

practiced long before the English word Easter was adopted by English speaking people. The translators of the Authorized Version (1611) were led of the Holy Spirit and proclaimed the Lord's resurrection with great jealousy and boldness. This post-resurrection word shows Christ as our Passover Lamb (**I Corinthians 5:7**). Jesus Christ became the Lamb of God and replaces the Old Testament Passover (**John 1:29**).

Easter is the Christian fulfillment of the Jewish Passover which is on the same date of the Jewish calendar. In **I Corinthians 5:7**, "*For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*" - my question: How can this be a pagan word? If the Greek word Pascha is translated as "Passover" (Holy Day) twenty-eight times and as "Easter" once, why would anyone assume Easter is pagan? It is from the same Greek word that describes one of Jehovah's Holy Days. This Greek word is a good word which is associated with a Holy Feast and has no connection with paganism. We should believe the Word of God and not fairy tales and old wives fables. Amen. A quote from another author: "Easter is not only a synonym for Passover, but also a descriptive word revealing the New Testament fulfillment of the Passover in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection."

Conclusion

Two hundred years before Constantine and the Nicean council of 325 A.D., Christians were celebrating Easter. It was called pascha, which is Greek for Passover. Easter is not a Roman Catholic holiday, for it was observed before there was a Catholic church. Constantine did not invent Easter. In the second century (as early as 120 A.D.), many of the Jewish Christians held to the fourteenth of Nisan (time of Passover) and many of the Gentile Christians held to the Sunday following the fourteenth in their celebration of Christ's Resurrection. Many of the early church writers spoke on the subject. There seems to have never been a debate as to whether or not to celebrate Easter among them, but only as to the particular day. The use of the word Pascha in early Christian writings dealt with the celebration of Christ's resurrection and not just the Jewish Passover.

*"Woe unto them that call
evil good, and good evil;
that put darkness for light,
and light for darkness;
that put bitter for sweet,
and sweet for bitter!"*

Isaiah 5:20



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*"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
Acts 16:31*

The Riches

OF GRACE

Robert W. Reed
April 2009

"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

EASTER

"And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."

Acts 12:4

+ Christian Passover +

Easter is a term that describes the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Christian Passover). It is the Christian fulfillment of the Jewish Passover which occurred on the same date of the Jewish calendar. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was foretold in the Old Testament and is mentioned at least one hundred times in the New Testament. It is the foundation of Christianity. The very gospel by which we are saved is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (**I Corinthians 15:3-4**). God purposely chose the time of year (spring) in which His Son would die and be raised again for our sins to coincide with the spring feasts of **Leviticus 23**. Even the flowers this time of year give testimony to this truth.

"A festival of the christian church observed in commeration of our Savior's resurrection. It answers to the Pascha or Passover of the Hebrews, and most nations still give it this name, *pascha, pask, paque.*"

Webster's 1828 Dictionary

The term Easter in the Bible has been a source of controversy for a number of years. This article will present three different views on this issue. I believe Easter is a good word and should be in the Scriptures. At the same time, I also reject the pagan customs that have crept into the church during the Easter observance (Easter trees, colored eggs, rabbits, etc.).

Mistranslation

Many critics say the Authorized Version of the Bible is in error for using the word Easter instead of Passover in **Acts 12:4** “*And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.*” The word Easter here is from the Greek word “pascha”. Twenty-eight times it is translated “Passover”; only one time is it translated “Easter.”

The Authorized Version in 1611 is not alone in using the word Easter and is not the first to do so. William Tyndale was the first to use the word Easter in the translation of an English Bible. It was not a creation of the King James translators. A number of early English versions used Easter as the translation of pascha. Tyndale’s translation (1525) has the word Ester (Easter) fourteen times; Esterlambe eleven times; Esterfeast once; and paschall Lamb three times. Since Tyndale, the term Easter has been used as the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ, the fulfillment of the Passover in Messiah. Tyndale used both Passover and Easter for the same Greek word. In **I Corinthians 5:7**, Tyndale’s translation reads, “For Christ oure Easterlambe is offered vp for vu”; and in **Mark 14:12**, he used “paschall Lamb” and “Easter Lamb” in the same verse. The Matthews’ Bible (1537) used “Passover” fourteen times and “Easter” fifteen times in the New Testament. In the Bishops’ Bible (1568), the word Easter appears in **John 11:55** and **Acts 12:4**. The Geneva Bible (1557) used “Easter” in **Acts 12:4**, but the 1560 version changes it to “Passover”. Martin Luther’s German translation uses the words oster, osterlamm, osterfew, which mean “easter”, “easter Lamb” and “easter fest”.

