

Easter  
Doctrines of Men  
or  
Commandments of God

Brothers and Sisters, I come to you not to condemn you for what you have been taught your whole lives, but as a watchman to sound the trumpet of warning, that you may take action.

### *Ezekiel 33*

- 1. Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,*
- 2. Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:*
- 3. If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;*
- 4. Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.*
- 5. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.*
- 6. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.*
- 7. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.*

## Easter

Easter is a day that is honored by nearly all of contemporary Christianity and is used to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The holiday often involves a church service at sunrise, a feast which includes an "Easter Ham", decorated eggs and stories about rabbits.

Those who love truth learn to ask questions, and many questions must be asked regarding the holiday of Easter.

Is it truly the day when Jesus arose from the dead? Where did all of the strange customs come from, which have nothing to do with the resurrection of our Saviour?

The purpose of this tract is to help answer those questions, and to help those who seek truth to draw their own conclusions.

The first thing we must understand is that professing Christians were not the only ones who celebrated a festival called "Easter."

"Ishtar", which is pronounced "Easter" was a day that commemorated the resurrection of one of their gods that they called "Tammuz", who was believed to be the only begotten son of the moon-goddess and the sun-god.

In those ancient times, there was a man named Nimrod, who was the grandson of one of Noah's son named Ham.

Ham had a son named Cush who married a woman named Semiramis. Cush and Semiramis then had a son named him "Nimrod."

After the death of his father, Nimrod married his own mother and became a powerful King.

The Bible tells of of this man, Nimrod, in *Genesis 10:8-10* as follows: "*And Cush begat Nimrod: he*

*began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar."*

Nimrod became a god-man to the people and Semiramis, his wife and mother, became the powerful Queen of ancient Babylon.

Nimrod was eventually killed by an enemy, and his body was cut in pieces and sent to various parts of his kingdom.

Semiramis had all of the parts gathered, except for one part that could not be found.

That missing part was his reproductive organ. Semiramis claimed that Nimrod could not come back to life without it and told the people of Babylon that Nimrod had ascended to the sun and was now to be called "Baal", the sun god.

Queen Semiramis also proclaimed that Baal would be present on earth in the form of a flame, whether candle or lamp, when used in worship.

Semiramis was creating a mystery religion, and with the help of Satan, she set herself up as a goddess. Semiramis claimed that she was immaculately conceived.

She taught that the moon was a goddess that went through a 28 day cycle and ovulated when full.

She further claimed that she came down from the moon in a giant moon egg that fell into the Euphrates River.

This was to have happened at the time of the first full moon after the spring equinox.

Semiramis became known as "Ishtar" which is pronounced "Easter", and her moon egg became known as "Ishtar's" egg."

Ishtar soon became pregnant and claimed that it was the rays of the sun-god Baal that caused her to conceive.

The son that she brought forth was named Tammuz.

Tammuz was noted to be especially fond of rabbits, and they became sacred in the ancient religion, because Tammuz was believed to be the son of the sun-god, Baal. Tammuz, like his supposed father, became a hunter.

The day came when Tammuz was killed by a wild pig.

Queen Ishtar told the people that Tammuz was now ascended to his father, Baal, and that the two of them would be with the worshipers in the sacred candle or lamp flame as Father, Son and Spirit.

Ishtar, who was now worshiped as the "Mother of God and Queen of Heaven", continued to build her mystery religion.

The queen told the worshipers that when Tammuz was killed by the wild pig, some of his blood fell on the stump of an evergreen tree, and the stump grew into a full new tree overnight. This made the evergreen tree sacred by the blood of Tammuz.

She also proclaimed a forty day period of time of sorrow each year prior to the anniversary of the death of Tammuz.

During this time, no meat was to be eaten.

Worshipers were to meditate upon the sacred mysteries of Baal and Tammuz, and to make the sign of the "T" in front of their hearts as they worshiped.

They also ate sacred cakes with the marking of a "T" or cross on the top.

Every year, on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, a celebration was made.

It was Ishtar's Sunday and was celebrated with rabbits and eggs.

Ishtar also proclaimed that because Tammuz was killed by a pig, that a pig must be eaten on that Sunday.

By now, the readers of this tract should have made the connection that paganism has infiltrated the contemporary "Christian" churches, and further study indicates that this paganism came in by way of the Roman Catholic System.

The truth is that Easter has nothing whatsoever to do with the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also know that Easter can be as much as three weeks away from the Passover, because the pagan holiday is always set as the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox.

Some have wondered why the word "Easter" is in the the King James Bible.

It is because *Acts, 12,4. And when he (Herod) had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.* The true Passover and pagan Easter sometimes coincide, but in some years, they are a great distance apart.

So much more could be said, and we have much more information for you, if you are a seeker of the truth.

We know that the Bible tells us in *John 4:24, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."*

The truth is that the forty days of Lent, eggs, rabbits, hot cross buns and the Easter ham have everything to do with the ancient pagan religion of Mystery Babylon. These are all anti-christ activities!

Satan is a master deceiver, and has filled the lives of well-meaning, professing Christians with idolatry. These things bring the wrath of God upon children of disobedience, who try to make pagan customs of Baal worship Christian.

You must answer for your activities and for what you teach your children.

These customs of Easter honor Baal, who is also Satan, and is still worshiped as the "Rising Sun" and his house is the "House of the Rising Sun."

## History Of Easter

**Easter is celebrated the world over to mark the resurrection of Jesus Christ – the Son of God. The young and the old, the rich and the poor, man and woman and people of all races celebrate Easter. However, Easter has been commercialized to a large extent by companies manufacturing Easter related goods and items and the greeting card industry. It is important that in all the commercialization of this very important festival, one does not forget the history of Easter.**

Easter is one of the most celebrated festivals of the modern Christian church. According to St. Bede, an English historian of the eighteenth century, Easter owes its origin to the old Teutonic mythology. The name Easter was originally derived from the word Eostre. Eostre was the ancient Greek goddess of spring. It was believed that every year, Eostre returned to Earth after a long, cold winter and brought along with her the light and warmth of Spring. Thus, ancient Greeks held pagan festivals to welcome Eostre and herald the onset of spring.

The Pagan festivals always coincided with the vernal Equinox on the 21st of March every year. Though the Greek were not fully cognizant of why and when spring comes, they believed Eostre must be pleased to ensure that she returns year after year. The festivals were lavish feasts that celebrated the booming of new flowers, the chirping of birds, butterflies, and sunshine and in general the feeling of rejuvenation that is inherent of spring.

The Christian church however, changed the Pagan festival from a celebration of spring to a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. In 325 A.D. the church also changed the date of the festival. The festival was no longer held on the spring equinox. Instead, as per the Church Council of Nicaea henceforth it was to be held on the very first Sunday following the full moon on or after the vernal equinox. Thus, today Easter is celebrated on different dates every year and can occur as early as March 22nd or as late as April 25th.

Some people even believe that Easter is related to the Hebrew celebration, the Jewish Passover. Passover is celebrated to mark the freedom of the Israelis from bondage and slavery after 300 years. It was during Passover in 30 A.D. that Christ was crucified for being blasphemous. The resurrection happened three days later on what is today known as Easter Sunday. The early Christians, many of whom were raised as Jews considered the resurrection and Easter as a new part of pascha. Thus the early celebration of Passover came to be celebrated as Good Friday and Easter.

