

False Lent and Pagan Festivals

By Bishop S. C. Johnson

LENT

Among the many errors which crept in after the Apostles died was Lent and its false connection with the sufferings and crucifixion of Christ. It is supposed to represent the forty days of fasting of Christ in the wilderness. However, the people do not fast as Christ did but they only give up one or several things which they like, or sometimes do not like. If they really wanted to commemorate the death and suffering of Christ they would fast the entire forty days. Christ nowhere in the Bible tells us to commemorate the forty days of fasting as an annual church festival.

In earlier times it was only adhered to by the Catholic Church and those churches that were closely connected to it in religious form. However, the celebration has reached such popularity until now even some of those who claim Pentecostal ties announce their holy week services.

Lent could not even begin to compare with those forty terrible days which God spent proving that He could live without yielding to temptation, because in most cases those who keep it, when tempted hard enough, will quickly get what they want. But we find, Jesus, when the devil came to tempt Him again and again, He would rebuke him. We find on one occasion when He had become hungered, the devil came to Him and showed Him the stones, which were in Jerusalem and closely resembled bread. The devil boldly told him *"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."* Matthew 4:3.

Jesus answered him saying *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* Matthew 4:4.

The devil showed the Lord the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but He would not lower His testimony to the children of men for worldly goods and a more of food.

The Bible does not at all endorse Lent, it is only a tradition devised out of carnal intentions of men. It has no place in the Church of God.

Lent was established at the council of the Catholic Church at Nicaea, 325 A.D. but was not well instituted until the middle of the fourth century. It was near this time that the birth of Jesus was celebrated on December 25, first in Rome, and before the end of the century, it was celebrated in the East also.

The actual meaning of the word Lent, comes from the Latin ***lengthen, lencten***, meaning spring. It denotes the spring period of fasting in preparation for Easter; in the Western Catholic Church, a penitential period extending from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Some writers associate it to the middle ages.

PALM SUNDAY

Toward the end of this vain worship is a week known as Holy Week, which lasts from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

Palm Sunday is usually distinguished by the wearing of palm. They say this is derived from the time when Jesus entered into Jerusalem, the people spread their garments in the way and others cut down branches of the trees and strewed them in the way. They went before Him and followed Him crying, "*Hosanna; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord:*" Mark 11:8-9.

To show how quickly people can be persuaded to change their minds, some of these people were with the mob, who a few days later cried out, "*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*" Yet the people are so deceived as to commemorate something done by murderers of Christ by pinning on palms.

But the Spirit tells us not the outward man but the hidden man of the heart. To those who were baptized in Jesus' name and have the Holy Ghost, palm is not necessary for us to cry *Hosanna* to the Lord. But the Holy Ghost which is in our souls is crying a constant Hosanna, not only on one Sunday of the year.

GOOD FRIDAY

One of the earliest references to Friday's being a holiday is found in the Mithraism cult, an off shoot of Zoroastrianism. In Persia, during the sixth century, this day was called Black Friday and the story goes that Mithras slew a bull one Friday. Subsequently, the bull laid in a tomb for three days and supposedly arose on the third day.

The Mithras cult believed that from the blood of this bull sprang forth all life. It was this same pagan cult that was very powerful in Rome before and after the rise of the Catholic organization. The influence of Friday was so strongly felt until the Catholic Church associated it with the death and resurrection of Christ.

So then, five days after this day they call Palm Sunday, comes a day which the people refer to as "Good Friday."

However, the Bible tells us everything the Lord made was very good and Paul, speaking in Colossians, blasts out against keeping of *holy days*. The world ignored these scriptures and claims the Friday before Easter to be a holy day because they believe Christ was crucified on that day. They say Christ was hung on the cross from 12:00 Noon to 3:00 P.M. and was taken down, buried and arose the third day which they call Easter Sunday.

Have you ever stopped to count the days from Friday to Sunday? Let us count: A part of Friday, one day; Friday night, one night; Saturday, two days; Saturday night, two nights. Now, even if we counted Sunday morning as a day, it would still only be three days and two nights.

But, we hear Jesus speaking from Matthew 12:40, *“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”*

This means then that Christ had to be crucified on Thursday to have been in the earth three days and three nights.

It is no use of the world trying to get around it, there is absolutely no other way for Him to have been in the grave three days and nights unless He was placed in the grave on a Thursday.

The thing that confuses the people, is the Scripture says the day on which Jesus was crucified was the preparation for the sabbath because it was the day before the sabbath. Nevertheless, we must remember Paul speaks of sabbath days. There was the seventh day sabbath and there were other days of rest, observed under the Law, which did not occur on the seventh day and they were called high sabbaths. It was for one of these such days that the Jews were preparing.

EASTER

The Bible nowhere states that the day Christ arose was Easter. Have you ever considered that Easter comes at a different time each year? Then how could He be crucified on one date one year and on another date another year? That does not make good sense!

Herod planned to bring Peter before the council after Easter, but it does not say that Jesus arose this day. Herod and the Jews were not interested in the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus. The very reason the people wanted to kill Peter and the Apostles was that they were preaching the power of the resurrection. It was through the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus that the power of hell and sin was broken.

Jesus died a natural body but arose a spiritual body and told the Apostles *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”*
Mark 16:15.

The name Easter is traced back to the old German word, Eastre, (plural) Eastron, from the name of the old Teutonic "*goddess of spring*," who was called - Eastr. **NOTE THIS CAREFULLY:** Easter is the first Sunday after the first full moon that falls on or the next after the vernal equinox (March 21 in the Gregorian calendar); if the full moon happens on Sunday, Easter is celebrated one week later.

We do not find the actual festival or Easter associated with the resurrection of Christ until the year 300 A.D. It was then looked upon as a joyous festival and sermons were preached on it.

So then, Easter was simply a spring festival to the goddess, Easter which came around the time of the Jewish Passover and was later incorporated in the backslidden church.

Dear reader, be not deceived and carried away by the customs of this world, for the people's customs are vain. The Pope, himself, cannot prove Lent and all it stands for to be sanctioned by the scriptures, nor can anyone else.

Jesus Christ wants us to be baptized in His name and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost speaking in other tongues according to Acts 2:38. He wants us to be holy and serve Him, not only on certain days and seasons of the year, but to live holy every day of our lives. Read Luke 1:73-75.

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