

Prophecies of HOPE

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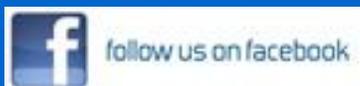
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Is Easter A Christian Holiday?

In the Spring time of every year, millions of Christians around the world celebrate the Easter holiday. From the time you were a child you may have been taught that Easter is a Christian celebration which commemorates the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Many celebrate the holiday by coloring Easter eggs and giving chocolate bunnies to friends and loved ones. If this is something you are familiar with or have been taught, then this article may be of interest to you on a personal level.



Did you realize that the Easter celebration is not a holiday which is taught in the Bible? Rather than being a Christian celebration, Easter has a pagan origin with roots deep in ancient sex worship. This may be difficult for you to believe, but let's consider what some authoritative works of history have to say about Easter.

The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1909 edition, Volume 5, page 227:

"A great many pagan customs, celebrating the return of spring, gravitated to Easter. The egg is the emblem of the germinating life of early spring. ...The rabbit is a pagan symbol and has always been an emblem of fertility."

The Encyclopedia Americana, 1956 edition, Volume 9, page 506:

"According to the Venerable Bede, English historian of the early 8th century, the word [Easter] is derived from the Norse Ostara or Eostre, meaning the festival of spring at the vernal equinox, March 21, when nature is in resurrection after winter. Hence, the rabbits, notable for their fecundity, and the eggs, colored like rays of the returning sun and the northern lights or aurora borealis."

This raises the question, if Easter is truly a Christian celebration, then why do many use eggs and rabbits to celebrate the holiday?



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What connection could they possibly have with the resurrection of Jesus Christ? The facts show that they have absolutely nothing to do with Jesus' resurrection. These things are traditional in Easter because the ancient pagans used them when celebrating their spring festival. Both were important symbols in pagan sex worship. On this point, consider what is said by Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, 1949 edition, Volume one, page 335:

"Children roll pasch eggs in England. Everywhere they hunt the many-colored Easter eggs, brought by the Easter rabbit. This is not mere child's play, but the vestige of a fertility rite, the eggs and the rabbit both symbolizing fertility. Furthermore, the rabbit was the escort of the Germanic goddess Ostara who gave the name to the festival by way of the German Ostern."

Does this mean that Easter is not mentioned in the Bible? Actually, the word "Easter" appears once in what is known as the "Authorized Version" or you may know it as the King James Version of the Bible. This is found at Acts 12:4. Notice this verse;

"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."

While the Authorized Version, also known as the King James Version of the Bible is a decent translation, the word Easter is the result of poor translating from the Greek language in which the book of Acts was originally written. The vast majority of Bible translations properly render the Greek word "pascha" as Passover, not Easter.

Note what The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible has to say about this on page 145:

"Easter is the spring festival in honor of the Teutonic goddess of light and spring known in Anglo-Saxon as Eastre. As early as the 8th century the name was transferred by the Anglo-Saxons to the Christian festival designed to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. In A.V. [Authorized Version] it occurs once (Acts 12:4), but is a mistranslation."

In fact, nowhere in the Bible does it indicate that early Christians observed a weekly Sunday or any kind of yearly Easter holiday to commemorate Christ's resurrection. With just a little research we have seen that Christian religious authorities openly admit that nearly everything associated with Easter is deeply rooted in paganism. Also, we find that Easter was never commanded by Christ or His disciples. It seems evident that Easter is another man-made holiday which is not in any way associated with worshipping God in "spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24)

As Christians, when it comes to our worship and the celebrating of Easter, each individual must decide for themselves whether he/she will or will not celebrate, and how, or if one should participate. This may raise another

question in your mind. Did Jesus mention any kind of celebration during this time of year?

The answer is, yes! The night before Jesus was crucified He demonstrated quite a different observance than the celebration of His resurrection. Jesus commanded the observance of what most Christians have known as "the last supper" or what is commonly known as communion. On the night of Nisan 14 on the Jewish calendar, Jesus served His disciples unleavened bread and wine to celebrate Passover. On that night, Jesus commanded His disciples, "... *this do in remembrance of me.*" (Luke 22:19) We can see from this event that it was Christ's death, not His resurrection that Jesus was emphasizing. This was an annual celebration and a reminder of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. (See Exodus 12, Deuteronomy 16, and Matthew 26:19, 20, 26-28)



Although we may observe communion more than once a year, can you think of a better time of year than Passover when Christ was crucified to honor and remember what our Father in heaven has done for us? God allowed His only begotten Son to leave His heavenly home and come down to this sinful world to die for us? Just think, our Lord Jesus gave His life willingly for any and all who accept Him as the Son of God! (John 3:16) Communion is a marvelous provision which we should never minimize. We are told that we should acknowledge this until Jesus comes again. In 1Corinthians 11:26 the Apostle Paul said, "*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*"

In conclusion, God is seeking those who will worship Him in a way that is pure and undefiled. When Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman He said this, "...*the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:23-24)

