**Why Not Easter?**

*by Joe R. Price*

It’s that time of year again when many people make their annual trek to the “church of their choice.” Easter, the springtime celebration of resurrection and renewal, has arrived.

If you say, “that sounds a bit cynical Joe,” perhaps it does. But, there are several Bible reasons to object to this annual “Christian festival,” not the least of which is that Christ Jesus nowhere in all of His New Testament commanded, encouraged or even remotely suggested that Christians honor His resurrection with an annual holiday called “Easter.” For those who want to do all things by His authority, such religious traditions are unnecessary, unwarranted and unwanted (Col. 3:17). “By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?” (Matt. 21:23)

The authority for Easter did not come from God. Such a Christian festival is not to be found in His word, the Bible. Oh, but you say, “Easter is in the Bible in Acts 12:4!” Yes, the King James translators put the word “Easter” in that verse, but textual scholars concede they should have used the word “Passover” since that is the word used in the Greek text (*pascha*). It is translated “Passover” every time it is used in the New Testament except here (for example, see Lk. 22:1). The King James translators betrayed their prejudice for the springtime religious festival invented by men when they rendered *pascha* “Easter” in Acts 12:4. Easter, as it occurs it modern churches, is not in the Bible.

The Catholic Concise Encyclopedia tells us the name Easter “derives from the Saxon goddess Eastre, the ancient deity of the dawn” (p. 138). It was only after AD 300 that the festivities of Easter became frequent (Shaff Herzog Encyclopedia, IV:43-45). There is general agreement among Easter historians that its origin is pagan in nature, and that the third to fourth century church incorporated, accommodated and adapted the features of pagan spring festivals into its celebration of the resurrection of Christ. (When there is no Bible authority for a religious practice, one source becomes as good as another; but it remains that such a thing does not please God – see Matt. 7:21-23.)

An increasing number of so-called “Churches of Christ” celebrate Easter Sunday. For example, the Southern Hills Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas (an institutional congregation) called April 16, 2006 “Resurrection Sunday” on their website. Their meaning was clear: they had planned an Easter service (one day after their “Eggstravaganza” of an Easter egg hunt!). Their website said, “Easter is more than ‘long ago and far away.’ Easter is more than hunting eggs and frilly dresses. Jesus’ resurrection means we have the power to start life fresh and write a new chapter!” (from an article published at [sohillschurch.org](http://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fsohillschurch.org%2F&h=UAQFGF32mAQEHEwfUJgwAp2mnY_boCprEOW3eVo2wcefAUw&enc=AZPv12GF0usI8Ndirf28MBc7PCH6I5pXO4l5rLWCHUEj1FAnXY41kgVfTpU956I_yoaYrfiBajEcZz9P1myL76ncce_U590aMG6GaYagurndlfGcH0vl99oMp_pXsnRpJDbcZr0pXgl3d7wlAcAP3dnCpqK1bGX6D6yB9y0c6g4WdUz22oYBdig-l_bboizTJnE&s=1)). And so, they define “Jesus’ resurrection” as “Easter,” but they do so on their own authority and not the Scriptures.

Should we also plan to observe Easter with Resurrection Sunday services? No. But, to hear some brethren these days, we are not using our opportunity to tell others about the resurrected Christ when we do not have Easter services – or at least have a sermon about the resurrection of Christ. Really? How can we scripturally tell the world of Jesus Christ and His gospel by inviting them to an unscriptural worship service? Our weekly remembrance of the Lord’s death by eating the Lord’s Supper proclaims His death “till He comes,” which implies He arose from the dead (1 Cor. 11:26). If we are not telling others about the resurrected Christ it is not because we do not have an annual Easter service like the churches around us; it is because we not making clear our practice of proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes again **each Lord’s day** and we are not living our faith before others **every day** (1 Cor. 15:16-20)!

We must continue to warn brethren who try to incorporate the wisdom of men into the church of Christ, including “Easter Sunday” services. (Such incorporation is exactly what the third to fourth century, apostate church did when it incorporated pagan spring festivals into its worship and called it “Easter.”) We do not have to accommodate the gospel to the traditions of men in order to proclaim it to others; to do so is actually to pervert it (1 Cor. 2:1 5; Gal. 1:6-10; 1 Tim. 4:1-3). We are commanded not to rely on the traditions of men for God’s approval (Matt. 15:7 9; 7:21-23; 1 Cor. 1:18 31; 4:6; 2 Jn. 9).

Even after this lengthy explanation there will be the person who says, “What? You mean you don’t observe Easter? Don’t you believe Jesus was raised from the dead?” They have completely missed the point. Of course we believe Jesus was raised from the dead, otherwise our faith is vain and we are truly pitiable (1 Cor. 15:17 19). But friend, belief in the resurrection of Jesus does not demand that we participate in a man made celebration of it. The resurrection of Jesus occurred by the wisdom and power of God (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 6:14; 1:24). But the religious holiday called Easter occurs by the wisdom and power of man. Easter is a man-made religious observance of the resurrection of Jesus that honors the wisdom and power of man, not the powerful work and wisdom of God. Jesus said:

“…Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do [like Easter, jrp]." He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition” (Mk. 7:6-9).

We will be content to practice and proclaim the good news of the resurrected Christ every day by lives of humble obedience to His word instead of binding the religious traditions of men as if they are the will of God. One thing is certain; we will not go wrong when we do what the Bible says and refuse to add things to it (Matt. 7:21-23; Rev. 22:18-19).

--- from *The Spirit's Sword*, April 16, 2006 ---