Today grand scale events mark the celebration of Easter in the United States and across the globe. Many traditional symbols of Easter continue to dominate the scene while new traditions are being part of the festival too. Thus, Easter is a festival that denotes life, rejuvenation, renewal, rebirth and restoration of all beings on Earth.

Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.)  
ON THE KEEPING OF EASTER.

From the Letter of the Emperor to all those not present at the Council.

(Found in Eusebius, Vita Const., Lib. iii., 18-20.)

When the question relative to the sacred festival of Easter arose, it was universally thought that it would be convenient that all should keep the feast on one day; for what could be more beautiful and more desirable, than to see this festival, through which we receive the hope of immortality, celebrated by all with one accord, and in the same manner? It was declared to be particularly unworthy for this, the holiest of all festivals, to follow the custom[the calculation] of the Jews, who had soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes, and whose minds were blinded. In rejecting their custom,(1) we may transmit to our descendants the legitimate mode of celebrating Easter, which we have observed from the time of the Saviour's Passion to the present day[according to the day of the week]. We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, for the Saviour has shown us another way; our worship follows a more legitimate and more convenient course(the order of the days of the week); and

consequently, in unanimously adopting this mode, we desire, dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews, for it is truly shameful for us to hear them boast that without their direction we could not keep this feast. How can they be in the right, they who, after the death of the Saviour, have no longer been led by reason but by wild violence, as their delusion may urge them? They do not possess the truth in this Easter question; for, in their blindness and repugnance to all improvements, they frequently celebrate two passovers in the same year. We could not imitate those

who are openly in error. How, then, could we follow these Jews, who are most certainly blinded by error? for to celebrate the passover twice in one year is totally inadmissible. But even if this were not so, it would still be your duty not to tarnish your soul by communications with such wicked people [the Jews]. Besides, consider well, that in such an important matter, and on a subject of such great solemnity, there ought not to be any division. Our Saviour has left us only one festal day of our redemption, that is to say, of his holy passion, and he desired [to establish] only one Catholic Church. Think, then, how unseemly it is, that on the same day some should be fasting whilst others are seated at a banquet; and that after Easter, some should be rejoicing at feasts, whilst others are still observing a strict fast. For this reason, a Divine Providence wills that this custom should be rectified and regulated in a uniform way; and everyone, I hope, will agree upon this point. As, on the one hand, it is our duty not to have anything in common with the murderers of our Lord; and as, on the other, the custom now followed by the Churches of the West, of the South, and of the North, and by some of those of the East, is the most acceptable, it has appeared good to all; and I have been guarantee for your consent, that you would accept it with joy, as it is followed at Rome, in Africa, in all Italy, Egypt, Spain, Gaul, Britain, Libya, in all Achaia, and in the dioceses of Asia, of Pontus, and Cilicia. You should consider not only that the number of churches in these provinces make a majority, but also that it is right to demand what our reason approves, and that we should have nothing in common with the Jews. To sum up in few words: By the unanimous judgment of all, it has been decided that the most holy festival of Easter should be everywhere celebrated on one and the same day, and it is not seemly that in so holy a thing there should be any division. As this is the state of the case, accept joyfully the divine favour, and this truly divine command; for all which takes place in assemblies of the bishops ought to be regarded as proceeding from the will of God. Make known to your brethren what has been decreed, keep this most holy day according to the prescribed mode; we can thus celebrate this holy Easter day at the same time, if it is granted me, as I desire, to unite myself with you; we can rejoice together, seeing that the divine power has made use of our instrumentality for destroying the evil designs of the devil, and thus causing faith, peace, and unity to flourish amongst us. May God graciously protect you, my beloved brethren.

## EXCURSUS ON THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE EASTER

### QUESTION.

(Hefele: Hist. of the Councils, Vol. I., pp. 328 et seqq.)

The differences in the way of fixing the period of Easter did not indeed disappear after the Council of Nicea. Alexandria and Rome could not agree, either because one of the two Churches neglected to make the calculation for Easter, or because the other considered it inaccurate. It is a fact, proved by the ancient Easter table of the Roman Church, that the cycle of eighty-four years continued to be used at Rome as before.

Now this cycle differed in many ways from the Alexandrian, and did not always agree with it about the period for Easter--in fact

(a), the Romans used quite another method from the Alexandrians; they calculated from the epact, and began from the feria prima of January.

(b.) The Romans were mistaken in placing the full moon a little too soon; whilst the Alexandrians placed it a little too late.

(c.) At Rome the equinox was supposed to fall on March 18th; whilst the Alexandrians placed it on March 21st.

(d.) Finally, the Romans differed in this from the Greeks also; they did not celebrate Easter the next day when the full moon fell on the Saturday.

Even the year following the Council of Nicea--that is, in 326--as well as in the years 330, 333, 340, 341, 343, the Latins celebrated Easter on a different day from the Alexandrians. In order to put an end to this misunderstanding, the Synod of Sardica in 343, as we learn from the newly discovered festival letters of S. Athanasius, took up again the question of Easter, and brought the two parties (Alexandrians and Romans) to regulate, by means of mutual concessions, a common day for Easter for the next fifty years. This compromise, after a few years, was not observed. The troubles excited by the Arian heresy, and the division which it caused between the East and the West, prevented the decree of Sardica from being put into execution; therefore the Emperor Theodosius the Great, after the re-establishment of peace in the Church, found himself obliged to take fresh steps for obtaining a complete uniformity in the manner of celebrating Easter. In 387, the Romans having kept Easter on March 21st, the Alexandrians did not do so for five weeks later--that is to say, till April 25th--because with the Alexandrians the equinox was not till March 21st. The Emperor Theodosius the Great then asked Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria for an explanation of the difference. The bishop responded to the Emperor's desire, and drew up a chronological table of the Easter festivals, based upon the principles acknowledged by the Church of Alexandria. Unfortunately, we now possess only the prologue of his work.

Upon an invitation from Rome, S. Ambrose also mentioned the period of this same Easter in 387, in his letter to the bishops of AEmilia, and he sides with the Alexandrian computation. Cyril of Alexandria abridged the paschal table of his uncle Theophilus, and fixed the time for the ninety-five following Easters--that is, from 436 to 531 after Christ. Besides this Cyril showed, in a letter to the Pope, what was defective in the Latin calculation; and this demonstration was taken up again, some time after, by order of the Emperor, by Paschasinus, Bishop of Lilybaeum and Proterius of Alexandria, in a letter written by them to Pope Leo I. In consequence of these communications, Pope Leo often gave the preference to the Alexandrian computation, instead of that of the Church of Rome. At the same time also was generally established, the opinion so little entertained by the ancient authorities of the Church--one might even say, so strongly in contradiction to their teaching--that Christ partook of the passover on the 14th Nisan, that he died on the 15th (not on the 14th, as the ancients considered), that he lay in the grave on the 16th, and rose again on the 17th. In the letter we have just mentioned, Proterius of Alexandria openly admitted all these different points.

