn the body that something bad is happening to it! Pain causes our muscles to react involuntarily to stop the pain. If we touch something hot, we'll pull quickly away.

Acquainted With Grief

The next phrase in Isa. 53:3 says Jesus also was "acquainted with GRIEF."

What is meant by "grief"? Was Jesus sad because someone close to Him had died? If we examine the marginal note, we'll see that the word translated "grief" literally means "SICKNESS." Was Jesus ever sick? We have no record of it. When was He acquainted with sickness? We'll see as we read on.



Borne our Grievs & Wounded

"Surely He has borne our griefs (sicknesses) and carried our sorrows (pains); yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions..." (vv. 4-5a). The marginal note says "wounded" could be translated, "pierced through."

Continuing, "He was bruised for our iniquities..." (v. 5b). The marginal note says "bruised" could be translated "crushed."

Continuing, "The chastisement for our peace was upon Him" (v. 5c). What does that mean? We'll answer that in a moment. The verse concludes, "And by His stripes we are healed."

What Is Meaning of 'Healed'?

What does it mean when it says we are "healed"? Some say this is ONLY a *spiritual* healing (a conversion of the mind; a healing of our spiritual condition) and NOT a promise of *physical* healing (repairing damage to physical tissue in our bodies). What does the Old Testament reveal about the meaning of this word?

The word "HEALED" is the *same* Hebrew word *every time* we read the word "healed" in the Old Testament, except for one verse. It is no. 7495 in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. It is the word *raphah*. It means "to mend by stitching." Figuratively, it can mean: cure, cause to heal, physician, repair thoroughly, and to make whole.

Is Isa. 53:5 talking about ONLY a spiritual healing? It seems very unlikely, considering how many times physical healing takes place in the Old Testament, and how rarely anyone is spiritually healed. Does the New Testament cast any additional light on this question?

Notice some examples of healing which Jesus performed when He walked the earth. "Now when Jesus

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had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she arose and served them. When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, '*He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses*'" (Mat. 8:14-17).

Were ALL these people healed *spiritually*? Probably not. Everyone healed did not suddenly become disciples of Christ. They were healed of their physical ailments and returned to their everyday Jewish lives. And yet, the New Testament says that Christ's healing of these people's physical ailments is a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4-5. This passage in Isaiah, therefore, is indeed talking about PHYSICAL healing.

Herbert W. Armstrong taught this principle. In *Mystery of the Ages* (1985), p. 212, he wrote, "This indescribable scourging was endured that believers might be healed from physical transgression, sickness or disease (Isa. 53:5, 1 Pet. 2:24). What a terrible price our own very Maker paid that we might, by believing, be healed. Yet nearly all professing believers totally ignore what their Savior provided for them."

By His stripes we are healed!

What Were these 'Stripes'?

What were these "stripes"? They were not zebra stripes, sergeant's stripes or highway stripes. They were a RIPPING OPEN of the body of Jesus Christ.

What does the word "healed" literally mean? STITCHING UP! Can we see the contrast in the statement, "by His stripes we are healed"? Isaiah's words tell us: By the ripping open of Jesus' body, we are stitched up. By the *ripping open* of Jesus' body, we are *stitched up*. By the ripping open of JESUS' BODY, WE are stitched up.

Jesus DIED so we can LIVE. He also was RIPPED OPEN so we can be STITCHED UP. He suffered and *paid the price* that we may be *healed*. He suffered so we don't have to! We can be miraculously healed! We can have our pain removed!

Other Translations

Let's read Isa. 53:4-5 in other translations. They help bring out this meaning.

"But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should

have borne... We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received" (*Good News Bible*).

"He suffered and endured great pain for us, but we thought his suffering was punishment from God. He was wounded and crushed because of our sins; by taking our punishment, he made us completely well" (*Contemporary English Version*).

"Surely He has borne our griefs—sickness, weakness and distress—and carried our sorrows and pain [of punishment]... v. 5: But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our guilt and iniquities; the chastisement *needful to obtain peace and well-being* for us was upon Him and with the stripes that *wounded* Him we are healed and made whole" (*Amplified Bible*).

Sin carries with it the penalty of death (Rom. 6:23). But that's NOT ALL. There often is a PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT OF CHASTISEMENT as well. For example, if we commit the sins of fornication, adultery, or homosexual acts, we could get AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases.

