

Easter or Passover?

By Ronald L. Dart

There is a fascinating story that links Easter and Passover, and most of the world goes on blissfully unaware of it. Most people know that Easter and Passover are in the same general season of the year, but what most don't realize is that the Christian observance of Easter actually arose directly from the Passover. No, I don't mean from the resurrection; I mean from the Passover itself.

Part of the confusion arises from a curious use of terms. The Hebrew word for Passover is *pesach* and it is translated into Greek and Latin as *pascha*. Everywhere in the Bible, now underline that in your mind, where the Passover is mentioned, in Greek and Latin versions, it is the word *pascha*. Follow me carefully through this.

Throughout the Latin and Greek churches, the day of the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus is called, in their own languages, *pascha*—Passover. When the discussions of *pascha* are translated into English, they become Easter.

Why on earth and how on earth did this happen? And on a related question, how did colored eggs and Easter rabbits become connected to the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus? A more absurd connection is hard to imagine.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* does a good job of outlining the history of the development of *pascha* or, as they call it in English, Easter.

If you want to follow up on this, the article that you will want to look for is the "Easter controversy," which they conclude went through three phases. The first of these phases was "mainly concerned with the lawfulness of celebrating Easter on a weekday. We read in Eusebius and give you the reference. A question of no small importance arose at that time, that is during the time of Pope Victor at about A.D. 90. The diocese of all Asia from an older tradition held that the 14th day of the moon, on which the Jews were

commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should always be observed as the feast of the life-giving *pascha*. Since Eusebius was writing in Greek he called it what it was: Passover. Naturally the 14th day of the first month can fall on any day of the week." Eusebius

was pointing out that, from ancient times, the church observed Passover on the day the Jews sacrificed the lamb. In other words, the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar.

When you consider that the Christian observance of Passover was about the sacrifice of Christ as the Passover lamb, that makes a whole lot of sense. In fact our earliest apostolic tradition as to this comes from

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Three Times a Year . . .

God commands us to give an offering "according to the blessing of the Lord". This Passover season we are reminded of the greatest blessings of all—Christ's sacrifice. There is a song in our hymnal that says it very well. "I gave, I gave My life for thee; What hast thou giv'n for Me?" Christ gave the supreme sacrifice so that you may have forgiveness of your sins. This Holy Day season is a time to show your appreciation for that ultimate sacrifice. "Give, and it shall be given unto you."

Do You Forget About the Crucifixion?

By David Havir III

Passover is almost upon us! It marks the beginning of the Holy Day season that is documented in Leviticus 23. As Ron Dart illustrated in his book, *The Thread*, the Holy Days mark God's appointments with history. But wait, isn't the Passover just a Jewish holiday?

The Jewish Passover commemorates the Exodus. While this event was special, there is a deeper meaning to the day—a meaning for all Christians. Let's take a look at Matthew chapter 26: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" (vv. 26-28, NKJV).

Jesus instructed the disciples to take the bread and the wine. It is a powerful story, but does that apply to us? I Corinthians 11 gives us an answer: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." (vv. 23-26, NKJV).

God knows the importance of symbolism to

illustrate a point. He knows Satan tries to distract us from what is important. But He has given us tools to help keep our focus.

If you look around, you see images of the cross on a daily basis. My point is not to argue the merits of the cross as a symbol or to discuss concerns about idolatry. Instead, I want to go back to the original point of the article. Do you forget about the crucifixion? But, how can I even ask that? I just said we see images of the cross every day.

I want to share a story I heard in a sermon years ago. A gentleman was in a store and overheard a conversation between another patron and an employee. A lady was shopping and came across a necklace with a representation of Jesus on the cross. She asked the employee if they had something similar but without that guy on it. I want to word this carefully; because I am not that person's judge, nor do I want to be. But that sort of attitude sounds like it leads to forgetting about the death of Jesus Christ. Whether you believe in wearing the cross as a necklace or not, it isn't just some guy on that cross.

But let's get back to I Corinthians and the symbolism that was given to us. As with everything else, God has given us a perfect way to remember the crucifixion. He has established a time, an appointment with history, for us to remember what Jesus sacrificed for us. He has given us a way to remember and refocus on the fact that Jesus is our Savior, who died for our sins.

Thank You Linda

Born to Win wants to give a most sincere thank you to Linda Benton, who has served as Editorial Assistant for this publication for the past few years. She is retiring to spend time with her elderly mother.

Linda has been a fixture at Christian Education Ministries. Her pleasant phone demeanor and outgoing personality have helped to provide superior customer service. She has been instrumental in the planning of the Feast of Tabernacles, Summer Camp, and Women's Conferences. We wish Linda all the best as she faces new adventures!

Do You Forget About the Resurrection?

By David Havir III

The Passover is our way to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. For those who keep the Passover, the symbols given to us will soon be taken. We will do our best to give proper reverence to the sacrifice that Jesus made due to our failings. But is that the end of the story?