Some years afterwards, in 457, Victor of Aquitane, by order of the Roman Archdeacon Hilary, endeavoured to make the Roman and the Alexandrian calculations agree together. It has been conjectured that subsequently Hilary, when Pope, brought Victor's calculation into use, in 456--that is, at the time when the cycle of eighty-four years came to an end. In the latter cycle the new moons were marked more accurately, and the chief differences existing between the Latin and Greek calculations disappeared; so that the Easter of the Latins generally coincided with that of Alexandria, or was only a very little removed from it. In cases when the id fell on a Saturday, Victor did not wish to decide whether Easter should be celebrated the next day, as the Alexandrians did, or should be postponed for a week. He indicates both dates in his table, and leaves the Pope to decide what was to be done in each separate case. Even after Victor's calculations, there still remained great differences in the manner of fixing the celebration of Easter; and it was Dionysius the Less who first completely overcame them, by giving to the Latins a paschal table having as its basis the cycle of nineteen years. This cycle perfectly

corresponded to that of Alexandria, and thus established that harmony which had been so long sought in vain. He showed the advantages of his calculation so strongly, that it was admitted by Rome and by the whole of Italy; whilst almost the whole of Gaul remained faithful to Victor's canon, and Great Britain still held the 'cycle of eighty-four years, a little improved by Sulpicius Severus.

When the Heptarchy was evangelized by the Roman missionaries, the new converts accepted the calculation of Dionysius, whilst the ancient Churches of Wales held fast their old tradition. From this arose the well-known British dissensions about the celebration of Easter, which were transplanted by Columban into Gaul. In 729, the majority of the ancient British Churches accepted the cycle of nineteen years. It had before been introduced into Spain, immediately after the conversion of Reccared. Finally, under Charles the Great, the cycle of nineteen years triumphed over all opposition; and thus the whole of Christendom was united, for the Quartodecimans had gradually disappeared.

**Queen of Heaven** is a title given to the Blessed Virgin Mary by Christians, mainly of the Roman Catholic Church, and also, to some extent, in the Anglican, Lutheran, and Eastern Orthodox churches, to whom the title is a (disputed) consequence of the Council of Ephesus in the fifth century, where the Virgin Mary was proclaimed "theotokos" ("God-bearer," "birthgiver of God" or the "one who gives birth to God" among other translations), a title rendered in Latin as Mater Dei, "Mother of God".

628 BC - In the Old Testament the term "queen of heaven" appears in a context unrelated to Mary. The prophet Jeremiah writing circa 628 BC refers to a "queen of heaven".

God has already punished Israel once for this.

*Jeremiah*

*11. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.*

*12. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.*

*13. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence:*

*14. So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.*

*15. Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,*

*16. As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee.*

*17. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto*

*the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.*

*18. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.*

*19. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?*

*20. Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying,*

*21. The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and came it not into his mind?*

*22. So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.*

*23. Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.*

*24. Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt:*

*25. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.*

*26. Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth.*

*27. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.*

*28. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs.*

*29. And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the Lord, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil:*

*30. Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will give Pharaohhophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.*

## **The Origin of Lent**

According to Johannes Cassianus, who wrote in the fifth century, "Howbeit you should know, that as long as the primitive church retained its perfection unbroken, this observance of Lent did not exist"

(*First Conference Abbot Theonas*, chapter 30). There is neither biblical nor historical record of Christ, the apostles or the early Church participating in the Lenten season.

Since there is *no* instruction to observe Lent in the Bible, where did it come from? A forty-day abstinence period was anciently observed in honor of the pagan gods Osiris, Adonis and Tammuz (John Landseer, *Sabaeen Researches*, pp. 111, 112). Alexander Hislops, *The Two Babylons*, pp. 104-105, says this of the origin of Lent: “The forty days abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshippers of the Babylonian goddess. Such a Lent of forty days, in the spring of the year, is still observed by the Yezidis or Pagan Devil-worshippers of Koordistan, who have inherited it from their early masters, the Babylonians. Such a *Lent* of forty days was held in spring by the Pagan Mexicans... Such a Lent of forty days was observed in Egypt...”

Lent came from paganism, not from the Bible! (To learn more about the Lenten season, read our article “The True Meaning of Lent.”)

### **Eggs, Egg Hunts and Easter**

Eggs have always been associated with the Easter celebration. Nearly every culture in the modern world has a long tradition of coloring eggs in beautiful and different ways.

Notice the following: “The origin of the Easter egg is based on the fertility lore of the Indo-European races...The egg to them was a *symbol of spring*...In Christian times the egg had bestowed upon it a religious interpretation, becoming a symbol of the rock tomb out of which Christ emerged to the new life of His resurrection” (Francis X. Weiser, *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs*, p. 233). This is a direct example of exactly how pagan symbols and customs are “Christianized,” i.e., Christian-sounding names are superimposed over pagan customs. This is done to deceive—as well as make people feel better about why they are following a custom that is not in the Bible.

Notice: “Around the Christian observance of Easter...folk customs have collected, many of which have been handed down from the ancient ceremonial...symbolism of European and Middle Eastern *pagan spring* festivals...for example, *eggs*...have been very prominent as symbols of *new life* and resurrection” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1991 ed., Vol. 4, p. 333).

Finally, the following comes from *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, James Bonwick, pp. 211-212: “Eggs were hung up in the Egyptian temples. Bunsen calls attention to the mundane egg, the emblem of generative life, proceeding from the mouth of the great god of Egypt. The mystic egg of Babylon, hatching the Venus Ishtar, fell from heaven to the Euphrates. Dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt, as they are still in China and Europe. Easter, or spring, was the season of birth, terrestrial and celestial.”

What could be more plain in showing the true origin of the “Easter egg”? An “Easter” egg is just an egg that pertains to Easter. God never authorized Passover eggs or Days of Unleavened Bread eggs, but there have been Easter eggs for thousands of years!

It naturally progressed that the egg, representing spring and fertility, would be merged into an already pagan springtime festival. Connecting this symbol to Christ’s Resurrection in the spring required much creativity and human reasoning. However, even highly creative *human reasoning* has never been able to successfully connect the next Easter symbol to anything Christian, because there is not a single word about it anywhere in the New Testament!

### **The Easter Bunny**

Here are two additional quotes from Francis Weiser about the origin of the “Easter bunny”: “In

Germany and Austria little nests containing eggs, pastry and candy are placed in hidden spots, and the children believe that the Easter bunny, so popular in this country, too, had laid the eggs and brought the candy” (p. 235) and “The Easter bunny had its origin in pre-Christian fertility lore...The Easter bunny has *never* had religious symbolism bestowed on its festive usage...However, the bunny has acquired a cherished role in the celebration of Easter as the legendary producer of Easter eggs for children in many countries” (p. 236).

Here is further proof of the origin of Easter eggs and rabbits. It demonstrates how no one has ever been able to connect the Easter bunny to anything Christian, let alone to the Bible: “The Easter bunny is not a true Christian symbol” (John Bradner, *Symbols of Church Seasons and Days*, p. 52), and “Although adopted in a number of Christian cultures, the Easter bunny has never received any specific Christian interpretation” (Mirsea Eliade, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, p. 558).

None of this will stop scores of millions of professing Christians from decorating their lawns and houses with Easter bunnies each spring.

Consider this last quote: “The hare, the symbol of fertility in ancient Egypt, a symbol that was kept later in Europe...Its place has been taken by the Easter rabbit” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1991 ed., Vol. 4, p. 333).

Even in modern times, rabbits have remained common symbols of fertility. While their rapid rate of reproduction is well known, another problem arises with rabbits—they do not lay eggs! While both are clearly fertility symbols, there is no logical way to connect them. In a world filled with pagan tradition, truth *and* logic can be lost. Merging these symbols with Christianity makes an already idolatrous practice worse.

There is nothing Christian about any of these symbols. The true history of these fertility symbols, rabbits and eggs, is completely unknown to all the unsuspecting children who have been led by adults to think them so special.