Notice this promise from God regarding David's descendants: "If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with *stripes*" (Ps. 89:30-32, emphasis added).

Sometimes sin carries a physical punishment—stripes. Sometimes sin causes sickness. Sometimes God uses sickness to punish us; to get our attention; to chastise us; and to correct us.

Chastisement for Our Peace

Remember as a child when we got in trouble, and our mother said, "You just wait until your Father gets home!" Were we at peace? No! We were anxious. We knew we were going to get a spanking or some type of correction or chastisement when Dad got home. We were not at peace until after the spanking, after the punishment, after the chastisement.

For us today, the spanking doesn't have to come! We can repent of our sins and Jesus gets *spanked* FOR US, in a manner of speaking. The chastisement NEEDFUL TO OBTAIN peace and well-being for us was upon Him.

Jesus PAID THE PRICE for our healing.

What is the price of healing? Go to a doctor and ask him what it would cost to heal a broken leg or a broken hip or whatever. And he might tell you something like, \$30,000.

If we went to an elder in the church when sick, and asked to be anointed (James 5:14-15), and he replied, "I will

anoint you, but it will cost \$30,000," what would we say? We could say, "The price has already been paid by Jesus' stripes." And he could check the register and say, "Yes, you're right. The price for your healing has already been paid."

Dake's Annotated Reference Bible says that Jesus was "made sick for men as He was made sin for them. The idea is that He became the sick offering as well as the sin offering for man. ... He did not personally experience all the sicknesses and diseases, but He became sick in the sense of becoming an offering for sickness. He made atonement for sin and all its effects. Both sin and sickness were part of the one curse, and both became a part of the one redemption. Christ atoned for and made provision for sickness to be healed, as well as for sin to be forgiven."

Conclusion

On His last Passover, Jesus took the bread, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24). His body was broken FOR US. Jesus willingly suffered *so we don't have to*.

There are numerous lessons we can learn from the broken bread at Passover. There are at least seven reasons why Jesus had to suffer before He died. We focused on just one lesson. Let's never forget this part of Christ's sacrifice, especially when we find ourselves sick or in pain.

Never hesitate to ask an elder for anointing. Don't think that by asking for healing, we add another blow to Jesus' body. It doesn't work like that. His suffering is over. It has been for 1,982 years. Just as He DIED ONCE for all mankind, he SUFFERED ONCE for ALL our healings.

Remember this always: by his stripes we are healed.

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JOHN THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED

John was one of the privileged three to witness Christ's transfiguration.

By Gregory Dullum
Part 6

Disciples Affirm Messiahship

There were times during the training of the 12 disciples, when John heard Peter say the wrong thing and Jesus took great exception! We are almost to the point when Peter utters one of these statements, and receives the strongest correction of his training.

And then, there were other times when Peter responded to his Master's question with EXACTLY the *right words*. One of these occasions comes first.

John and the other disciples traveled with Christ from Bethsaida Julias, a town on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee, to the area of Caesarea Philippi. A quick check of a Bible Atlas will show us that Caesarea Philippi was about 22 miles northeast of Bethsaida Julias.

Caesarea Philippi was "a town in the northern part of Palestine, about 120 miles from Jerusalem, 50 from Damascus, and 30 from Tyre, near the foot of Mt. Hermon.... It was the northern limit of Christ's travels in the Holy Land" ("Caesarea Philippi," *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* by Merrill F. Unger, 1988, p. 191).

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' " (Mat. 16:13-16).

These were *exactly* the RIGHT WORDS for Peter to utter!

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I say to you that you are Peter (the Greek word is *petros*, meaning a small stone), and on this rock (the Greek word is *petra*, meaning a giant crag—Christ was referring to himself) I will build my church, and the gates of hades (hell—or the grave) shall not prevail against it' " (vv. 17-18). Some like to think the church was built upon Peter. But Peter was just a man. Christ built the church upon Himself. Peter was a part of the church—a small part—just one stone of many in the foundation. Jesus Christ was the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20).

Jesus didn't stop there. He had more to tell Peter. "And I will give you (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Mat. 16:19).

When the church was founded on Pentecost A.D. 31, Peter used those keys to open the doors to the kingdom to the Jews, leading them to repentance (Acts 2:14-41). He later opened the doors to the kingdom for Gentiles (Acts 10:9-28, 44-48).