The King James translators were well educated, and well versed in Scripture, and understood many languages. They believed that they were led of the Holy Spirit in their work— unlike our modern critics. They demonstrate their understanding of words and were aware of the importance of what they were translating (Holy Scripture). They also stood against Catholicism and paganism which is seen in the dedicatory. They used the word Passover in other texts, because they were pre-resurrection passages and used “Easter” in a post-resurrection passage. The only exception is in **I Corinthians 5:7**, which alludes to the Old Testament feasts. The critics should be very careful in their corrections of God’s Holy Word (**Revelation 22:18-10**).

Correct Translation

There are those that believe the word Easter is a correct translation of the Greek word Pascha, but say it refers to a pagan festival that was celebrated by Herod which occurred around the same time as Passover. Many in the fundamental circles accept this view and at one time I also took this position. But there are many problems with this view. There is no Scriptural or historical evidence to support it. There are no records or proof from archaeology. This whole theory is based on mere speculation.

First, the Bible does not say Herod celebrated or waited for a pagan holiday

(**Acts 12:1-4**). Herod is thinking of the Jewish Passover, not some pagan festival. It would have been foolish for Herod to engage in a pagan practice and not to reverence the Jewish Passover. During the time of Passover there would have been multitudes of Jews in Jerusalem, plus there were thousands of Christians who recognized the Savior’s resurrection at this time of the year. It would have been political suicide for Herod to kill Peter during this Holy Week of Passover and Unleavened Bread (**Mark 14:1-2**).

He would have had trouble from the Jews and incurred wrath from Rome for not keeping peace in his district. Some historians say that Herod was non-religious and akin to being a political secularist. As another author put it, “Herod was not a true believer or pagan, nor was anyone else in Jerusalem worshipping Ishtar at that time.” Herod possibly did not kill Peter during this sacred week because of political expediency.

Second, the two feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread are connected together and are interchangeable terms (**Luke 22:1,7; Matthew 26:2,17; Exodus 12:15-20; 13:6-7; 23:14-15; Deuteronomy 16:6; Ezekiel 45:21**). Strictly speaking, Passover is on the fourteenth day of Nisan and Unleavened Bread was from the fifteenth unto the twenty-first of Nisan). But generally speaking these two feasts were tied together. In **Acts 12:3**, we have the “**days of Unleavened Bread.**” These days include the week following Passover and Herod simply waited for this entire week to run its course. Easter would have been after Passover, but during the week of Unleavened Bread (seventeenth day of Nisan).

Third, the word Easter simply means “resurrection.” Easter is not a Christianized pagan festival of spring named after some goddess of fertility (ostera, Ishtar, astrate, estare). The source of information on this subject usually comes from an English Catholic historian by the name of Bede, who lived in the early eighth century, or from Alexander Hislop, the author of the book, *The Two Babylon’s*. In Hislop’s book, there is a lot of speculation and little proof that Easter is pagan. He also was critical of the translators of the Authorized Version of the Bible.

The English word Easter is of Anglo / Saxon origin meaning resurrection as the German word for Easter is “Oster”. Quoting from other authors, “Those who study the origin of words (etymologist) say the English word Easter is derived from the German root “ostern”, for dawn or east, which is the time and place of the rising sun”; “*Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings*” (**Malachi 4:2**). This is how a day commemorating the resurrection of Christ could have been called Easter.

Many languages have one word for both the Jewish Passover and the celebration of the resurrection of Christ. In the original Greek language, the word pasche is used for both, and most native Greeks know the word pascha means Easter.

The word Easter is not pagan. We are not denying pagan practices and worship in the springtime or any other time. Nor are we saying there was no pagan worship before the time of Messiah. But there were also the feasts of Jehovah 1500 years before the birth of Messiah. Four of those feasts were in the spring (**Leviticus 23**). Each of these Holy Feasts of the Lord pointed to Jesus Christ.

Good Translation

This third view is that Easter is a good word and fits very well in the text of **Acts 12:4**. This is the view that I hold. The celebration of Christ’s resurrection was