The entire concept that these are Christian is a *lie* foisted on innocent children who will believe that “the moon is made of cheese” just because someone tells them so. While these are shocking facts, they are true nonetheless.

### **A Counterfeit Savior?**

One of the central themes of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ came to die for mankind’s sins and offer redemption to a world cut off from God.

The master counterfeiter (Satan the devil, called the “god of this world” in II Cor. 4:4) seeks to counterfeit *every* aspect of God’s plan. He “deceives the *whole* world” (Rev. 12:9). As the arch-deceiver, he would not be content to counterfeit all *other* aspects of Christianity but not the identity and worship of the true Savior!

Who is the *real* “savior” central to the “Easter Sunday” tradition? Is it the Jesus Christ of the Bible? If you say “yes,” are you sure? History answers this question plainly, with this:

First notice that “...the conception of a Saviour-God was quite normal in the ancient pagan world...a conception of salvation underlies the notion of such Gods as Osiris, Attis, and Adonis...” (John M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 395).

And then this: “It has often been urged that this belief in the Resurrection of Jesus is due to ideas of

divine resurrection current in the contemporary world...stories of Attis, Adonis, and Osiris...In the pagan stories the rising again is a joyous reversal of defeat; in the Christian story it is the complement of victorious death. It may be said that Attis and Osiris saved by rising again, Jesus by dying...the Easter observance did not arise at once out of belief in the Resurrection, but developed later by gradual stages out of the Jewish Pasch. The notion implied in the Easter greeting Christ is risen is a secondary development; the idea comes from this festival and from its occurrence in spring; the festival does not come from the idea. The idea of Christ's resurrection was injected into the old practice of Easter observance and not the other way around" (A. Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background*, pp. 105-107).

And, finally, the powerful theme of this oft-repeated counterfeit is made most clear by the famous historian, James George Frazer: "Now the death and resurrection of Attis were officially celebrated at Rome on the 24th and 25th of March, the latter being regarded as the spring equinox, and...according to an ancient and widespread tradition Christ suffered on the 25th of March...the tradition which placed the death of Christ on the 25th of March...is all the more remarkable because astronomical considerations prove that it can have had *no historical foundation*...When we remember that the festival of St. George in April has replaced the ancient pagan festival of the Parilia; that the festival of St. John the Baptist in June has succeeded to a heathen Midsummer festival of water; that the festival of the Assumption of the Virgin in August has ousted the festival of Diana; that the feast of All Souls [following Halloween] in November is a continuation of an old heathen feast of the dead; and that the Nativity of Christ himself was assigned to the winter solstice in December because that day was deemed the Nativity of the Sun; we can hardly be thought to be rash or unreasonable in conjecturing that the other cardinal festival of the Christian church—the solemnization of Easter—may have been in like manner, and from like motives of edification, adapted to a similar celebration of the Phrygian god Attis at the vernal equinox...*It is a remarkable coincidence*...that the Christian and the heathen festivals of the divine death and resurrection should have been solemnized at the same season...*It is difficult to regard the coincidence as purely accidental*" (*The Golden Bough*, Vol. I, pp. 306-309).

We can summarize the above source. The Roman Catholic Church had a practice of incorporating pagan festivals—of pasting "Christian" names over them and calling them "Christian." This was done to make "Christianity" more palatable and familiar to heathen worshippers, whom the Church was trying to attract. How did such a state of affairs develop?

It can now be better understood why the apostle Paul wrote the Corinthians to beware of the subtle deceit of "*another Jesus* whom we have not preached." He said, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes preaches *another Jesus*, whom we have not preached, or if you receive *another spirit*, which you have not received, or *another gospel*, which you have not accepted..." (II Cor. 11:3-4).

People today can *think* that they are worshipping the true Savior when they are really worshipping a *false savior*—another Jesus! The entirety of traditional Christianity is actually worshipping Baal, the mediator and sun god, who was named after his "wife" Ishtar (who was actually his *mother* Semiramis)—who we will later see is the one the Bible calls the "Queen of Heaven."

People can worship in ways that represent things that are far different than what they sincerely believe or intend. Consider the following classic example.

### **Sunrise Services**

Sunrise services *are* mentioned in the Bible. But what God says about this custom is not what you expect. Notice these astonishing verses. The prophet Ezekiel was being shown, in vision, an important

prophecy concerning the sins of God's people in our time.

The entire context of these verses needs to be examined carefully to understand the heightening condemnation toward which God builds in His conclusion: "...Turn you yet again, and you shall see greater abominations that they do...and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz...And He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their *faces toward the east*; and they *worshipped the sun toward the east*. Then He said unto me, Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a *light thing*...that they commit the abominations which they commit here? For they...have returned to provoke Me to anger...Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them." (Ezek. 8:13-18).

*Observing sunrise services is serious to God!* He so hates this vile practice that He will ultimately destroy all who persist in it (Ezek. 9)!

It is no "light thing" to God that many millions do this every Easter! It may seem "beautiful," "religious," and "deeply moving" to those participating in it, but God has forbidden His true people to devise their own religious customs and ideas. He is not interested in what *people* may personally *feel* or *think* is right. He is interested in those who care about what *He thinks!* As far as God is concerned, ancient sun worship, dressed up in Easter finery and bonnets, is just modern packaging of a very old, idolatrous pagan custom.

Consider God's own words in Deuteronomy 12:28-32 (NKJ): "Observe and obey all these words which I command you...When...you...dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them...and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' *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...*Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.*"

God tells Christians to never mix what is godly with what is pagan—or the true with the false! Do not let men tell you that what God says makes no difference. *It does!*

## **God Calls Easter Evil**

Now that we know that Easter is the goddess Ashtaroth, we need to look into the Bible and see what God thinks of her. Look at this verse: "And the children of Israel did *evil* in the sight of the Lord...And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and *Ashtaroth* [Easter]" (Jdg. 2:11, 13).

The context shows that God allowed His people to be taken from their land into captivity as a result of *this sin!* It continues, explaining how God delivered His people over and over again through a series of judges. After each deliverance, Israel returned to the same false gods, which in turn brought *another* captivity, via conquest by the nations around them. They never seemed to learn, as verse 19 makes clear: "And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves...*in following other gods*...and...they ceased not from *their own doings*, nor from their *stubborn way*." In chapter 10, verse 6, Israel repeats this pattern of stubbornness. And God, just as stubbornly, still calls it evil.

Baal and Ashtaroth worship reappeared during Samuel's time. Samuel told Israel, "...*put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only*...Then the children of Israel *did* put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and *served the Lord only*" (I

Sam. 7:3-4). Later, in I Samuel 12:10-11, Samuel publicly recounted Israel's history to them. He reminded them that they continually returned to obeying God, only to fall backwards into idolatry again and again!

It has been said that "The only thing man has learned from history is that no one learns from history." George Santayana took it further, saying, "Those who do not learn the lesson of history are *doomed to repeat it.*"

This lesson describes ancient Israel—but it also describes today's modern world. Because Israel could not stay on track, they were eventually taken into captivity, becoming lost to history! After one more captivity and punishment, prophecy reveals that Christ will gather them for the last time at His Return.

### **One Final Example**

The Bible states that King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. Yet, he made a mistake that God considered so great that, after his death, He punished Solomon by removing the kingdom from his son.

His mistake?