Let's take a moment to read from the Scripture regarding the rest of the story: "But the angel answered and said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.'" (Matthew 28:5-7, NKJV).

This was a miraculous event! And there is a day to specifically commemorate the event, right? Well, I'm not so sure we are all talking about the same day. If you read the lead article in this newsletter, Ron Dart gives a more in depth explanation about the connection between Passover and Easter.

I want to take a moment to share a warning that applied to me in my life. I didn't grow up celebrating Easter. Personally, I found the eggs and the bunny to be a distraction from the magnitude of the event. However, it became very easy to almost lump the resurrection in with the trappings of Easter. I mean, I was observing the Passover; so I was set. Or so I

thought. However, let's look at one more passage in the Bible that illustrates the danger with the line of thinking that I had.

Let's read from I Corinthians 15: "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!" (vv. 12-17, NKJV).

Well, that doesn't really apply to me, does it? I wasn't denying the resurrection, as some were doing at the time of this writing. But the last part of the passage really struck a chord. If Christ is not risen, my faith is futile. . . and I am still in my sin. Maybe I wasn't denying it the same way the Corinthians were. But I definitely wasn't focusing enough on an event that literally makes or breaks my faith. In my zeal to remove myself from the pagan influences that have come to be associated with the resurrection of Christ, I was removing myself from the event itself! And I don't ever want to forget that Jesus, our Savior who died for our sins, has risen!

In Memory

Born to Win is grateful for the generous contribution made in memory of John Orgel. John had a massive stroke December 6th and later passed. Our deepest sympathy and prayers go for his widow, Rita, and their family in this most difficult time. Please pray our Father's comfort for Rita during this time of deep grief and adjustment.

It's a heavy burden to carry, and our love and prayers are with her.

Born to Win is also grateful for the generous contribution made in memory of Billie Sue McNair.

She was the wife of Burk McNair, who was a minister in the Church of God.

Billie Sue was a warm, caring person who served well in numerous churches across the nation and was loved by many. She was survived not only by her husband, Burk McNair, but by their children and grandchildren.

How to Get Out of Trouble

By Allie Dart

Some of us seem to have what is often called “hoof and mouth disease”. Every time we open our mouths, we insert our foot by saying the wrong thing. Others get hurt because of the words we say. Certainly, it’s better if you don’t say those hurtful things. But most human beings manage to hurt someone with their words sooner or later.

The Apostle James has something to say about this. “Now if we put the bit in the horse’s mouth so that they obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Behold the ship also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire. And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body and sets on fire the course of our life. And is set on fire by hell.” (James 3:3-6, NKJV).

That little pink flesh that flaps around in our mouth gets us regularly in trouble. James continues in verse 8 by saying: “No man can tame it.” Then in verse 10, he says, “My brethren, these things ought not to be this way.” Are we helpless and is there no way to tame the tongue—control what we say? What is the cause of the tongue setting such a great fire?

James addresses the major problem with the tongue getting out of control in verses 14-16. He labels it bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil things.” Think about it. Analyze the

times your tongue has gotten you in trouble. Was there no jealousy or selfish ambition?

We have a problem. James tells us that no man can control his tongue. Are we helpless and is there no solution to constantly offending with that pink piece of flesh in our mouth? What is the answer?

In essence, it’s not your tongue. It can only do what your mind tells it to. It is your heart. The Bible says, “The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it?” You can’t control your tongue all by yourself. You need God’s help. Ask for it. Go to God, confess your jealous and selfish ambition and repent! God is the solution. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Christ in you can control your tongue. It will take constant prayer and thinking before you speak. Recognize that you have the weakness that all humans have, and when in doubt, don’t say it.

So, what if you yield to temptation and stick your foot in it? Or maybe I should say, your tongue in it, and what you say has offended someone? How do you get out of it? How do you make amends? The way to get out of trouble is to admit you’re wrong and confess your sin. For some reason, I’m left cold with “I apologize”. So many times it’s a little lightweight for the sin you’ve committed.

Remember Psalm 51? David never came close to justifying himself. He said he was wrong! That’s where you start. Admit you’re wrong. Ask forgiveness. Think about it. Doesn’t saying “I am truly sorry” show a more repentant attitude if you really mean it? It’s much more likely to get you out of trouble. But the solution is to mean it, and to not repeat that mistake.

Prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles 2017

Join *Born to Win* for the 2017 Feast of Tabernacles cruise! Christian Educational Ministries will be sponsoring a Western Caribbean Cruise on board the Royal Caribbean International vessel named *Liberty of the Seas*! The cruise will make stops in Cozumel, the Grand Caymans, and Jamaica. Services will be a mix of live speakers and the timeless messages of Ronald L. Dart. Watch for more exciting information to learn how affordable, fun, and spiritually uplifting the cruise will be! If you are interested in the Cruise, please call us at 1-888-BIBLE-44 or email us at david@borntowin.net.

