

Why Some Christians Eat Fish on Good Friday and Other Easter Customs

I grew up a Catholic and my mother was always insistent that on Good Friday we would have fish and chips for dinner that night. When I questioned her as a kid and asked her why, her answer was that Jesus didn't eat meat on Good Friday and so we eat fish to commemorate that.

My logical mind kicked into gear and I thought "What?" I knew enough about the story of Good Friday and Easter to know Jesus was being held against His will and crucified on that last day so that's why He didn't eat red meat but why would we eat fish instead? What has fish got to do with Good Friday?

I remember in religious instruction class at school asking what rabbits and eggs have to do with the story of Jesus' death failing to see any connection between the two. Maybe you have had similar questions like how could there be three days and three nights between Friday afternoon and Sunday morning between when Jesus died and rose again from the grave? And where does the very name of Easter itself come from?

Notice these remarkably frank statements that come from the Catholic Encyclopedia in its article on Easter about the origins of Easter and its customs:

Because of the use of eggs was forbidden during Lent, they were brought to the table of Easter Day, colored red to symbolize the Easter joy...The custom may have its origin in **paganism**, for a **great many pagan customs** celebrating the return of spring gravitated to Easter...**The rabbit is a pagan symbol and has always been a symbol of fertility** (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 5, p.227, article "Easter").

This recognised Catholic authority plainly admits that rabbits and eggs and many other Easter customs originated from the fertility worship of pagans and were introduced into Easter.

Where does the name for the festival of Easter itself come from? Notice what Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words says about Easter:

Pascha...mistranslated 'Easter' in Acts 12:4, KJV, denotes the Passover ... **The term 'Easter' is not of Christian origin. It is another form of Astarte, one of the titles of the Chaldean goddess, the queen of heaven.** The festival of Pasch [Passover] held by Christians in post-apostolic times was a continuation of the Jewish feast ...

From this Pasch the pagan festival of "Easter" was quite distinct and **was introduced into the apostate Western religion, as part of the attempt to adapt pagan festivals to Christianity**" (p. 192).

Easter was different to the original festival of Passover that Christ kept (Matthew 26:18). It was introduced later some time after the time of the early apostles.

The Phoenician fertility goddess Astarte was known as Ishtar by the Babylonians. The famous Ishtar Gate in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin was named after this great mother goddess. In his book "Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought" James Bonwick writes:

The mystic egg of Babylon, hatching the Venus Ishtar, fell from heaven to the Euphrates. Dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt, as they are still in China and Europe. Easter, or spring, was the season of birth, terrestrial and celestial. (p. 211-212).

According to historian Alexander Hislop another custom that was part of the worship of Ishtar in Babylon was Lent. He writes:

The forty days' abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshipers of the Babylonian goddess... Such a Lent of forty days was held in spring by the Pagan Mexicans Such a Lent of forty days was observed in Egypt ..." (The Two Babylons, p. 104-105).

What about the custom of eating fish on Good Friday that I asked my mother about? Where does it really come from? Ralph Woodrow explains its origins in the quote below:

Certainly the Scriptures never associate fish with Friday. On the other hand, the word "Friday" comes from the name of "Freya", who was regarded as the goddess of peace, joy and FERTILITY, the symbol of fertility being the FISH. From very early times the fish was a symbol of fertility...The word "fish" comes from "dag" which implies increase or fertility...The fish was regarded as sacred to Ashtoreth, the name under which the Israelites worshipped the pagan goddess. In ancient Egypt, Isis was sometimes represented with a fish on her head...

Consider that Friday was named after the goddess of sexual fertility, Friday being her sacred day and the fish her symbol, it seems more than a mere coincidence that Catholics have been taught that Friday is a day of abstinence from meat, a day to eat fish! (Babylon Mystery Religion, p.142-143)

Given that Friday was the day of the fertility goddess Freya, the Norse equivalent of the Babylonian Ishtar, might that have some connection to do with why the death of Jesus is celebrated on a Friday, only 1 day and 2 nights before Sunday sunrise, as opposed to 3 days and 3 nights? Jesus Himself stated very plainly:

For as Jonah was **three days AND three nights** in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:39-40).

If the resurrection took place at the same time of day as when Jesus was buried (just before sunset) - only three days later - this would place the resurrection close to sunset on the Saturday, not Sunday sunrise, as is commonly assumed. The gospel writers tell of several different visits made by the disciples to the tomb on that first day of the week. In every instance, they found the tomb EMPTY! In John 19:30-31 we read:

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath **was a high day**), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Jesus kept the Passover the night before (Matthew 26:18) on the day noted in Leviticus 23:5. The Sabbath on the day after Christ was crucified was a high day – it was an annual Sabbath – the first Day of the feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-8) which could occur on a day other than Saturday. In the year of His death it was held on a Thursday.

Jesus' death and burial was shortly before Wednesday sunset NOT on a Friday (Freya's day) which was followed by the annual high day on the Thursday, the preparation day of Friday and then came the weekly Sabbath.

In chronological order Luke 23:54-56 states that Jesus was buried, the Sabbath drew on (the high day), they returned to prepare spices which would have happened on the Friday as they wouldn't have done so on the high Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (Thursday) and then rested on the weekly Sabbath.

How does God feel about us using pagan customs as a part of our worship of Him? Is God OK with it or not? Ralph Woodrow makes the follow comments about this including a biblical verse that directly answers the question:

Catholic scholars know and recognize that there are customs within their church which were borrowed from paganism. But they reason that many things, though originally pagan, can be christianized...Though pagans worshipped the sun toward the east, could we not have sunrise services to honour the resurrection of Christ, even though this was not the time of day that He rose? Even though the egg was used by pagans, can't we continue its use and pretend it symbolizes the large rock that was in front of the tomb? In other words, why not adopt all kinds of popular customs, only instead of using them to honour pagan gods as the heathen did, use them to honor Christ?

It all sounds very logical, yet a much safer guideline is found in the Bible itself: **"Take heed...that you do not ask about their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods, that I too may do likewise? YOU SHALL NOT do so to the LORD your God...All the things I command you, be careful to do it. You shall not add to it, nor take away from it" [Deuteronomy 12:30-32]** (Babylon Mystery Religion, p.148).

Jesus did not keep Easter. He kept the Passover (Matthew 26:18), one of seven festivals that God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai. When God gave Israel the instructions for how to keep each of these festivals He started off by calling them "the feasts of **THE LORD**" (Leviticus 23:2). The Encyclopaedia Britannica tells us:

The sanctity of special times was an idea absent from the minds of **the first Christians ... [who] continued to observe the Jewish festivals**, though in a **new spirit**, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed (11th edition, Vol. VIII, p. 828, "Easter").

Instead of Passover just symbolising the death angel sparing Israel during the plagues of Egypt, the Passover now celebrates Jesus passing over our sins (1 Corinthians 5:7). Instead of just celebrating coming out of Egypt, the feast of Unleavened Bread celebrates our coming out of sin (1 Corinthians 5:8). Pentecost now celebrates the birth of the Church (Acts 2) – the first harvest of souls.

The four latter festivals don't just celebrate physical events such as the latter, greater physical harvest but the great harvest of souls to occur after Christ's return and other end-time events. Paul referred to these feasts as "a shadow of things **to come**" in Colossians 2:17.

If you wish to know more about the origin of Easter customs and more about the wonderful festivals that God has specifically given that step by step describe His great plan for mankind's salvation then be sure to download or request a copy of our booklets "Holidays or Holy Days" and "God's Holy Day Plan".