Jesus, who had been speaking specifically to Peter, the leader of the disciples, then turned to them all and gave them all instructions. "Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that he was Jesus the Christ" (v. 20).

Jesus had very plainly and openly discussed who He was with his disciples. John and the others may have assumed it was time to proclaim this to the world. Christ warned them that it was *not yet* time. That time would come AFTER his crucifixion, which is what Jesus spoke about next.

Jesus Predicts Death, Resurrection

"From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Mat. 16:21).

Peter probably was feeling pretty good about himself, the way he had just answered Christ's question and had been praised by Christ. He saw another opportunity to show off his loyalty, hoping for more good words from his Master.

"Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!'" (v. 22). If Peter was expecting praise from Christ, he was shocked at the response he received!

"But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men'" (v. 23).

That deflated Peter's balloon!

Christ's words to Peter were similar to those He said to Satan, when He was tempted in the wilderness (Luke 4:8). Christ saw in Peter's words a temptation from Satan—a temptation to AVOID the suffering which He didn't want to endure (Mat. 26:39).

Although Peter uttered the words, John and the other disciples held the same sen-

timent. In Mark's account, Christ turned and looked at the disciples before responding to Peter (Mark 8:33). He undoubtedly saw the same determination on all their faces—a determination to protect Him from what must come to pass.

Did Jesus call Peter "Satan"? Probably not. He may have been speaking *through* Peter to Satan, who had influenced Peter to offer protection from his future suffering. Or, there is another understanding of these words explained in the fictional book, *The Gospel According to Judas* by Jeffrey Archer (2007):

"Jesus' words, *Get behind me*, were used simply to remind his disciples of their calling. When he had first come into their lives, he said: *Follow me*, which Judas understood to mean to walk behind him, for he was their Master.

"Jesus was telling his disciples to follow him without question, wherever he believed that path lay; this despite the fact that he must have known they could not begin to understand his reason for giving such a command.

"Judas also understood exactly what Jesus had meant to convey when he uttered the word *Satan* in their presence.

"In the Aramaic that Jesus spoke when addressing his followers, the word *satana* means 'stumbling block,' or someone who opposes the ways of God.

"So when Jesus said, *Get behind me, Satan*, Judas understood his words to mean: *You are stumbling blocks to my path, preventing me from carrying out God's holy will, because your wishes only fulfill the desires of mankind and you fail to understand the ways of God*" (pp. 39-40).

Christ then told John and the other disciples that they, too, must be willing to give up their lives for the kingdom of God. He said, "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Mat. 16:25).

Jesus then gave his disciples a view of the future, more than 2,000 years beyond his death and resurrection: "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He shall reward each according to his works" (v. 27).

Jesus' disciples—all of them, from the first century to the very last century—will receive rewards for their good works when Jesus Christ returns to this earth

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(Rev. 22:12).

John and the others did not know Christ's return would be about 2,000 years into the future. When they finally realized He was indeed going to die, be resurrected, and come back, they thought it would happen in their lifetime. Jesus' next statement added to this misunderstanding. He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Mat. 16:28).

Today, Jesus has *not yet* COME in his kingdom and ALL the apostles are dead! Did Jesus lie? What did He mean? To know the answer, we must simply keep reading the account in Matthew.

John Sees Christ Glorified

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, brought them up on a high mountain by themselves, and was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him" (Mat. 17:1-3).

This is one of the times when we see Peter, James and John given special privileges above the other disciples. Peter was their leader; James and John were Christ's cousins and enjoyed a special relationship with Him.

What these three saw on the mountain appeared to be real to the disciples. It seemed so real that Peter suggested they make three tabernacles; one for Christ, one for Moses and one for Elijah. However, this was NOT real! Moses and Elijah were dead and buried, awaiting the resurrection at Christ's second coming (John 3:13, Eccles. 9:10). What they saw was a VISION (Mat. 17:9). It was a VISION of the time when Christ will return to this earth in a glorified state, and the saints from the past will rise from their graves and be given eternal life (1 Cor. 15:20-23, 1 Thes. 4:13-17).

This vision, given to "some" of the disciples (not all of them) was the fulfillment of Jesus' words in Mat. 16:28.

