

Teaching E-mail

Prophetic Warnings From A Righteous God

49. Jesus Christ, Our Passover Lamb (January 16, 2010)

This Teaching E-mail continues the series of prophetic warnings the Spirit of God is giving to deter followers of Jesus from participating in ANY form of paganism that has been adapted into Christendom. Some denominations today are so filled with pagan ritual and traditions that they're void of scriptural foundation and are leading many astray.

How far afield from biblical truth we wander when we ignore the *continuity of promises* between the Older Testament and the Newer Testament! We'll be focusing here in particular about the *desecration* of the Passover feast that's overtaken so much of Christendom, and how ignorance of God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery has opened the door for much pagan infiltration into what is now known as *Easter*.

What you have taken for granted as always having been celebrated by God's called-out people is, in fact, *rooted in demonic darkness*. We'll also explore why the apostle Paul refers to *Jesus* as the Passover Lamb for Jew and Gentile alike who follow Him.

The Demonic Origins of *Easter*

Most Christians today eagerly look forward to celebrating "Easter"; in fact, most kids, whether from Christian homes or not, will be looking forward to decorated baskets of chocolate bunnies and brightly colored candy eggs surrounded by abundant (fake) green grass. Right alongside all the fun of fancy new clothes and an Easter egg hunt are *church services*,

which for some people is the only time besides Christmas that they sit in a pew.

Now, perhaps you're a parent who is earnestly trying to teach your children about the reality of Jesus and His reconciling work on the Cross so that they might access God their Father and be forgiven. Just how, in a child's mind, does he separate *the fantasy* of eggs and rabbits and lilies from *the truth* of the death and resurrection of Jesus? That kind of mix is called *syncretism*, borrowing from pagan customs to alter the holy Word of God to make it more appealing. To our righteous Father, that is *abomination* — the same kind of compromise that brought chastisement upon His chosen Israelites, and will bring upon His children today.

Have you ever wondered *when* and *how* all these strange mythical practices came about? We hope you'll be shocked enough to repent when you learn the truth! Centuries before the Incarnation of Jesus, the Babylonians were enslaved by their worship of the demonic deity Ishtar, the goddess of both love and war. (This deity was also known as Asherah, Astoreth, *Eastre*, Gaia, and Venus, among other names.) The meaning, however, was the same: "Earth Mother."

The festival of Easter had long been celebrated by the Assyrians, the Phoenicians, the Philistines, and the Babylonians—peoples whom the Hebrews were commanded by their holy God to not intermingle with through marriage *or adopt any of their detestable practices* (see Ezra 9:10-12).

Just as Christmas had been syncretized so that its timing and practices

coincided with the winter equinox, so did celebration of Easter among the heathens find its roots in the sky. Eastre, the goddess of spring, was annually impregnated by the sun during the spring equinox. To celebrate this festival to their Earth Mother, followers took part in ritual sex acts to initiate *fertility*.

So where did the rabbits and eggs enter in? Again, fertility among these agrarian peoples was paramount. To ensure fertile land, they rolled brightly decorated eggs across their fields. Then, to protect these sacred eggs from “evil spirits”, they hid the eggs in rabbit nests. Rabbits, a truly prolific species—we used to raise them, and they ARE prolific!—were another Easter symbol of fertility.

Two other symbols of contemporary Easter celebration also are deeply rooted in the worship of this demonic entity. The emblem of Ishtar is the *lily*, often found on stone depictions with her. And, those delicious *hot-cross buns* so savored on Easter morning are rooted in Babylonian mythology as well! The Babylonian symbol for female was a circle with a cross-shape below it. To celebrate their beloved Earth Mother, the “*Queen of Heaven*”, the Babylonians baked round cakes marked with a cross—the very cakes used in her worship by Israel that so provoked God to anger.