He married a woman who led him into the worship of Easter (Ashtaroth). Notice I Kings 11:4-6: "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods... For Solomon went after Ashtaroth the goddess of the Zidonians... And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father." Verses 11-12 demonstrate that the kingdom *was* taken from his son.

### **The Quartodeciman Controversy: From Passover to Easter**

What does history say about how and when the idolatrous pagan festival of Easter came to replace the Passover service ordained by God? A series of extensive quotes tell this story—commonly referred to as the "Quartodeciman Controversy." Several sources are quoted so that the story of how the counterfeit Easter came to replace Passover will be perfectly clear. This problem—Passover versus Easter—became so pivotal, as a test of the power of the great church that wished to stamp out the "little flock," that eventually disobedience brought the *death sentence* upon any who continued to keep either God's Sabbath or His true festivals.

Make no mistake! Whether one keeps God's Passover or celebrates the pagan Easter is *serious!*

First notice the following by Eusebius (a well-known historian of the early Church) from his work, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, chapters XXIII and XXIV: "A question of no small importance arose at that time. For the parishes of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should be observed as the feast of the Saviour's passover... the bishops of Asia, led by Polycrates, decided to hold to the old custom handed down to them. He himself, in a letter which he addressed to Victor and the church of Rome, set forth in the following words the tradition which had come down to him:

"We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles... and, moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord... and Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thrasesas, bishop and martyr from Eumenia... the bishop and martyr Sagaris... the blessed Papirius, or Melito... All these observed the fourteenth day

of the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith.”

The 1967 *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states, “Quartodeciman, a term used to describe the practice in the early Church of celebrating Easter on the 14th of Nisan (*die quarta decima*), the day of the Jewish Passover (Ex. 12:6). Quartodecimanism, prevalent in Asia Minor and Syria in the 2nd century, emphasized the death of Christ, the true Paschal victim (Jn. 18:28; 19:42), while Roman practice emphasized the observance of Sunday as the day of the Resurrection. Implicit in these two positions is the disputed chronology of Holy Week. As Christianity separated from Judaism, gentile Christians objected to observing the principal Christian feasts on the same day as the Jewish Passover.

“Roman efforts to induce the Quartodecimans to abandon their practice were unsuccessful. On a visit to Rome (c. 155), St. Polycarp of Smyrna amicably discussed the question with Pope Anicetus without, however, reaching agreement. Pope Victor (189-198) sought unity through a series of synods held in both East and West; all accepted the Roman practice except the Asiatic bishops. When Victor attempted coercion by excommunication, St. Irenaeus of Lyons intervened to restore peace (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.23-25). During the 3rd century Quartodecimanism waned; it persisted in some Asiatic communities down to the 5th century” (Vol. 12, p. 13).

The following very lengthy statement from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th Edition, well summarizes and details the story of how Easter slowly came to replace the Passover by A.D. 325 within visible, organized “Christianity”: “Although the observance of Easter was at a very early period in the practice of the Christian Church [false], a serious difference as to the day for its observance soon arose between the [true] Christians of Jewish and those of Gentile decent, which led to a long and bitter controversy...The Jewish Christians...(observed) the 14th day of the moon at evening...without regard to the day of the week. The Gentile Christians (Roman Catholics)...identified the first day of the week with the resurrection, and kept the preceding Friday as the commemoration of the crucifixion, irrespective of the day of the month.

“Generally speaking, the Western Churches (Roman Catholic) kept Easter on the 1st day of the week, while the Eastern Churches [including the remnant of the true Church] followed the Jewish rule [the true Christian Passover].

“Polycarp, the disciple of John the Evangelist (last of the 12 apostles), and bishop of Smyrna, visited Rome in 159 (sic) to confer with Anicetus, the bishop of that see, on the subject, and urged the tradition which he had received from the apostles of observing the 14th day. Anicetus, however, declined. About forty years later (197), the question was discussed in a very different spirit between Victor, bishop of Rome, and Polycrates, metropolitan of proconsular Asia. That province [embracing churches founded through the apostle Paul, like Antioch and all of those identified in Revelation 2 and 3 as the true Church] was the only portion of Christendom which still adhered to the Jewish usage. Victor demanded that all should adopt the usage prevailing at Rome. This Polycrates firmly refused to agree to, and urged many weighty reasons to the contrary, whereupon Victor proceeded to excommunicate Polycrates and the Christians who continued the [correct] Eastern usage. He was, however, restrained (by counsel from other bishops) from actually proceeding to enforce the decree of excommunication...and the Asiatic churches retained their usage unmolested. We find the Jewish usage (the true New Testament Passover) from time to time reasserting itself after this, but it never prevailed to any large extent.

“A final settlement of the dispute was one among the other reasons which led Constantine [Roman Emperor] to summon the council at Nicaea in 325. At that time the Syrians and Antiochenes were the solitary champions of the observance of the 14th day. The decision of the council was unanimous that Easter was to be kept on Sunday, and on the same Sunday throughout the world, and that none hereafter should follow the blindness of the Jews. [Or, in other words, no one was allowed to follow the example of Christ and the true Church He founded!]....The FEW who afterwards separated themselves from the

unity of the [politically organized] church, and continued to keep the 14th day, were named Quartodecimani [from the Latin word for 14], and the dispute itself is known as the Quartodeciman controversy” (Vol. VIII, pp. 828-829).

This is a very powerful quote making absolutely plain the full story of *what* happened and *how* it happened. History records that Polycarp was martyred on the way back from Rome (burned to death in a farmhouse), just days after his meeting with Anicetus over the issue of keeping Passover or Easter. He was almost certainly killed because he would not compromise regarding the proper keeping of the Passover.

The 1967 *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states this: “Occasionally, the Quartodecimans celebrated Easter on the day that other Christians were observing Good Friday. Originally both observances were allowed, but gradually it was felt incongruous that Christians should celebrate Easter on a Jewish feast, and unity in celebrating the principal Christian feast was called for” (Vol. 5, p. 8).

Now read this quote from the same source, concluding the matter of how the Council of Nicea “decided,” for all, the matter of Easter versus Passover: “As for Easter, the Fathers decreed (1) that all Christians should observe it on the same day, (2) that Jewish customs should not be followed, and (3) that the practice of the West, of Egypt, and of other Churches should remain in force, namely, of celebrating Easter on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox” (Vol. 5, p. 433).

The 1909 edition of *The Catholic Encyclopedia* says, “After the Pope’s strong measures the Quarterdecimans seemed to have gradually dwindled away. Origen in the “Philosophumena” (VIII, xviii) seems to regard them as a *mere handful of wrong-headed nonconformists*. SECOND PHASE—The second stage of the Easter controversy centers around the Council of Nicaea [A.D. 325] granting that the great Easter festival was always to be held on a Sunday, and was not to be coincident with a particular phase of the moon, which might occur on any day of the week” (Vol. 5, p. 228).

The truth is that the Passover was always tied directly to the moon, regardless of the day of the week on which it fell! (The word *month* is derived from *moon*.) The 14th day of Nisan (Abib) was God’s instruction (Exodus 12:1-6)—not the nearest Sunday to this or any other date.

This same edition of *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, when describing the final decision at Nicaea in A.D. 325, quotes the words of the Emperor Constantine, writing to all the churches: “At this meeting the question concerning the most holy day of Easter was discussed, and it was resolved by the united judgment of all present that this feast ought to be kept by all and in every place on one and the same day...And first of all it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin...for we have received from our Saviour a different way [this is false because Christ did not ever instruct “a different way”]...And I myself have undertaken that this decision should meet with the approval of your Sagacities in the hope that your Wisdoms will gladly admit that practice which is observed at once in the city of Rome and in Africa, throughout Italy and in Egypt...with entire unity of judgment.” (Vol. 5, p. 228).

