

What About ... Easter?

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As part of the Mosaic Law, God gave Israel seven annual holidays or festivals, as recorded in Leviticus 23. They commemorated God's blessing of Israel (1) in the past history of the Exodus, (2) in their annual agricultural cycle, and (3) in the coming of the Messiah. Here we will focus our attention on the festivals of Passover and First Fruits.

Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, showed that the ultimate meaning of Passover is Christ's death as the Lamb of God. For, indeed, Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7b). We see that Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29b). He was officially presented to Israel on the Jewish date of Sunday, Nissan 10 (Palm Sunday). Subsequently, He was "inspected" for flawlessness over the following three days and killed on Passover. He fulfilled the ultimate meaning of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:1-6). But there is more.

His body was then placed in the tomb on Jewish date Nissan 14 prior to sundown. Sundown began Friday, Nissan 15, the first day of the Unleavened Bread Festival. Sunday, Nissan 17, was the next festival, First Fruits. First Fruits occurred on the single Sunday during the Festival of Unleavened Bread week. So from year-to-year, it would rotate dates, repeating every seventh year.

First Fruits was the festival in which the Israelites brought samples of their first grain crops of the spring to the priest. The priest would then wave the grain on that Sunday for all to see God's bountiful provision (Leviticus 23:9-11). In the year of Christ's death, the festival of First Fruits occurred three days and nights after Passover, fulfilling Christ's repeated prediction about His resurrection. So He arose early on Sunday, the feast of First Fruits fulfilling its real meaning. When the women arrived at the tomb early Sunday morning, He was already gone (Matthew 28:1-6).

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Following His resurrection, He appeared openly to large numbers of people (1 Corinthians 15:3-8) over a period of 40 days (Acts 1:3) to reveal His resurrection. In affect, God "waved Him," the real First Fruit, for all to see. Numerous people, such as Lazarus and others, had been brought back to life before, but Jesus Christ

was the very first person ever to be truly resurrected — with a new body, never again to die. It's the core of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-40) and beautifully portrayed in First Fruits.

Unfortunately, the church has compromised First Fruits with the label of "Easter." The exact origin of this name and its practices are much debated among cult authorities, but it is clearly of non-biblical pagan origin. Most trace it back at least to the cult Anglo-Saxon goddess named Eostre (Estre, Estara, Ostara, and others.) Allegedly, she was the goddess of the dawn and worshipped especially in the springtime. Fertility was a major theme, thus the symbols of rabbits, eggs, attractive clothing, and numerous other pagan practices. Various attempts have been made to trace the origin all the way back to Nimrod and his wife Semiramis as the principal false goddess.

Nonetheless, the Easter tradition runs deep within the Church. The term, "Easter," even erroneously crept into the KJV of the Bible in place of "Passover" in Acts 12:4.

We should be encouraged to drop the pagan term "Easter" and its ungodly practices in favor of celebrating the wondrous truths of God's First Fruits—the first person to rise from the dead, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

