

The Saddest Day

I Kings 12:32-33

I. INTRODUCTION:

1. If you had to pick the saddest day what day would you pick?
 - A. July 4, 1863: As this Fourth of July dawned some 51,000 Union and Confederate soldiers lay dead or dying on the battlefield at Gettysburg, PA.
 - B. April 14, 1865: President Abraham Lincoln was mortally wounded at Ford's Theatre.
 - C. December 7, 1941: 2,403 U.S. servicemen were killed in the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.
 - D. November 22, 1963, Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President Kennedy in Dallas, TX.
 - E. April 20, 1995: 168 (incl. 19 children) Americans perished in the domestic terrorist bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, OK.
 - F. September 11, 2001: 2,996 people were killed in the attacks on the World Trade Center, Pentagon and Flight 93.
 - G. Perhaps your saddest day is more personal in nature; mine is July 20, 1977: Miriam Thomas (my mother) died of cancer at the tender age of 51.
2. I want to suggest that all of these, and many other days, could qualify as the "saddest day."
3. However, to me none of these days even comes close to being truly the "saddest day."
4. In my book, the "saddest day" can be any day; any day people who claim to be God's people depart from God's word and practice that which God has not authorized.
5. Consider the example of Jeroboam (I Kgs. 12):
 - A. First king of Israel (Northern Kingdom) after the death of Solomon.
 - B. For political reasons he did not want the people of his kingdom to worship in Jerusalem as commanded by God (I Kgs. 12:27).
 - C. Therefore, Jeroboam set up "golden calves" for the people to worship in Dan and Bethel (I Kgs. 12:28-29).
 - D. He made priests of people regardless of whether they were of the tribe of Levi or not (I Kgs. 12:31).
 - E. Then he ordained one of those "saddest days," notice:

I Kgs. 12:32-33: *Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month **which he had devised in his own heart**. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.*
6. Today, this very day; April 20, 2014 is also one of those "saddest days." Today people all over this great land, yea, around the entire globe are celebrating the day called "Easter."
7. Those who celebrate Easter claim to be celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They claim be doing this in God's name to please Him. In fact, those who celebrate Easter have been celebrating numerous "religious" holidays in what is called the "Lenten" season:
 - **LENT** or "Lenten" is the name applied to the forty days of fasting preceding Easter Sunday.

- ✓ It is observed in commemoration of Jesus' fast in the wilderness for a period of forty days. [doubt if 99% of people know that!]
- ✓ Lent begins on *Ash-Wednesday* which is forty days before Easter (not counting Sundays).
- ✓ Lent is supposed to be a time of penitence where one shows sorrow for sin and their need to seek forgiveness.
- ✓ Lent is a time its observers prepare for Easter by abstaining from certain foods and activities. [e.g., give up chocolate, donuts, etc.]
- **ASH WEDNESDAY** is the first day of Lent.
 - ✓ It came from a custom observed by people expressing their humiliation at this time by appearing in sack-cloth and ashes.
 - ✓ In some "churches," ashes from the preceding year's Palm Sunday are blessed by the priest and used to mark a cross on the foreheads of the congregants.
 - ✓ This is to remind the people to begin their "Lenten" penance in a humble spirit. (BTW: *Ash Wednesday* follows *Fat Tuesday*, or *Shrove Tuesday* (aka "Mardi Gras") which is an occasion of the basest sort of drunkenness and debauchery.)
- **PALM SUNDAY** is the last Sunday before Easter and marks the beginning of what most call the "Holy Week" or "Passion Week."
 - ✓ Palm-Sunday is supposed to honor Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem as described in John 12:12-15, where the people spread palm branches in his path.
- **MAUNDAY THURSDAY** (also called *Holy Thursday*) is the Thursday before Easter and is supposed to recall to one's mind Jesus' last meal with the twelve apostles in the upper room
 - ✓ In some places, the priest (Roman Catholic) will wash the feet of twelve members of the congregation to show that Jesus washed his disciples' feet (Jn. 13).
- **GOOD FRIDAY** (the Friday before Easter) is supposed to observe the death of Jesus on the cross and his suffering for our sins.
- **HOLY SATURDAY** (the day before Easter) is a day of solemn vigil (waiting).
 - ✓ Some "churches" hold vigil services which often include the baptism of new members.
 - ✓ Many times this leads up to a dramatic moment in which all the lights are turned off leaving everyone in the dark.
 - ✓ The priest then will light a tall candle which is supposed to represent the risen Christ.
 - ✓ He then lights the members' candles which is supposed to symbolize the light of Jesus going out into the world.
- **EASTER SUNDAY** for many "Christian" denominations Easter Sunday begins with a dawn ("Sun Rise") service to supposedly commemorate the day on which Jesus rose from the dead.
 - ✓ For many this will be the only "worship" service they attend for the entire year.
 - ✓ In many "churches" this will be the only day of the year the Lord's Supper will be observed.
 - ✓ In many "churches" this service will also be associated with a large feast in the "church's" fellowship hall following the service.
 - ✓ In many "churches" this service will also be associated with the coming of the "Easter Bunny" complete with an "Easter Egg Hunt" for the kids.