Finally, this same source continues a few paragraphs later with, “The final decision always lay with accepted *ecclesiastical authority*...was primarily a matter of *ecclesiastical discipline* and not astronomical science” (p. 229). These two short phrases make it clear that *church authority at Rome*, and not God’s Word, determined whether Easter or the Passover would be kept.

How many churches have "sunrise services" on Ishtar's day and face the rising sun in the East?  
How many will use colored eggs and rabbit stories, as they did in ancient Judah?

These things are no joke, any more than Judgment day is a joke.  
I pray to God that this tract will cause you to search for more truth.  
We will be glad to help you by providing more information and by praying for you.  
These are the last days, and it is time to repent, come out and be separate.

### *Romans 12*

*1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

*2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

What should we be doing instead of Easter?

## Order of the Seder

Passover – the Feast of Redemption – is a day of reckoning! Do you know what purpose it serves? Do you know it is one of the commanded feasts? Do you know it is an eternal feast that we will celebrate in the kingdom?

Passover (also named Pesach in Hebrew) comes this year on the evening of April 17, 2011. For those keeping the Jewish Diaspora calendar it will be observed on the evening of April 18, 2011. The slight difference is based on differences in perceiving when the New Moon occurs and the beginning of the month of Nisan; however, there is also the difference between the Pharisaic tradition of keeping Passover on the 15th of the month (the first day of Unleavened Bread) and Moses actually instructing us to observe the Passover on the 14th at *twilight*. In the ancient texts, the word that is translated as *twilight* is the Hebrew word *erev*. Erev means *evening* and is understood in Hebrew as the *beginning* of the day. This is different from our Western mindset where as the day begins at midnight. According to the Scriptures, the day begins and ends when the evening comes. So if we are commanded to observe the Passover on the 14th of Nisan at *erev*, then it is to be the evening following the 13th. This is a full day before the Pharisees observed it. This is also why the Messiah and His disciples appeared to keep the Passover prior to the Pharisees. Yeshua actually kept the Passover with His disciples according to the Law of Moses, not as the Pharisees had instructed.

I know this is confusing to new Messianic believers, but it is important. We want to join Yeshua and His disciples in keeping the Passover. I know it is traditional for the Jews to keep Passover as they have for the last millennia, but Yeshua criticized this particular tradition saying, "You prefer the traditions of the elders to the commandments of God."

There is nothing wrong with traditions or culture as long as it is not contrary to a commandment of God. Observing the Passover on the 15th of Nisan (Aviv) as opposed to the 14th is in DIRECT conflict with the commandment.

*And you shall keep it [the lamb] until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight.*

*Exodus 12:6*

*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.*

*Exodus 12:18*

*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the Lord's Passover.*

*Leviticus 23:5*

Rabbinical Judaism teaches explicitly that Passover is observed on the fifteenth day of the month. They connected it to the Feast of Unleavened Bread although there is no Scriptural basis to do so.

*Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.*

*Leviticus 23:6*

Not only does Rabbinical Judaism connect and combine the two observances (Passover and Unleavened Bread), they add an additional day. According to Moses, Unleavened Bread is seven days long beginning on the 15th. The last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread should be the 21st of the month. But the Pharisees and Rabbis of today add one more day to include the 22nd.

There are even more complications. The 15th and the 21st are supposed to be High Sabbath days. Judaism ignores the High Sabbath on the 21st and observes it on the 22nd. Moses instructed us to neither add to nor take away from the Lord's instructions. This is exactly what the Pharisees did. This is also why the Messiah warned us about the Pharisees saying, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees."

If you think this is more of a mess than you wanted to know about, just wait. There is a third observance Moses instructed us to do. It is called the Feast of First Fruits. It always occurs on the first day after the first (weekly Sabbath) after the Passover. Therefore it is always after the 14th, after the weekly Sabbath that follows, generally somewhere during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. However, Judaism (the Pharisaic tradition) uses the High Sabbath on their Passover instead of the weekly Sabbath as their basis for calculating the Feast of First Fruits and the Feast of First Fruits always occurs on the 16th. On top of that they essentially ignore the holiday completely.

For us who follow the Messiah's example, we observe the Feast of First Fruits to remember Yeshua's resurrection. If you recall, He was resurrected on the first day after Sabbath. He was the "first fruits" of many brethren.

Moses specified the 14th for Passover, the 15th through the 21st (inclusive) for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and a variable date based on the occurrence of the weekly Sabbath after Passover for the Feast of First Fruits. Moses never specified an exact date for First Fruits as he did for Passover and Unleavened Bread. Therefore, it cannot always be on the 16th according to the Pharisaic/Rabbinic tradition.

For Messianic believers this issue is of paramount importance. For our testimony to be clear before the Messiah, we must demonstrate a true desire to follow the Torah, not the traditions of Jewish religious leaders. We are not called to keep Jewish feasts; we are called to keep Biblical feasts that are the commandments of God. Furthermore, we are not talking about mere religious duties. Passover is commemorating the blood of the lamb that covered us when the Angel of the Lord passed over the

homes in Egypt. The firstborn of our houses were kept alive. The Unleavened Bread we eat is the "bread of haste" we ate when we escaped from captivity and fled Egypt. The firstborn of Israel were the first fruits of freedom and formed a new nation called Israel.

Passover also commemorates the Messiah's redemption for us modeled after the Egyptian exodus. The cup and unleavened bread of the Passover Seder meal also memorializes the offering of our Messiah (the Lamb of God) that has enabled us to escape the trials and tribulations (Egypt) of this world and to be passed over from death (the penalty for our slavery to sin) to life. We then remember the Messiah's resurrection from the dead on the Feast of First Fruits. Let me not hear any one of you who name Messiah Yeshua saying, "The commandments of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits are not important for us to observe." As Messianic believers we should set the standard for appropriateness and observance of these holidays.

For 2011, the Passover is to be observed with a Seder meal just as the Messiah did with His disciples on the evening of April 17. We should eat only unleavened bread beginning that evening and extending through the day of April 25. We should observe the High Sabbaths of Unleavened Bread of the evening of April 18 and the evening of April 24. The weekly Sabbath is on April 23. Therefore on Sunday, April 24, we will remember First Fruits on the first day after the weekly Sabbath following Passover.

Now that we have the dates correct, how do we observe them correctly?

Passover is a watch night. There is no Sabbath per se for the date unless it falls on a weekly Sabbath. We observe Passover at night by eating the Seder meal. The word "Seder" means "order." The Hebrew expression for "Okay" is *B'Seder*, which means "in order," or simply everything is okay. The Passover Seder is a specific order of events that leads us through the observance and remembrance of the ancient exodus from Egypt. First, let's review what those in Egypt had to do.

*Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, "On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons in them; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. And they shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste- it is the Lord's Passover."*

*Exodus 12:3-11*

Moses continued his instruction concerning the lamb while in Egypt.

*Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, "Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover lamb. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you."*

*Exodus 12:21-23*

Now let us review what Moses said about the Passover memorial feast that we would observe annually after the escape from Egypt.

