

The Grace of God



"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us..." (Titus 2:11-12).

March 22, 2008 (Vol. 8)

EASTER!

dwh.

Wikipedia has this to say about Easter: *"Easter, also called Pascha, is the most important religious feast in the Christian liturgical year.[1] It celebrates the resurrection of Jesus, which Christians believe occurred on the third day after his crucifixion around AD 33. Many non-religious cultural elements have become part of the holiday, and those aspects are often celebrated by many Christians and non-Christians alike."*

Wiki adds, *"The ecclesiastical historian Socrates Scholasticus (b. 380) attributes the observance of Easter by the church to the perpetuation of local custom, 'just as many other customs have been established,' stating that neither Jesus nor his Apostles enjoined the keeping of this or any other festival..."*

In other words, modern day "Christianity" follows a pattern of feasts and celebrations based upon tradition. This tradition is linked to Bible events, but is not revealed in the Bible as a feast or celebration, etc.

For example, with the exception of the mistranslation in the King James Version of the Jewish Passover as "Easter", there is no reference to Easter, its observances, its festivities, etc. As to the KJV's use of "Easter" consider that the Jews, who were **opposed** to Christ and His church, would **not** have celebrated Christ's resurrection. And consider that the word translated "Easter" in the KJV of Acts 12:4 is the Greek word for the Old Testament feast of the "Passover". Reading other translations helps to clarify this:

Acts 12:1-4 ASV, "Now about that time Herod the king put forth his hands **to afflict certain of the church**. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And when he saw that **it pleased the Jews**, he proceeded to seize Peter also. **And those were the days of unleavened bread**. And when he had taken him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions

of soldiers to guard him; intending after **the Passover** to bring him forth to the people."

Even though Wikipedia assures us that Easter is a universally accepted practice, they do at least correctly quote from historical figures who say it did not originate with Jesus or the Apostles and is not actually observed religiously by all.

Wiki adds, *"The Easter festival is kept in many different ways among Western Christians. The traditional, liturgical observation of Easter, as practised among Roman Catholics and some Lutherans and Anglicans begins on the night of Holy Saturday with the Easter Vigil. This, the most important liturgy of the year, begins in total darkness with the blessing of the Easter fire, the lighting of the large Paschal candle (symbolic of the Risen Christ) and the chanting of the Exultet or Easter Proclamation attributed to Saint Ambrose of Milan. After this service of light, a number of readings from the Old Testament are read; these tell the stories of creation, the sacrifice of Isaac, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the foretold coming of the Messiah. This part of the service climaxes with the singing of the Gloria and the Alleluia and the proclamation of the Gospel of the resurrection. A sermon may be preached after the gospel. Then the focus moves from the lectern to the font. Anciently, Easter was considered the most perfect time to receive baptism, and this practice is alive in Roman Catholicism, as it is the time when new members are initiated into the Church, and it is being revived in some other circles. Whether there are baptisms at this point or not, it is traditional for the congregation to renew the vows of their baptismal faith. This act is often sealed by the sprinkling of the congregation with holy water from the font. The Catholic sacrament of Confirmation is also celebrated at the Vigil. The Easter Vigil concludes with the celebration of the Eucharist (or 'Holy Communion'). Certain variations in the Easter Vigil exist: Some churches read the Old Testament lessons before the procession of the Paschal candle, and then read the gospel immediately after the Exultet. Some churches prefer to keep this vigil very early on the Sunday morning instead of the Saturday night, particularly Protestant churches, to reflect the gospel account of the women coming to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week. These services are known as the Sunrise service and often occur in outdoor setting such as the church's yard or a nearby park."*

Consider a few things from the comments above.

1) While there are references to Bible events, is there any reference to Bible authority for these traditions? No.

2) The emotional appeal of “Sunrise services” and “outdoor settings” is, I believe, very evident. It seems the focus is on dramatic settings and moving events, rather than on worship that is honestly honoring God according to God’s word (John 4:24).

3) Sprinkling for baptism among Catholics, Lutherans, etc. is also an unscriptural practice (cp. Rom. 6:1-4). Catholic Confirmation is unheard of in the Bible, as well as Paschal candle processions, etc. .

More could be examined about Easter and its religious observances. But we can sum that up by saying, “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14). We are not to have fellowship or participation in religious error.

Now, as concerning NON-religious festivities, the Bible shows that we are at liberty to eat, gather with friends, take a day of work, etc. For example, a practice that is ADDED to the gospel is absolutely forbidden (circumcision, Acts 15; Gal. 2). But when done simply as a social custom, in a nonreligious context, it was acceptable (Acts 16:3).

So, what can we say about churches of Christ having an “Easter Egg Hunt”? If it is done religiously, then we MUST ask: “By what authority do you do this?” If it is done as simply a social/entertainment activity, we must again ask, “Where does God authorize the church to be involved in such things?”

But I suppose this is not any different from having “fellowship-halls” (more accurately called kitchens/dinning rooms), gymnasiums, “family-life centers”, etc. If we can involve the church in one unrevealed practice, why not 100, or 1000?

As God said to Israel of Old, “And that ye may make a distinction between the holy and the common, and

between the unclean and the clean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Jehovah hath spoken unto them by Moses.” (Lev. 10:10-11) God wanted a distinction made between things dedicated to God’s service and things for common use. To fail to make these distinctions was to sin against God.

This principle is repeated in the New Testament (1 Cor. 11:33). So, in order to please God we need to let the church be the church and the home be the home. Don’t blur the lines!

PEOPLE TO REMEMBER & PRAY FOR

Jean Gambrell (back), **Othena Kinnard**, **Mag Bumbalough**, **Mary Cox**, **Monie Petty**, **Dave Poteet** (NHC 225), **Betty England**, **Thelma Klein**, **Ed Williams**, **Michelle Austin**, **Lydia Poe**, **Larry Bumbalough**, **Jake Hale**, **Joshua & Misty Poteet**, **Carolyn Williams**, **Kenley Streeval**. **Matthew Taylor** (leukemia), **Bill Frazier** (cancer), **Emma Featherston** (Adam’s grandmother), **Michael Harris** (Gerald Harris’s Son, medical complications), **Edwin Hayes**.

OBEY THE GOSPEL!!!

Hear (Rom. 10:17) Believe (Mark 16:16)
Repent (Acts 17:30-31) Confess (Rom. 10:9)
Be Baptized (Acts 2:38) Live Faithfully (Rev. 2:10)

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **Radio Program** - Every Sun. 2pm, AM 1050 WSMT
- **HBS/Singing** - March 29, April 26
- **Ladies Class** - 2nd & Last Sunday Each Month
- **Business Meeting** - Sun. March 30
- **GM** - Ron Daly, April, 7-11, 2008 (Mon-Fri).
- **GM** - Lanny Smith, Oct.12-17, 2008.

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Place
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Here

Speaking As The Oracles Of God (1 Pet. 4:11)