8. I submit to you that Easter and all of its associated “religious” holidays and observances qualify as the “saddest” of days because none of the observances associated with Easter are authorized by God’s Word! These are days just like the feast day appointed by Jeroboam; days man has **“devised in his own heart.”**

II. DISCUSSION:

- I. **What is the claim of the New Testament?** The NT claims to have within its pages:

- A. *“all things that pertain to life and godliness”* **2 Pet. 1:3**
- B. *“all truth”* **Jn. 16:13**
- C. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”* **2 Tim. 3:16-17**
- D. Reveals the mind of God **1 Cor. 2:9-10:** *But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*
- E. *“faith once for all delivered”* **Jude 3**
- F. The NT threatens damnation upon any and all who twist, add to, or take away from that which is divinely revealed in the Bible, specifically the New Testament:
 - Jn. 12:48:** *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*
 - 2 Pet. 3:16:** *as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*
 - Acts 3:22-23:** *“For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 ‘And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’*
 - 2 Jn. 9-11:** *Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.*
 - Rev. 22:18-19:** *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*
 - Gal. 1:6-12:** *I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. 11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

- G. With these divinely revealed and recorded warnings in mind, our sincerest desire should be to serve God as commanded in His word: nothing more, nothing less! With this in mind...
- ☛ **Where is Easter mentioned in the Bible? To which book, chapter and verse does it turn?**
 - ☛ **Where is the pageantry, time, and the method of observing Easter recorded in the New Testament?**
 - ☛ **Which book in the New Testament records an example of the first century Christians observing Easter under the approval, direction, and teaching of Christ's appointed spokesmen, the apostles?**
 - ☛ **In which book does God set forth His instructions for the observance of Easter or any of its related holy days (e.g., Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, etc.)?**
- H. The point is this: One must go outside the Bible to secular history and the practices of the apostate Roman Catholic church to find how and when to observe Easter. Let me show you everything the Bible says concerning Easter and its observance.
- I. But someone will say, "wait just a minute! I found Easter in my Bible!"

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.* (KJV)

The word translated "Easter" in the King James Version is the Greek word *pascha* which appears 29 times in the New Testament and is always translated *Passover* (with this one exception in the KJV).

Note Vine's comments on *pascha*:

"mistranslated "Easter" in Acts 12:4, A. V., denotes the Passover (R. V.). The phrase "after the Passover" signifies after the whole festival was at an end. 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 held by Christians in post-apostolic times was a continuation of the Jewish feast, but was not instituted by Christ, nor was it connected to Lent. 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." (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, W. E. Vine; Vol. II. pgs. 14-15)

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (fourteenth edition, Vol. II, p. 859) records:

"There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament or in the writings of the apostolic fathers. The sanctity of the special times was an idea absent from the minds of the first Christians."

2. **What is Easter and where did it come from?**

- A. We have already shown that Easter does not come from the Bible; even though it supposedly "celebrates" the resurrection of Christ. It was never proscribed by Christ or any of his inspired apostles and prophets!
- B. As Vine and the *Encyclopædia Britannica* noted, Easter...
- ☛ **"is not of Christian origin"**
 - ☛ **"was not instituted by Christ"**

- ☛ “was introduced into the apostate Western religion as part of the attempt to adapt Pagan festivals to Christianity”
- ☛ “There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament” So what does the NT teach about Easter?!