Notice what else happened during this vision that *only* Peter, James and John experienced:

"While he [Peter] was still speaking [about making tabernacles], behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Mat. 17:5).

Peter had just affirmed to Christ that he

knew He was the Son of God. James and John were Jesus' cousins and probably had some understanding of who He was as they grew up together. Now, suddenly, these three were chosen to hear their understanding CONFIRMED from God's own lips: "This is My beloved Son!" This should have cleared away any shadow of doubt they may have had.

In addition, they were commanded by God to "HEAR Him." Do you think these three paid closer attention to Jesus' words from this day forward?

John, James and Peter were scared to death by the cloud and loud, booming voice emanating from it. "And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid" (v. 6).

Face down on the ground with their eyes closed, John and the other disciples felt a tap on their shoulders. They heard Jesus' voice telling them, "Arise, and do not be afraid." They looked up and saw Jesus only. They got up, brushed themselves off, and headed back down the mountain.

There was no doubt in the disciples' mind that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. He was there beside them, walking down the mountain. A question came to mind. They asked Jesus why the scribes said ELIJAH must come before the Messiah. There had been NO appearance of Elijah; Jesus had come on the scene without a resurrected Elijah preparing the way for Him.

Christ replied that the scribes CORRECT-

LY understood what the Old Testament said. The scriptures plainly say Elijah must come before Christ would appear. Then He explained that John the Baptist came in the office of Elijah. He was NOT the Elijah of the Old Testament—he was a prophet who came with the power and authority of Elijah, preparing the way for Christ's coming. The question was settled in their minds (vv. 10-13).

Healing of Demoniac

While Jesus had been up the mountain with Peter James and John, a multitude had gathered around the other nine disciples. A man had brought his demon-possessed son to the disciples to be healed. They had tried to cast the demon out but couldn't.

When Jesus cast out the demon, the boy appeared to be dead! Perhaps he was dead—and Jesus brought him back to life as He had Jairus' daughter (Mat. 9:23-25). Jesus took the boy by the hand and raised him up, healed.

The disciples asked Jesus why they could not cast out this demon. They had cast out many other demons in the past. Jesus told them that this demon was of a different kind or higher rank. It took a greater FAITH to cast him out. Then He told them how to acquire that faith: "However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Mat. 17:14-

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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 March 25, 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).

In This Modern World, There Are People Committing 'A Greater Abomination'

By Gregory Dullum

While he sat in Babylonian captivity, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision from God, showing him some of the abominations committed by people in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel wrote, "And He said to me, 'Turn again, and you will see greater abominations that they are doing.' 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" (Ezek. 8:12-14).

Last month we saw that by observing Lent, professing Christians *unwittingly* continue a pagan tradition that God calls an ABOMINATION—weeping for Tammuz!

This month we will see that professing Christians observe an even greater abomination! Let's continue reading in Ezekiel:

"Then He [God] said to me, 'Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.' So He brought me to 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 sun, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east. Then 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?... 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.'" (Ezek. 8:15-18).

Here were men with their backs toward God's house, worshiping the sun at sunrise! What an affront to Almighty God! No wonder this was a reason that God would refuse to hear their cries when they got in trouble!

Today there are millions of professing Christians who are doing no different than the men Ezekiel saw in this vision—they turn their backs on God and worship the sun with Easter sunrise services!

There is no command in the Bible to celebrate Easter. Christ never told anyone to commemorate his resurrection. However, He left clear instructions to keep Passover—a FEAST OF GOD which commemorates Christ's death (Mat. 26:19-20, 26-29; Mark 14:16-17, 22-25; Luke 22:13-19; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). Professing Christians today turn their back on Christ's clear instructions to observe Passover and instead attend sunrise ser-

vices to celebrate Easter.

Easter has its roots in pagan worship. It was a pagan celebration of spring, filled with fertility rites (such as rabbits and eggs) that the pagans thought would help ensure good crops in the new growing season. When the Roman Catholic church could not force the pagan converts to give up their spring festival, the church assigned new meaning to it—changing sun worship to Son worship, and claiming this pagan festival of spring now honors Christ's resurrection.

"Christianity, when it reached the Teutons, incorporated in its celebration of the great Christian feast day many of the heathen rites and customs which accompanied their observance of the spring festival. That the festival of the resurrection occurred in the spring, that it celebrated the triumph of life over death, made it easy for the church to identify with this occasion the most joyous festival of the Teutons, held in honour of the death of winter, the birth of a new year and the return of the sun...