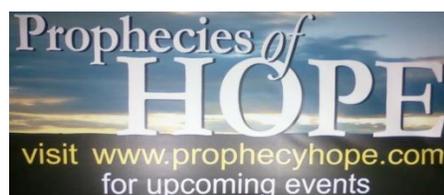
James said, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*" (James 4:7-8)

This time of year when most of the Christian world is celebrating a non-Biblical holiday called Easter, let's try to remember the celebration that Christ Himself instituted. We certainly do not want to minimize the resurrection in any way. We should keep in mind that the resurrection of Christ is evidence that His sacrifice was pure and was accepted by God, while remembering that Jesus' death was the first step in the atonement for man's sin. May each of us draw near to God and keep our worship pure. By doing so, and allowing the indwelling Christ to mold and shape our character, we can develop a personal relationship with the Father and His Son Jesus that will last for eternity!

We at Prophecies of Hope are praying that you, the reader, will take some time to reflect on what Christ's death and atonement for our sins means to you personally during the upcoming season.

Mark Martin, POH

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Can We Have The Faith Of Jesus?



Has there ever been a time in your life when you were terrified or truly afraid? Perhaps you've had thoughts of being seriously injured in some way, or maybe you have been in an automobile accident or you may have a friend or loved one who has been through something similar. Many people are afraid of earthly calamities while others fear the judgments of God. Perhaps you have thought that there is just no way you can live up to God's lofty standards. Have you ever been afraid that you cannot and will not measure up to the person God expects you to be? Maybe you've felt that there is just no way that you could be "perfect" as God has called us to be. In Matthew 5:48 Jesus said, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*"

Consider the above text for a moment. It seems obvious that Jesus is talking about our character in this verse. He could not expect us to change our looks, our height or our genetic makeup. He must be talking about our morality or our choices when it comes to right and wrong. And most truly He is calling us to complete perfection, an absolute perfection that is not by our own standards, but by His heavenly standards. This concept may surprise you. How would we ever be able to attain such a high achievement?

Revelation gives us a clear picture of an end time people who will live up to this standard! Revelation 12:14 says, "*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*" Here they are! If they are keeping the commands of God they must be living perfectly, right? What about the faith of Jesus? Why do these Saints have the faith of Jesus? It could be that this faith enables them to keep all of God's commandments. Does having the "faith of Jesus" mean just believing in the fact that it's Jesus' sacrifice that saves us? Is having the faith of Jesus the same as having faith in Jesus? In Galatians 2:16 we read;

*"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith **of** Jesus Christ, even we have believed **in** Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith **of** Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* (King James Version, **Emphasis added**)

If you read the above text carefully you will notice that there is a difference between the faith **of** Jesus and faith **in** Jesus. This text in Galatians makes it clear! We are not justified, (made acceptable to God) by our own small faith, nor by our works. But we are justified by the incredibly vast amount of faith that Christ has. Jesus has a faith that can not only move mountains, but a faith that can (and did) create them! His faith has obtained the victory for us! The faith we have **in** Jesus enables us to receive the gift of the faith **of** Jesus! Of course the faith that God puts in our hearts to know Christ Jesus and accept Him as our only means of salvation is very important. However, the faith of Christ is truly the key to living out and manifesting commandment keeping lives.

The point of the whole matter is this. The faith that Christ has in His Father, for all of His needs, for His very life and for His ultimate victory over sin can be ours. (2 Corinthians 13:4) We must claim Christ's faith so that we can be victorious! 1 John 5:4 says, "*For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*"

Christ Jesus was born of God. He is the only begotten Son of God. By His faith we are adopted sons and daughters of God. (See Romans 8:15 & Ephesians 1:5) By Jesus' faith, we can receive His victory over sin! Amen!

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Questions from the POH Mailbox



Does the Bible teach that homosexuality is wrong?

The short and direct answer to this question is yes. The Bible shows clearly that homosexuality is wrong. In 1Corinthians 6:9-10 the Apostle Paul said; *"do you not know that unjust ones will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be led astray, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous ones, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor plunderers shall inherit the kingdom of God."* (Literal Version)

However, the God of the Bible, known as Jehovah (Psalm 83:18, Exodus 6:3 KJV), is well aware of our human weaknesses. He is a God of love who does not cast aside any person as long as we are willing to conform to His will.

Notice that 1Corinthians 6:9-10 does not apply only to homosexuals. This Scripture shows that if we fall into **any** of the categories listed in those verses and we want eternal life, then we must be willing to make the appropriate changes in our lives. This same Bible passage shows us that making such a change **is** possible. The Apostle Paul refers to fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers and plunderers, and then he says in the very next verse:

"And such were some of you; but you have been washed, you have been made holy, you have been given righteousness in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." (KJV)

Notice too that Paul said, *"And such **were** some of you."* This shows that those who he was speaking to may have been in one or even more of those categories, but God gave them the power they needed to make the appropriate changes in their lives!