Gal. 1:8-9: *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

- C. Easter is simply a pollution of the divinely mandated worship of God with the traditions of men. Jesus had something to say about that!
- Matt. 15:9:** *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.*
- D. Easter represents man seeking to weave three “observances” into one “holiday” and calling it “Christian”!
- (1) The Hebrew Passover—celebrated during the month of NISAN (which is the first of the month of the Hebrew calendar and always fell sometime in what some call Easter season).
 - (2) The commemoration of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ which took place at the feast of the Jewish Passover, but the New Testament does not record the EXACT date!
 - (3) A pagan festival of spring which fell at the vernal equinox on March 21.
 - The name Easter comes from *Eostre*, the ancient goddess of the dawn. In earlier pagan times an annual spring festival was held in her honor.
 - This pagan festival embodied the worship of the goddess of the Saxons in whose honor sacrifices were offered annually about the time of Passover in the spring of the year.
 - Prominent symbols in this celebration of nature (which marked the end of winter and the new-birth of spring) were rabbits, and eggs colored like the rays of the sun.
 - Catholics of this era were surrounded by pagan rituals like these devotions to *Eostre* and were determined to keep them, so the Catholic Church acquiesced and created the *Easter* holiday as a compromise, allowing its adherents to celebrate like the pagans but with a Catholic flair. *If you can’t beat ’em join ’em!*
- E. The merging of these three events (*Passover*, resurrection, *Eostre*) became associated with the unauthorized festival of the resurrection which was celebrated at the time of the Passover.
- F. It is quite revealing that Easter is not of NT origin simply by the fact that **WHEN** to celebrate Easter was disputed for several centuries after the NT was completed!
- (1) The council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) decreed it should be on Sunday.
 - (2) It was not until the 7th century that the rule setting the date for Easter was finally set and adopted.
 - (3) This same method of calculation is used today:
 - (a) Easter Sunday is determined to be the first Sunday after the first full moon following the first day of spring which falls on March 21 of each year.
 - (b) Easter, then, may fall anywhere between March 22 and April 25.
 - (4) **What NT passage(s) give us these instructions?**

3. What should New Testament Christians conclude and practice concerning Easter?

- A. Easter is not part of the gospel authorized by Christ revealed by the Holy Spirit and written down by the inspired writers of the New Testament. Therefore it is **ANOTHER** gospel! Every Christian should reject it **COMPLETELY!!**

Gal. 1:8-9: *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

- B. Because, true New Testament Christians follow only what is divinely revealed! Matt. 28:20; Jn. 16:13

Col. 3:17: *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.*

1 Pet. 4:11: *If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God.*

- C. So the question simply becomes: What does the Bible say concerning the observance or celebration of the Christ's resurrection?

NOTHING! The Bible is absolutely silent on the subject!!

- D. Does that shock you? Do you believe that to be true? I hope it doesn't shock you and I hope you believe it because it is true. What celebration does God's word reveal?

1 Cor. 11:23-26: *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; 24 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." 25 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." 26 **For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.***

- E. You see, New Testament Christians observe and commemorate the **death of Christ** each (**every**) Lord's day (Sunday, first day of the week) by partaking of the Lord's supper.

Acts 20:7: *Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.*

Acts 2:42: *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Pentecost always on the first day of the week, Lev. 23:15-19)*

III. CONCLUSION:

1. Recall Jeroboam: remember how he ordained one of those "saddest days"?

1 Kgs. 12:32-33: *Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that was in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month **which he had devised in his own heart**. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense.*

2. Jeroboam's feast was something not commanded by God, it was that "**which he had devised in his own heart.**" Remember how God responded to Jeroboam?

1 Kgs. 13:1-5: *And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2 Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you,*

and men's bones shall be burned on you.” **3** And he gave a sign the same day, saying, “This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out.” **4** So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, “Arrest him!” Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself. **5** The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.

3. So I ask you: **Does Easter originate from the Spirit of God or from men with the spirit of Jeroboam?**
4. Some may think this lesson is over the top, maybe even think I am a crank or crackpot. But, I submit to you that I'm neither. Neither am I intentionally trying to rain on anyone's parade. I am simply trying my best to follow God's revealed word and teach others the same. Thus, with all sincerity and concern for the souls of men I simply ask: **Is Easter pleasing to God? Is the observance of Easter God's will for the Christian?** Jn. 12:48; 2 Tim. 3:16-17

2 Jn. 9-11: *Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.*

Gal. 1:8-9: *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*

Jn. 4:24: *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”*