Hurry before time runs out on this truly edifying opportunity!

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the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. He said in I Corinthians 5:7-8: “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

So, celebrating *pascha* on the day the Jews killed the lambs made perfect sense. And that’s what all the churches did throughout Asia Minor, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia in those early years. They all celebrated Passover on the day the Jews killed the lamb.

Eusebius said that the Eastern churches contended that the fast ought to end on that day, whatever day of the week it might happen to be and I presume he’s referring to the Lenten season fast.

Continuing to quote, “However it was not the custom of the churches in the rest of the world to end it at this point, as they observed the practice, which from apostolic tradition has prevailed to the present time of terminating the fast on no other day, but that of the resurrection of our Savior.”

Now, there is no record whatsoever, of a Lenten fast in any of the writings of the Apostles. So we know that the whole idea of a fast leading up to Passover was a post-apostolic development.

We do, however, know that Jesus and the Apostles kept the Passover, the Feast of the Passover, and we know when they did it. Now bear in mind that when Eusebius spoke of the customs of the Eastern churches, he was talking about Asia Minor (today what we call Turkey), Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. In other words, those church’s closest and earliest in the origins of the faith. When he spoke of the rest of the world, he was talking primarily about Rome and Alexandria.

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Eusebius continued, “Synods and assemblies of bishops were held on this account and all with one

consent, through mutual correspondence, drew up an ecclesiastical decree that the mystery of the resurrection of the Lord should be celebrated on no other day, but the Sunday and that we should observe the close of the Paschal fast on that day only.”

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The Catholic Encyclopedia says, “The words of the father of church history followed by some extracts which he makes from the controversy letters of the time, tell us almost all we know concerning the Paschal controversy in its first stage.” They say almost all we know, they have covered the waterfront, because there’s precious little anywhere else.

It is helpful to notice that they’re still calling it the *Paschal* controversy. When translated into English, they should remember it, Passover—this they carefully avoid.

They go on to say, “A letter of Saint Irenaeus is among the extracts just referred to and this shows that the diversity of practice regarding Easter had existed at least from the time of Pope Sixtus circa 120 A.D.”

“Further, Irenaeus stated that Saint Polycarp who, like the other Asiatics, kept Easter on the 14th day of the moon, whatever day of the week it was, following there in the tradition which he claimed to have derived from Saint John the Apostle.” We have no way of verifying that Polycarp got it from John the Apostle, but we can verify that the Corinthians got it from Paul exactly that way. “[Polycarp] came to Rome about 150 A.D. about this very question. He could not be persuaded by Pope Anticetus to relinquish his Quartodeciman observance (that’s the practice of keeping the Passover on the 14th), nevertheless he was not debarred from communion with the Roman church and Irenaeus, while condemning the Quartodeciman practice nevertheless reproaches Pope Victor with having excommunicated the Asiatics too precipitously, and for not having followed the moderation of his predecessors.”

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The article does not discuss the origins of the diversity that goes back at least to 120 A.D. It doesn't tell you how the church got divided between East and West as it was by that time; nor does it discuss who made the change, East or West, but it seems likely that the Eastern churches, which were unanimous in their observations and who supported Paul, if not John, have the older case. But somehow, a change got introduced.

The article continues, "The question thus debated was therefore primarily whether Easter was to be kept on Sunday or whether Christians should observe the holy day of the Jews, the 14th of Nisan, which might occur on any day of the week."

Did you notice that the article stopped calling the festival *pascha* and began calling it Easter? Those who kept Easter with the Jews were called Quartodecimans. But even in the time of Pope Victor, this usage hardly extended beyond the churches of Asia Minor, where they had already told us that it really extended to Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia.

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"After the Pope's strong measures, the Quartodecimans seem to have gradually dwindled away. Origen seems to regard them as a mere handful of

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wrong-headed nonconformists." That's what we usually consider people who differ from us.

I'm sorry, but you can't "keep Easter with the Jews." The article says those who "kept Easter with the Jews were called Quartodecimans." It is not possible; the Jews don't keep Easter, they observe Passover. Now if you think they had solved their problems by what they had done, you'd be mistaken. This day was called *pascha* in their language, and they started translating it into English as Easter every time they mentioned it. But in their own language of Latin or Greek it was still *Pascha*.

This was problematic because that word pointed at the Passover, always. The early church sprouted schisms like so many weeds and, after this, there arose a new challenge.

You will want to hear about this new challenge. To hear more about the challenge and the Council of Nicaea, return the enclosed card, call us at 1-888-BIBLE-44, or email us at adm@borntowin.net and request your copy of *Easter or Passover?* by Ronald L. Dart.

Born to Win

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*That the man of God may be proficient
and equipped for every good work*