However, today there are some homosexuals who say that they cannot change. Some assert, "I can't help it; I was born a homosexual and this is who I am genetically." Or, they may say that homosexuality is the result of their upbringing. Without a doubt, there are many social, emotional and genetic factors that make us who we are. Perhaps any and/or all of these things are involved in what causes a person to have homosexual tendencies. In fact all of us were born with a sinful nature. In many cases the root causes of one's being a homosexual may not be completely known or understood.

Even so, we can be confident that our heavenly Father and His Son Jesus are very interested in helping us to overcome any vice which may keep us from inheriting eternal life. The key is that we must be willing to surrender our lives to God and look to Him for help. King David in the Old Testament said this prayer;

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow... Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." (Psalm 51:7, 9-11 KJV)

Today, if we sincerely ask for God's help in Jesus' name, we can be confident that God will hear us! In John 14:13-14 Jesus said, "*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*" (KJV) This means that we can be specific in our prayers and ask our heavenly Father to change our thinking and even our desires. We can ask Him to help us make certain practical adjustments in our lives which will be pleasing to Him. In some cases it may be that the total emotional, physical and social effects of homosexuality may not be wiped out completely or immediately. But, we should not give up on our endeavor to do God's will. At times progress may seem slow or even impossible, yet we can persist in prayer and rely on God's Spirit to help us to overcome anything which displeases our heavenly Father. Remember, Jesus said, "*...with God, all things are possible.*" (Matthew 19:26)

Jesus also said, "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*" (Revelation 3:21 KJV) So by the Grace of God the Father and His only begotten Son Jesus, we can and we must overcome if we expect to be a part of God's Kingdom!

Mark Martin, POH.

Is there a Bible question you would like to have answered but have hesitated to ask? Please feel free to mail or email your Bible questions to;

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Healthy Living



Are you drinking enough water? Did you know that each day, on average, about two quarts (64 ounces) of water is eliminated through the skin, lungs, intestines, and kidneys? We lose approximately one pint (16 ounces) of liquid every day just by exhaling. If this water is not replaced, we will become dehydrated. Some signs of dehydration are headache, fatigue, muscle soreness, dark urine, heat intolerance, dry mouth and dry eyes.

So how much water should we drink? Experts say that the minimum for a healthy person is eight to ten 8 ounce glasses of water per day. We need more if we exercise a lot or live in a hot climate. If we are overweight, it is recommended to drink an extra 8 ounce glass of water for every 25 pounds we exceed our ideal weight. Some may say that it is enough to drink water when you are thirsty, although if you are very thirsty, you may already be somewhat dehydrated.



Mark Martin, POH.

Shared Testimony

It's amazing how God works in our lives to bring us closer to Him and to refine us so we become accustomed to His way of thinking and strengthened in our faith.

I work from home, and in January of 2013, I had a severe adrenaline rush when a large, hardwood tree fell on the roof of our house during a teleconference I was leading with a client for my employer. It felt like there was an earthquake, although I live in an area of the US not prone to earthquakes. Those who were on the call with me were able to hear it over the phone, it was so loud, and I had to excuse myself from the call so I could hesitantly investigate what happened. I was not able to finish the workday due to the shock of what had happened.



Amazingly, God preserved our home and there was not much damage done, so the repair was fairly quick and painless – thank God! Our home is on the downside slope of a wooded lot that has a lot of mature trees. After the first tree fell, we felt confident that we would not have any additional issues since the remaining trees on the slope seemed to be in fairly good health and condition. However, about 6 months later, I was startled again (not mildly) by the sound and shaking of another tree crashing on the roof of the house. My husband intended to alert the owner of the property next door so the remaining trees could be thinned out and any dead/questionable trees could be taken down, but time got away, and this communication did not occur.

This evening (about 8 months after the 2nd tree fell), after a very spiritually uplifting conversation on Skype with several close friends, my husband and I were busy with a small task in the kitchen, when the unexpected happened. There was a crash that felt like an earthquake and sounded like an explosion!



The expression on my husband's face was unlike anything I've ever seen on his face before! His reaction told me that the adrenaline rush made him jump out of his skin... and he exclaimed, "what was that?" I calmly said to him, "that was a tree falling on the roof." A few seconds later, it occurred to me that this was the first time he had actually experienced being home when a tree hit the house. For me, this was the third time experiencing this sensation, and I was surprisingly not shaken. The difference in our involuntary reactions made me realize that this is just how we need to react in times when things in our lives get tough.

I was in awe when I understood that this is what it's like to become accustomed to exercising faith in our Father in heaven. He allows us to have trials and to be put through the fire, so that we become stronger in our faith and more immune to what this sinful world throws at us. When we have experiences that test our strength and our faith, they help us to become immune to the things the devil puts in our pathway and we are not taken off guard.

The time is coming very soon, that God's people will experience things they never thought possible. Only by our daily interaction and dependence on our Father and the indwelling Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:27) will we be able to overcome and prevail against what the enemy places before us.

"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7-8, New International Version)

Mary Tyler, POH