"The customs and symbols associated with the observance of Easter have ancient origins, not only in the Teutonic rites of spring but also far back into antiquity.... [T]he conception of the egg as a symbol of fertility and of renewed life goes back to the ancient Egyptians and Persians, who also had the custom of colouring and eating eggs during their spring festival....

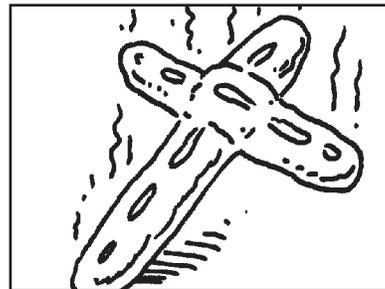
"Like the Easter egg, the Easter hare, now an accepted part of the Easter traditional Easter story, came to Christianity from antiquity" ("Easter," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1959, vol. 7, p. 859).

Even the modern name of the holiday, "Easter," has nothing to do with the sun rising in the east. It comes from the name of a pagan goddess: "Easter is named for the goddess of spring, Oestre, or Ostara" (*The Pagan Book of Days* by Nigel Pennick, 1992, p. 60).

God wants his people to observe his feasts and holy days. They are not supposed to make up their own (such as one marking Christ's resurrection), and they are not to mix pagan customs with true beliefs (Deut. 12:28-32; 2 Cor. 6:15-18).

Observing Easter instead of Passover is doing the same thing these ancient men did in Ezekiel's vision—turning their backs to God and performing pagan sun worship!

Fun Fact



Drawing and Fun Fact are courtesy of NAPS. Hot cross buns were first baked in England to be served on Good Friday. [The custom originates in cakes baked for the Queen of Heaven (Jer. 7:18, 44:19)—Editor]

Witerature

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

Ah-Choo! The Uncommon Life of Your Common Cold by Jennifer Ackerman, Twelve, 2010, p. 98.

Drink a Little Wine

"To [Psychologist Sheldon] Cohen's surprise, the two studies he conducted at the CCU showed that drinking moderately—one or two drinks a day—actually diminished susceptibility [to colds]. Nondrinkers were at greater risk of getting a cold. It's not clear why. 'It could be that the types of people who drink are less susceptible for other reasons' Cohen suggests. Or there could be a direct link. Alcohol might somehow limit the replication of viruses, or it might inhibit inflammatory processes. Either way, Cohen and his colleagues don't encourage drinking as a prophylactic or cure for the common cold, as the risks of consuming more than a drink or two a day far exceed the benefits in cold reduction."

Ps. 104:15, 1 Tim. 5:23, Isa. 5:11

Quotable Quote

"The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; and the pessimist fears this is true."

—James Branch Cabell

Memory Scripture

"For bodily exercise profits a little...."

—1 Tim. 4:8

John

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21, Mark 9:14-29).

Jesus Again Predicts His Death

While everyone was marveling about the healing, Jesus told his disciples that He must die, but after three days He would be raised back to life. Jesus may have been using the death (or near death) and resurrection (or revival) of the boy to teach a lesson about his own death and resurrection. His statement didn't offer the disciples hope; it only made them sad. They didn't understand about Christ's resurrection and they were afraid to ask what He meant (Mat. 17:22-23, Mark 9:30-32, Luke 9:43-44).

Jesus Pays Temple Tax

Jesus and the disciples returned to Capernaum. Temple-keepers came and asked Peter if Christ paid the half-shekel temple tax. Peter didn't know the right answer, but knowing that Christ was not a law-breaker or tax evader, he assured these men that He did pay the tax.

Christ explained to Peter that as the Son of God, he was not required to pay a toll or tribute to his Father's house (the temple). However, so as not to cause the temple-keepers to stumble, Christ ordered Peter to go to the Sea, catch a fish, and find a shekel in the fish's mouth, with which he would pay the temple tax for the two of them (Mat. 17:24-27).

Wanting to Be Greatest

The disciples disputed among themselves which one of them would be the greatest. Why? Was it because Christ had taken Peter, James and John up the mountain for the transfiguration and left the other nine behind? Was it because the nine were unable to cast out the demon? It's likely these events entered into the discussion.

