

CHURCH TRADITIONS

What did everyone think of Steve's message on the Pagan origins of Easter?

Good reasech. Easter is a pagan holiday.

But I was glad he said what he did at the end about not judging one another when it comes to the observance of these feast days because it's really easy to get *puffed up* by this kind of knowledge. It's easy for we who have left the Religious System and know the truth, to look down our noses at those who don't know the truth and remain in that System. It's easy for us to get *self righteous* when we compare ourselves to them.

Sometimes it's good to remind ourseves that *none* of what we have ever known as "Church" is Scriptural. It's not just the holy days and the feasts that are pagan. Whether you are talking about the observances of the Ecclesseastical Year (like Christmas and Easter, etc.), or the structure and content of the church service itself, none of it comes from the Scripture. All of it—the Sunday morning sermon, the pastor, the building and the pews, the offering, the choir, missionary programs, and anything else you can possibly mention—comes from either religious or secular paganaism. Everything we have ever done in "church" was of pagan origins. They were introduced first into the Roman Catholic organiztion, and then modified and incorporated into the Protestant Reformation—and none of them are Scriptural. Indeed, some of them are blatently pagan in character.

Yet, since the days of the Reformation, God has not only allowed these things to go on in His "Church", He has *blessed them* to a certain degree. Look at all the great men of God over the last 500 years. All of them have been part of this unscriptural System and structure. And even though they would denouce the sin that was rampant in the System, they defened the System *itself* as being Scriptural to thier dying day, even though it clearly is not Scriptural. Yet, in spite of this, God blessed these men and used them mightily.

The Protestant Church has been contaminated from the very beginning because it brought with it a whole slew of Roman practices, ordinances, and holy days that were clearly unscriptutral, pagan, and purposely anti-Jewish in nature. One of the things Steve mentioned briefly last night was the *possible* role Anti-semitism might have played in the change from observing the 14 day of Nisan as the Jewish Passover, which the Jewish Messiah fulfilled, to the Sunday after Passover, which has nothing to do with the Jewish feast.

Personally, I think Antisemitism was a *major* factor in the decision to change the celebration Jesus instituted from a *Christian version of a Jewish feast* to a *Pagan version of a Christian feast*. And I think history bears this out. For example, history records that around 155 A.D. Polycarp of Smyrna, who was a disciple of the apostle John, went to Rome to deal with various heretics and doctrinal issues. While there, he tried to persuade Anicetus, the bishop Rome, *not* to switch the Jewish Passover observance from the 14th day of Nisan to the following Sunday after that day. His pleas was ignored.

Later, in the year 193 A.D., the Council of Rome, presided over by Bishop Victor, condemned those who still celebrated paschal tradition on the proper Jewish day of Nisan 14. He wrote a letter to Polycrates of Ephesus and the Churches in Asia, urging them to recognize the new Sunday tradition, but the churches of Asia flatly rejected his plea.

Even over a century later, there still were those, even among the Romans that wanted to observe the Lord's death on the 14th of Nisan. This was distressing to Emperor Constantine, and he had this issue as one of the main agenda items for the Council of Nicea, which he had convened in 325 A.D. He convened the council of 318 bishops, and one of the decrees they passed concerned the celebration of Passover. The decree said that there must be one day, unanimously recognized by all people, regarding the celebration of God's "holy and supremely excellent day". According to Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, Book III chapter 18, Constantine said: "*Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way.*" However, Constantine's decrees and declarations did not stop everyone from properly observing Passover. Because of this, a later Roman Emperor named Theodosius (380-394) decreed a death penalty for all who would: "...*dare to perpetrate the atrocious crime of celebrating on an improper day the festival of Easter*".

The same Roman authority that changed the Passover feast and its date because of antisemitism, changed the weekly Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday for the same reason. And 1700 years later, not only the whole Protestant religious system clings to that change, the whole culture of the West is built around the Sunday sabbath.

Even many of those who have come out of the System, *continue* the practice of meeting on Sunday mornings. Because we still think Sunday is the Lord's day because that's when He rose from the grave. But this is not true. The Lord rose on the Jewish sabbath—and the reason so many people don't know this truth is because they don't have any understanding of the Jewish feasts and ordinances, all of which are types and shadows, and sometimes prophecies concerning the life, death and resurrection of the Lord. Our understanding is not the understanding of the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but rather, the children of Aristotle and Rome.

Everything about the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was already laid out in the Scripture thousands of years before He came to earth. Much of this is contained in the shadow of the law and the celebration of the feasts of Israel. For example, under the Law, on the evening *after* the Passover *Sabbath* was over, the very first sheaf of grain of the early harvest was cut from the ground. It was prepared that night by threshing the barley from the chaff and then parching it over a fire. The next morning, the priest lifted an omer of the grain to God as the presentation of the firstfruits of the harvest. This is what Paul had in mind when he said: *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.* (I. Cor. 15:20)

The term, "Christ the firstfruits", is a direct reference to that first sheaf offered on the morning after the Sabbath by the priest. Paul's wording leaves no room for doubt. James referred to this as well when he said: "*Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures*" (James 1:18). What we see here is Christ as the first of the firstfruits in the resurrection, with the remainder of the firstfruits to follow at his coming.

So the Sunday morning after the Jewish Passover is important to both Jews and Christians. For the Jews, it was the day of the offering of the firstfruits, the first day of the seven weeks to the Feast of Firstfruits. For the Christian, it doesn't commemorate the resurrection, but the *ascension* of Jesus to the Father. Also, it commemorated the Lord's first appearances to his disciples after His resurrection. Moreover, it was the first day of the seven weeks till the *spiritual* fulfillment of the Feast of Pentecost. Thus, those who want to observe a day in connection with the resurrection should only be observing one Sunday out of the year.

Another Christian observance which is not really done according to Scripture is the Lord's supper. The Lord's supper included a regular meal, then the bread and the wine, then a foot washing. This is brought out in the gospel of John and the book of Corinthians. First let's look at how John describes the evening of the Last Supper:

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter

therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

John 13:1-30

From her till John chapter 18, Jesus talks to the disciples. Then the Scripture says: When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.”

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

I Corinthians 11:18-29

We have all done, and may still be doing things that are not exactly Scriptural.

We must be careful to not get self righteous and judge people with regards to these things.

Tell about visti to Zac Poonen's meeting....Humility....do we really feel like we are nothing?