*Now this day [Passover] will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance... And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. When you enter the land which the Lord will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. And when your children will say to you, "What does this rite mean to you?" you shall say, "It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes."*

*Exodus 12:14, 24-27a*

For the priests, Moses gave these additional instructions for the observance in the tabernacle and temple.

*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the Lord's Passover.*  
*Leviticus 23:5*

The term *at twilight* (erev) may confuse some but in temple worship it is actually 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon that leads to evening and start of the next day. When Israel observed the Passover, they would bring their lambs to the temple in the afternoon of the 13th. The lambs would be slain *at twilight*, the blood of the lambs would be drained and poured out at the base of the altar, and the lambs would then be carried to their homes for the Seder meal that night. At home, the lambs would be skinned but not dressed (the entrails would remain in the lamb whole). It was then cooked over fire with the meat of the lamb carved off the carcass and served for the meal.

When Yeshua instructed Peter and John to prepare the Passover for the Last Supper, they went to the temple to slay the lamb, brought it to the upper room, skinned, and began the cooking process over a fire. The table with the other elements was also set. Other families in Israel were doing the same thing – except for the Pharisees. Since the Pharisees kept the Passover on the 15th, they were waiting until the next day at 3:00 pm (at twilight) to keep the Passover. This is why the trial of Yeshua did not interrupt the Pharisees' Passover Seder meal and the Pharisees were presenting the Passover lamb in the temple at the very moment Yeshua was dying on the cross. (See table below)



*your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and another holy assembly on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you.*

*Exodus 12:15-16*

During the historical event, the children of Israel left the cities of Egypt and gathered first at Sukkot where God met them with the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. They journeyed six days and crossed the Red Sea on the seventh day. The High Sabbaths commemorate the departure of the cities from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea.

Our memorial event does not require us to leave our homes. Instead, it requires us to eat unleavened bread during that time. Later, in the fall, at the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) we do leave our homes and camp out (lodge in temporary dwellings) for eight days, remembering how our ancestors escaped Egypt and lived in the wilderness.

Again, the historical event is different from the memorial event. I say this again because some Messianic brethren are seemingly opposed to memorializing these events. In their zeal to avoid the ancient Jewish tradition that was in contrast to the commandments, they reject out of hand all traditions and customs. They make as grave an error as did the ancient Jewish rulers. We have been commanded to memorialize these events and remember them and to teach them to our children, so they can teach their children. How can we keep that part of the commandment if we do not set things in order (the Seder)? Based on this same logic, the Apostle Paul has instructed that we are to assemble and worship the Lord "decently and in order."

What then is the proper order (or Seder) for the Passover meal? How has this been done in the past? Where is the teaching that has been passed down from father to son to this day? How did Yeshua and His disciples keep the Passover?

Many questions of the past are difficult and result in expert guessing, but not this one. The Passover Seder is one of the most documented, well-established memorial traditions known in our faith. And the best historical data (the Gospel accounts of the Passover dinner with Yeshua and His disciples) is completely consistent with the present traditional *Haggadah* (the booklet showing the order of the Passover observance) we have today. A Passover Haggadah has 14 specific elements that lead you through the *order* of observance. Unlike the leaven of the Pharisees, the Messiah and His disciples appear to have kept these same elements. As Messianic believers of Yeshua, we would do well to follow His example. The minimum fourteen elements of the Haggadah serve us well in the order of remembrance and memorialization.

Let's briefly look at those 14 elements:

1. **Kaddesh** – the Cup of Sanctification
2. **Urchatz** – the washing of hands
3. **Karpas** – the dipping of parsley
4. **Yachatz** – the breaking of the matzoh (unleavened bread)
5. **Mageed** – the telling of the story with the Cup of Instruction
6. **Rachatz** - the washing of hands prior to eating
7. **Motzee Matzah** – the first piece of matzah eaten
8. **Maror** – eating the bitter herbs
9. **Koraych** – the matzah sandwich of bitter herbs and charoset
10. **Shulchan Orekh** – the dinner meal
11. **Tzafun** – the Afikoman and the Cup of Redemption

12. **Barekh** – grace after the meal

13. **Hallel** – the Psalm of Joy and the Cup of Praise

14. **Nirtzah** – all is accepted

The order of the Seder uses four cups of wine called *sanctification, instruction, redemption* (freedom), and *praise*. There are many sub-elements with the Seder, some before the Seder even happens, during the Seder, and after. The search for leaven precedes the Passover and prepares the home for the Seder, while the remembrance of Jerusalem follows the Seder. Each part of the observance is filled with meaning and value, and we would be remiss if we didn't discuss some of the elements a bit more.

Kaddesh and the Cup of Sanctification separate the Passover Seder meal completely from all meals or feasts throughout the year. Sanctification means *separate*. This is done to follow God's instruction so that no one will eat the Passover in an unworthy manner. In fact, those who do not believe in the God of Israel are forbidden from eating the Seder meal. I have seen some Messianics invite others to the Passover as a sort of outreach to friends. They should not do that. The Seder is reserved only for the redeemed and those who have been circumcised (in the heart). The Cup of Sanctification not only separates the meal from others, it sanctifies those who are partaking of it from the rest of the world.

Karpas—dipping the parsley twice into salt water—is an extraordinary symbol of redemption illustrating the need to be *born again*. During the Seder, we will mention how Israel was born of tears (salt water) and again when crossing the Red Sea (a body of salt water), but the more powerful element in the memorial is the need to be born again of God's Spirit sometime after natural birth.

The Seder uses three pieces of matzah placed in a Unity (usually a three compartment decorative cloth cover). A very ornate Unity can be made of silver but it must have the three compartments. The upper piece is usually eaten by the father during the meal. The middle piece serves as the ceremonial and broken piece. Once broken, the best part (determined by the leader) will serve as the Afikoman; it is wrapped in linen to be *resurrected* after the meal to be the best part (the dessert) of the meal. The third piece is often called the *comforter* as it is used when eating the bitter herbs and charoset. You learn quickly to eat more matzah than bitter herbs when eating them together and let abundance of matzah comfort you from the bitterness of the herb.

The telling of the story and the drinking of the Cup of Instruction is the predominant activity in observing the Seder other than the meal itself. There are many elements that review the story of redemption, the judgments, teaching the children, and reviewing the main symbolic foods on the Passover platter. While there are variations to the review, there is one thing in common with all who keep the traditional Seder - we begin with the story of Joseph being dispatched by his father Jacob. Torah teachers will tell you that the story of redemption begins in Scripture at Genesis 37:12. Joseph was the first of the children of Israel to be enslaved in Egypt. His bones were also brought out of Egypt when Moses and the children of Israel went out. Joseph is the predominant Messianic prophetic figure of the entire Tanach (Old Testament). Just like Joseph, Yeshua was rejected, sold out, cast in a pit, raised out of a pit, went away for awhile and will one day be in charge of the world. Joseph had been sent by his father Jacob to see to the welfare of the flock and his brethren. Yeshua has done the same, being sent by our Heavenly Father, to see about us.

The Passover Seder platter holds and displays the Passover food symbols. Following the Seder, the Passover platter presents each symbol to assist in telling the story. There is much tradition in Passover Seder platters primarily born out of the commandment to teach our children and draw the entire family to the observance. In many American homes there is the larger platter that usually is used for presenting the Thanksgiving turkey. In the same way, Passover Seder platters serve as the ceremonial plate for the Passover Seder meal and that platter comes to the table only after every guest and everything is completely set to start the Seder meal.