Jesus didn't defend his decision to select the three for special privileges and He didn't accuse the nine of being any less important. Instead, He taught them all a lesson. He set a little child in their midst and said they ALL needed to become *humble* and *teachable* like the child if they wished to enter the kingdom of God (Mat. 18:1-5, Mark 9:33-37, Luke 9:46-48).

Did John take this instruction to heart? He probably did. He later was called "the disciple whom Jesus loved," perhaps because he was more humble and more teachable than the others. How well did John take correction? He was about to find out!

(To be continued!)



Pope Benedict XVI Announces Retirement

"Pope Benedict XVI's surprise announcement on Monday [Feb. 11] that he will resign on Feb. 28 sets the stage for a succession battle that is likely to determine the future course of a church troubled by scandal and declining faith....

"Citing advanced years and infirmity, Benedict became the first pope in six centuries to resign. Vatican officials said they hope to have a new pope in place by Easter....

"Many Vatican watchers suspect that the cardinals will choose someone with better management skills and a more personal touch than the bookish Benedict, someone who can extend the church's reach to new constituencies, particularly to the young people of Europe, for whom the church is now largely irrelevant, and to Latin America and Africa, where evangelical movements are fast encroaching.... ("Successor to Benedict Will lead a Church at a Crossroads" by Rachel Donado and Elisabetta Povoledo, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Feb. 11, 2013, pp. 1-3).

Many years ago, a Catholic known as St. Malachy "traveled to Rome where he presented Pope Innocent II with a list of all future popes until the end of the world. However, it was not until 1595 that Dom Arnold de Wyon, a Benedictine historian, discovered the list in the Vatican archives and published it. The forecasts are in the form of 112 Latin epigrams which identify all the Popes from Celestine II (1143-44) to the last Pope of all. After John Paul II, the list gives only two Popes" (*Prophecies for the New Millennium* by James Manning, 1997, p. 60).

The motto for Pope Benedict XVI was "Gloria Olivae" or "the glory of the olive." Benedictines are known as the Olivetans, and this pope took the name "Benedict."

The last pope, according to Malachy, is "Petrus Romanus" or "Peter the Roman." The following prediction is made: "In the final persecution, the seat of the Holy Roman Church will be occupied by Peter the Roman, who will feed the flock through many tribula-

tions: after which the city of seven hills will be destroyed and the formidable judge shall judge his people" (*Apocalypse WOW, A Memoir for the End of Time* by James Fin Garner, pp. 43-44).

Is there any significance to Malachy's prophecy? It's possible that Satan influenced Malachy (or whoever wrote it) and there could be some truth to it. When Saul consulted the medium at En Dor in 1 Samuel 28, the medium conjured up a demon that looked like the dead Samuel and *he foretold Saul's death* in battle with the Philistines.

How accurate is Malachy's prophecy? *Reader's Digest* published a book, *Mysteries of the Unexplained* (1982). On page 16, this book claims that Malachy's prophecies are actually a *forgery* written about 450 years after he died.

Nevertheless, this article says of the phrases accompanying each pope: "Some are opaque, and others are strikingly accurate." It then relates how 10 descriptions accurately portrayed 10 popes who have reigned since 1595—AFTER the "forgery" was written.

We cannot know for sure the accuracy of Malachy's prophecy. But it is interesting to note that he saw *one more pope* before Christ returns. *If there is truth* to this prophecy, we are CLOSE to the return of Christ.

Obama Weakens U.S.

U.S. President Barack Obama wants to cut the U.S. arsenal of deployed nuclear weapons from 1,700 to 1,000 ("Obama to Renew Drive for Cuts in Nuclear Arms" by David E. Sanger, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Feb. 10, 2013, p. 1).

This is happening at the same time North Korea confirmed it had conducted its third nuclear test ("North Korea Confirms It Conducted 3rd Nuclear Test" by David E. Sanger and Choe Sang-Hun, *The New York Times*, nytimes.com, Feb. 11, 2013, p. 1).

The U.S. is losing the pride of its military power (Lev. 26:19) and is heading for national captivity as punishment for its sins (vv. 31-35) at a time when others are increasing their military strength. North Korea may be part of the "kings of the east" at the time of Christ's return (Dan. 11:44, Rev. 16:12-16).