

The Forum Terrace Church of Christ does not observe Easter Sunday, nor do churches like it. They have no special sermons, no unique acts of worship, no plays or programs. In fact, they worship just as they do every Sunday without even a reference to the word "Easter". Are we making a major mistake by not observing Easter like all the denominations around us? Many other churches have special services on Easter Sunday. All the other preachers have special lessons. There are even some "churches of Christ" which engage in Easter Sunday services. In the April 2, 1983 edition of the IRVING DAILY NEWS, mention of the community sunrise Easter service sponsored by the Irving Ministerial Association was made. It was scheduled for 6 a.m. at the Oak Grove Cemetery. The following is lifted from the release: *"The Rev. Monroe Teague of Rochelle Road Church of Christ will give the sermon. The invocation, benediction and scripture reading will be delivered by pastors Wallace Philpot of Oak View Baptist church; Robert Corser, Foursquare Gospel Church; and Geoffrey Gunter, First Nazarene Church. Music will be provided by the New Revelation Quartet and Celebration."*

Perhaps, by way of explanation it must be established that we firmly believe in the Son of God and His resurrection from the grave. Our concern however is to worship God and Christ in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23,24) for this is the kind of worship that God is seeking. Thus, we need to search the scriptures to know what the Bible says about observing Easter. For many centuries this day has been set aside as a special day for commemorating the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Are you acquainted with the Bible teaching on this subject and the significance of this day with its related holidays? We ought to inquire about God's Will in the matter and submit to it.

Easter Was Not Observed by New Testament Christians

No where in the original New Testament Greek can one find a comparable term for

"Easter". In the King James Version the word "easter" is found in Acts 12:4. However, the original is "Pascha". This word occurs 29 times in the New Testament and is translated "Passover" every time except here. Commentator Albert Barnes relates:

There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this. The original is simply "after the Passover". The word "Easter" now denotes the festival observed by many Christian churches in honor of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that, nor is there the slightest evidence that any such festival was observed at the time when this book (Acts) was written. The translation is not only unhappy, as it does not convey at all the meaning of the original, but because it may contribute to foster an opinion that such a festival was observed in the time of the apostles. (BARNES' NOTES, Vol. 10, p. 190).

Barnes is not alone in his scholarly comments on Acts 12:4. In their commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown wrote

...rather, after the Passover; i.e., after the whole festival was over. (The word in our King James Version is an ecclesiastical term of later date, and ought not to have been employed here.) (COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE, P. 1099).

The fact is "Easter" does not convey at all the meaning of the original. Many older translations and most modern translations correctly render it "after the Passover". Instead, this poor translation contributes to foster a false conviction that such a festival was observed by early Christians.

A careful reading of Acts 12:1-4 will

make it obvious that "Passover" is the correct translation. *"Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread. So when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover."* Herod had killed James and was preparing to kill Peter in an effort to "harass some from the church" (v. 2) and "please the Jews" (v. 4). This text next mentions the feast of unleavened bread - part of the Jewish Passover (v. 3). Herod placed Peter in prison, intending to try him "after Easter". Now if Herod was trying to "please the Jews" and "harass the church" why would he have delayed the trial until after "Easter"? If indeed he thus respected a Christian holy-day, especially one in honor of Christ's resurrection, he would surely not be pleasing to the Jews. It would have "vexed" the church more to kill one of its Apostles on its own holiday, would it not? But, because it was the Jewish holiday (Passover), he delayed delivering Peter to the Jews until afterward.

The fact is "Easter" is never taught in the Bible. The earliest written evidence for an Easter festival appears in the "paschal controversy" over the correct date for the resurrection, which began with the correspondence in 154 A.D. between Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and Anticetus, bishop of Rome. No writer before Justin Martyr seems to mention such a celebration. Therefore, the observance of "Easter" clearly originated sometime after the writing of the New Testament. *"There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the N.T., or in the writings of the Apostolic fathers. The sanctity of special times was an idea absent from the minds of the first Christians..."* (ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA, VOL. 7, P. 859, 1946 edition).

If we could find "Easter" in God's Word, we would be glad to observe it. The usual response is "What difference does it make?" According to Col. 3:17, we must have Bible authority for what ever we do in religion. *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*

Observe the Lord's Supper Weekly Instead of Observing Easter Once a Year

At this point there is one question that you are probably pondering: *"Do you mean to tell me that an important event like Christ's resurrection is not to be celebrated?"* No, it is to be commemorated not once a year at Easter, but every Lord's Day. Since no one really knows the exact date that Christ arose from the grave, it is impossible to celebrate that day, even if we wanted to. All we know from the Bible is that Jesus arose on a Sunday after the Jewish Passover.

Sunday is the only religious day denoted to celebrate Christ's resurrection. The Lord's Supper is that weekly celebration. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia for the early Christians *"Every Sunday of the year was a commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ, which had occurred on Sunday."* (Vol. 5, P. 225). Many denominations celebrate the Lord's Supper only once a year on the morning of Easter. The Christians in the New Testament observe it every first day of the week. *"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..."* (Acts 20:7).

In I Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul gives us the authority and details for properly observing the memorial feast of the New Testament. "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.

If you are truly earnest in wanting to commemorate the Lord's death, burial and resurrection, then why not do it in the manner in which we find Bible authority? The Lord's Supper is expressly for commemorating His resurrection. Jesus Christ authorized it Himself. Instructions are given as to what to use: grape juice and unleavened bread, not colored eggs and chocolate bunnies. The purpose behind this feast is given. Furthermore, a warning is given not to abuse it. There is nothing about the Lord's Supper to tempt the worldly pride of any communicant, but every Easter bonnet is designed to inspire the envy of all who behold it. Such commercializing and socializing of the commemoration of the Lord's Resurrection is strictly forbidden in the very context of I Cor. 11. Finally, the time and frequency is given. The Corinthians were to partake of it as often as they came together. They came together every first day of the week (I Cor. 16:1,2).

– Daniel R. Vess

“No Easter Egg Hunt Today!”



Your are Invited to attend the
Forum Terrace Church of Christ

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Grand Prairie, Texas 75052

Phone: 972.641.4351

Internet: www.fourmterrace.com

Service Times

Sunday

Bible Study.....9:30 am

Worship Service.....10:30 am

Worship Service.....5:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study.....7:30 pm

**Why the Forum Terrace
Church of Christ Does Not
Celebrate Easter?**

by Daniel R. Vess