The Passover Platter generally holds the following food stuffs: the Zarowa, the Maror, the Karpas, and the Charoset. It will be seated near the Unity with the Matzah and goblet cup.

The Zarowa (the lamb shank bone) actually means *arm*. The prophet Isaiah asked a key question concerning the message of the Messiah that relates directly to the Passover Seder.

*Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*  
*Isaiah 53:1*

When we observe the Passover we are to ask ourselves about the state of our faith. Do we believe this story of redemption? Do we believe that the arm of the Lord (*Zarowa Adonai*) has reached out to deliver us as well? This is more than just holding a theological thought. We are actually instructed to tell our children that it is us (personally and physically) that were passed over and crossed the Red Sea leaving Egypt. Then our children are to learn that it was them as well when they teach their children and the next generation.

Eating the matzah with *maror* (bitter herbs) can be an exhilarating experience, especially if it is the fresh ground stuff from the root. It will not only wake up your sinuses, it will move you and your comfortable chair. Part of the memorial process is to consider in a dramatic way what was accomplished. The Living God came down and delivered a people who were enslaved and had no escape. He did not use a sword. Instead, he used a shepherd's staff. He didn't array troops across the field and wage combat. Instead, he used words and judged them with their own gods.

Our God is profound beyond words and thoughts. We should be moved by Him and shaken from our complacency. A little horseradish is actually delicious but it does wake us up at first.

A traditional game is played during the Seder meal. The Afikoman, as part of the Seder, is the broken piece of matzah that is wrapped in linen at the beginning of the Seder and buried behind a pillow called "the stone," and is to be brought forth after the meal. Then the children steal the bread and hide it. The leader of the Seder calls for the Afikoman to "come forth." He dispatches a child to retrieve it, but the child returns announcing that "the stone has been moved and all I found was this linen cloth." This is the exact picture given to us in the Gospels at Yeshua's resurrection. It is more than ironic that this traditional children's game at Passover tells the story of Yeshua's resurrection as well as any first century Apostle could. It is even more powerful when considering what *afikoman* means.

*Afikoman* in Hebrew means "It is finished" or "It is fulfilled!" Had you been standing at the base of the cross, the last words you would have heard Yeshua say is "Afikoman."

Some of my New Covenant brethren like to think that Yeshua's statement somehow meant that the Law of Moses was completed and thus done away at the cross. They are grossly ignorant of the faith, the Scripture, the Messiah, and the Passover. The word *afikoman* is in the context of Passover and the redemption promised by God through our father Abraham. The Lord will provide Himself as the sacrifice in that place. It was pictured again at the exodus from Egypt and was realized at the cross and it is remembered at every Passover.

Christianity has so diluted this message that the feast of redemption (communion) is a mere scrap of the bread and less than the spillage of a cup. Most Christians, who take communion every month, have no idea that it is the *Tzafun* element of the Passover Seder. Many don't even recognize that the bread is called the *Afikoman* and the cup is called *Redemption*. Yes, they refer to them as the body and the blood of Jesus, but they have separated Him and themselves from the very feast He ate with His disciples.

It is common for differing opinions of theology to occur. One of the explanations for the difference may be based on one party pulling a thought out of context. Once something is out of context, any explanation can then be given causing a distortion and misunderstanding. This is a great example of

this kind of mistake - taking something out of context: the Christian communion vs. its proper context in the Passover Seder. It is tragic and sad that so many New Covenant brethren have never eaten the feast of freedom. Instead, they have been served crumbs and a half sip. Nor have they experienced themselves being passed over from death to life.

The final cup of the Passover is the Cup of Praise. Yeshua did not drink this cup with His disciples. Instead, he declared that He would drink it with us in the kingdom. That would suggest something very powerful about our Passover Seder. It will make it to the kingdom also.

There is much more to say about the Seder and its elements. But rather than have me tell you about it, it would be better that you do it. Let me summarize and make this final point about the traditional Seder we keep. Those who have kept the Passover and known the Messiah will be seated prominently with the Messiah at the Passover in the kingdom. Those who have claimed to know the Messiah but didn't keep His commandment to observe the Passover will be seated elsewhere. They will find that annulling God's commandments and ignoring His instructions to memorialize and remember was a great mistake. There is only one other group of believers that will be more sad than them. That would be Messianic believers who knew the feasts of the Lord and failed to keep them. Ignorance is sad but failing to keep it and knowing you should have kept it will be even worse.

I want to finish on this last point.

To observe the feasts of the Lord, you must learn about them. Don't just follow the Messianic Lemmings that are in front of you. Keep the feasts and do them fully submitted to the Lord from your heart. That is the actual commandment.

The Lord has commanded us to participate in this memorial we call the Passover Seder. It is planned out and has been observed for many generations before us, even to the days of the Messiah and His disciples. There should be no hesitation for us to keep this feast and follow its order. And before we make the same mistake the church fathers made, we should learn what the Seder really means or represents by doing it before suggesting that we make a new order and dismiss the traditional order.

I have prepared this article about the Passover Seder well in advance of April 2011 and our observance of Passover this particular year. I did so in the hope that you would keep all of the feasts of the Lord this year, not just Passover. But if you are going to keep those feasts this year you must keep the Passover first. All of the rest of the feasts are based on keeping this one first.

If you had lived in Egypt in the days of Moses and Aaron, they would have said to you, "Don't plan on leaving Egypt or going to the Promised Land if you don't keep the Passover." If you had been alive in the days of Yeshua and His disciples, they would have said to you, "Don't plan on enjoying your redemption or understanding the Messiah's resurrection unless you keep the Passover."

So, what do you want me to say to you today? Maybe you should not be calling yourself a Messianic believer and hanging around a Messianic congregation if you are not planning on keeping the Passover with your brethren. Not learning about this commandment and not keeping it betrays your words of faith.

Prophetically, there is one final element of the Passover that you should know. Keeping the Passover will be a life or death decision at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The last generation of these ages will experience the final three and half years before the Messiah is seen in the heavens returning to the Earth. God has a great escape plan for the tribulation saints. The key to it is not being dismayed in the face of many traumatic things happening and escaping at the moment God says to leave. It is called the Greater Exodus.

When did the children of Israel leave on their exodus? It started with a Passover dinner. Do we know

the exact time for our escape? It will be revealed at a future Passover Seder.

If you don't keep the Passover, you will never know about the escape or the timing. But even more than that, you won't really trust the Lord to deliver you in those days.

I invite you to join with other Messianic brethren this year to observe and keep the Passover. We will be meeting in one another's homes. Some of you will say, "There is no one else around me." Then you host the Seder and be prepared to gather brethren with you when they appear. Some of you will say, "But I can't host others; I don't have the means." Then speak with others and join together. "But, there is no one to lead us." Yes, there is! He is the Messiah and He will be happy to be invited to your Seder. That's why we wrote a Messianic Haggadah. Just follow what it says and you will keep the order right along with everyone else in the world. "Yes, but I don't know Hebrew." I have good news for you! God is so smart that He knows all of the languages of the world, but He is more interested in your heart than your words.

Your excuses will not prevail. Make up your mind now, well before Passover and prepare your heart and family to join in the observance.

Learn what *leaven* is in your life and home; remove it. Get some Matzah; you'll like it. Get a Haggadah and review the order of the Seder. Set your table festively for the feast. Have a feast to the Lord in your home or join others in their homes. Don't just talk about your redemption in Messiah Yeshua – do it!

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