

EASTER AND THE RESURRECTION

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most significant events in the history of the world. But it is of great disservice to the cause of truth and righteousness to connect it with Easter – a festival known to be entirely the affair of pagans.

Many people who revel in the observance of Easter today are quite ignorant of its origin. The festival has gained popularity in the world because people do accept religious dogmas without ascertaining their scriptural authenticity.

In Christendom, Easter is said to be a festival that celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The celebration is usually marked by church services held in an atmosphere of jubilation. Christian worshippers dress gorgeously and the places of worship are decorated with flowers and candles; and as for colours preference is always for white. “Christ the Lord is risen today” is chanted by jubilant celebrants.

Taken on the surface of it, these things appear to have a savour of Christian spirit but what the inquiring mind will want to know is whether there is an instruction by God that Christ’s resurrection should be commemorated; whether the early apostles of Jesus Christ ever celebrated it; whether, if ordained by God, it is being celebrated accordingly; and whether the name EASTER originates from God or Christ or the apostles.

Resurrection is one of the fundamental doctrines of the Bible and its reality is confirmed by that of Christ. Concerning the resurrection of Christ the apostle Paul wrote: “For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” – 1 Corinthians 15:16-20

Jesus Christ himself said: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” – Revelation 1:18

There is no doubt that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is a matter for great joy to all Christians who have the understanding of its significance. It is indisputably a vindication of the supremacy of Jehovah, the God of gods, and a positive evidence of the victory of Jesus Christ over death and its author, the devil.

According to the Scriptures, it is Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, that Almighty God has vested with power to raise the dead in His due time. And Christ said: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live...” – John 5:25, 26

Pagan Name

If for any reason, anyone on his own wishes to do honour to Jesus Christ by celebrating his resurrection, why should he make such an event bear a pagan name?

Easter was a festival of the Anglo-saxons originally celebrated in honour of a Teutonic goddess

known as Astarte or Eostre. E. Royston Pike in his *Encyclopedia of Religion and Religions* wrote concerning Easter as follows: "According to the Venerable Bede the name is derived from Eostre, the Anglosaxon goddess of spring whose festival was kept at the spring equinox..." He went on: "There is no mention of the celebration of Easter in the New Testament and the Apostolic Age." – Page 32

There is abundance of historical evidence that Easter has no connection whatsoever with the resurrection of Jesus Christ or with true Christianity for that matter. The Encyclopedia Britannica States among other things; "Bede in the 8th century derived it (Easter from that of the Anglo-Saxon spring goddess Eostre...around the Christian observance of Easter as the climax of the liturgical drama of Holy Week and Good Friday folk customs have collected, many of which have been handed down from the ancient ceremonial and symbolism of the pagan spring festival brought into relation with the resurrection them." – Vol. 7 pp. 864-866

The testimony of Alexander Hislop is also a case in point, in his *The Two Babylons* he made it known that Easter "is not a Christian name" and commented: "It beats on Chaldean origin on its very forehead. Easter is nothing else than Astarte, one of the titles of Beltis, the queen of heaven... That name as found Layard on the Assyrian monuments, is Ishtar... The festival, of which we read in Church history under the name Easter, in the third or fourth centuries, was quite a different festival from that now observed in the Romish Church, and at that time was not known by any such name as Easter. It was called the Pasch or the Passover..." – Page 103-104

Many of the customs associated with the observance of Easter in Christendom were borrowed from the pagans and they are of no spiritual significance to true Christians according to the Scriptures. With reference to Easter the American Educator Encyclopedia has this to say: "The English word is from the name of a Teutonic goddess of spring or the dawn, and many of the Easter customs probably had their beginning in the pagan celebrations of the rebirth of the world in the spring. The Easter egg is a symbol of new life. People dress in new clothes and wear flowers on Easter Sunday because the winter has come to an end and the earth seems alive again." – Vol. 4, Page E-16

The following references from other authoritative works are also worthy of note: "Before the time of Christ people used to worship many gods, goddesses. One was named Eastre; Because Easter comes in the spring. We have named it for this goddess. We have brightly colored eggs at Easter, because eggs stand for the beginning, or birth, just as spring itself is a birth each year. Christians celebrated Easter as the New Year..." – Illustrated World Encyclopedia, Vol. 7, page 1732

"Many of the popular observances of Easter are pagan in origin. Some may be traced to the feast of the goddess Eostra..." – The American Peoples Encyclopedia, Vol. 7, page 483

Mistranslation

No intelligent student of the Bible will ever make reference to Acts 12:4 as an authority for the celebration of Easter. As a matter of fact that is the only place where the word Easter appears in the Holy Bible. But for the bias of the translators the word would not have come in at all because it is most unrelated to the context of the text. That the word is a mistranslation is indisputable.

Indeed it is in the *Authorized Version* the error is made but other versions or translations of the

Bible give the correct rendering. In the *Douay Version* (which some call Roman Catholic Bible) the word Pasch is used. Other versions, such as *the Revised Version*, *Moffat Translation*, *Diaglott*, *The New English Bible* and so on, use the proper word, Passover.

William Nicholson in his *Bible Student's Companion*, stated: "EASTER – An improper translation: for the feast of the Passover is meant, Acts xii. 4. Easter was the name of a Pagan festival observed in spring by our ancestors, in honour of the goddess Astarte or Eostre, a Saxon goddess, the Ashtaroth of Syria. In all other places Paschais rendered Passover, the true meaning."

The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible confirms that Easter was "originally the spring festival in honour of the Teutonic goddess of light and spring known in Anglo-Saxon as Eastre." It goes on: "As early as the 8th century the name was transferred by the Anglo-Saxon to the Christian festival designed to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. In Authorised Version it occurs once (Acts 12:4), but is a mistranslation. The original is pascha, the ordinary Greek word for Passover. Revised Version properly employs the word Passover." – Page 145

With regard to the word Easter In a text in the Authorised Version of the Bible Alexander Hislop's comments are also enlightening. He wrote: "Every one knows that the name 'Easter', used in our translation of Acts xii. 4, refers not to any Christian festival but to the Jewish Passover. This is one of the few places in our version where the translators show an undue bias."

That many things have been going wrong in Christendom there is no doubt. The invention of dogmas and upholding of traditions of men rather than true doctrines and the commandments of God have resulted in the mass production of nominal Christians. Lots of things being done in the name of Christ today cannot receive his approval or be scripturally justified.

Easter, we must re-emphasise, is a pagan festival which has nothing to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.