If we might digress for a moment on the schemes of Satan to *lead children astray*: Notice that preparation of these cakes was a *family affair* pushed by the wives onto their husbands and children:

The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke Me to anger (Jeremiah 7:18)

Ahab-like husbands today choose to allow their wives to rule by practicing pagan customs in their homes. Failing to protect their children from sin-rooted traditions, these fathers shouldn’t be surprised that the truth of God has little or no impact on their sons and daughters. After all, the holiness of the Bible becomes just another ingredient in the whole celebration, be it Christmas or Easter. And the parts that really appeal to impressionable kids are the *fun* ones: the goodies, the gifts and the special foods! How tragic, from our precious Lord’s perspective...

Syncretism, the Slide to our Forthcoming Chastisement

But surely, you may be thinking, the word Easter is in the Bible! NOT SO! In the original language of the Newer Testament, the word *pascha* is used 29 times to describe the *Passover celebration*. The only version of the Bible which used the word Easter (and that only once in Acts 12:4) was the King James Version. As with many religious leaders over the centuries, the king who authorized the translation was thoroughly anti-Semitic and wanted to distance Christian practice from its Jewish root!

Far earlier than that particular mistranslation was the practice of the Romanized Church to adopt pagan customs of converted heathens into accepted church practice, even as authentic biblical practices were discarded. According to Roman Catholic theologian, Cardinal John Henry Newman, rulers of the Church were prepared:

“to adopt, to imitate, or to sanctify the existing rites and customs of the population, as well as the philosophy of

the educated class. The use of temples and those dedicated to particular saints, and ornamented on occasion with branches of trees, incense, lamps, candles, votive offerings on recovering from illness, holy water, holy days and seasons, use of calendars, processions, blessings on the fields, sacerdotal vestments, the ring in marriage, chants, the Kyrie Eleison — are all of Pagan origin, and sanctified by adoption into the Church.” (The Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, chapter 8, emphasis added).

Why then did these obviously pagan practices become so widely accepted? Credit Roman Emperor Constantine I when, in AD 325, he convened together 220 bishops to establish unified doctrines and practices. This gathering, known as the Nicene Council, instituted increased tolerance for pagan practices in order to facilitate control over the diverse populace.

Passover and other “Jewish” observances were outlawed, while pagan customs were “sanctified” with a scriptural spin. And, as we noted with the family-style worship of the Queen of Heaven, when children are brought up with pagan practices *mixed in with biblical truth*, they perpetuate the lies among their own offspring. No longer “set apart for Him” are those who are intended by our God to *worship Him alone* in the manner prescribed *in His Word*.

ARE compromise and syncretism God’s way? Hear from His own mouth how to respond to pagan infiltration into His timeless, righteous commands for His called and chosen ones:

Destroy their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles [symbols of the Earth Mother] in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and destroy

their names from those places. You must not worship the LORD your God in their way (Deuteronomy 12:3,4).

The Passover Lamb of Redemption

Since we can see pretty clearly how *not* to commemorate the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, how then *should* we commemorate His victory over sin on our behalf? Let’s reexamine briefly the purposes behind the Passover celebration during which our Lord Himself established a *new covenant* with His disciples.

For multiple centuries the Passover foreshadowed the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. His atonement on behalf of our sins can only be fully appreciated with a clear understanding of the Passover. This is why we must identify the continuity between both Testaments of the Bible.

When God heard the cries of Israel in their slavery in Egypt, He responded by commanding through Moses that the male head of each household kill an unblemished male lamb in its first year — during its prime of life. Some of the blood was to be put on the doorposts and lintels of the houses in which they would eat the lamb. That night God would pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn male to *bring judgment* against all the gods of Egypt. (See Exodus, chapter 12 for the whole account.) The blood of a slaughtered lamb on each family’s doorframe would be a sign on their behalf so that the destroying plague from God would be averted. He would *pass over* them.

So important to the relationship between God and the Israelites was this Passover that He established very specific commands regarding it. The slaughter of the Passover lamb would take place each year on the 14th day of the first month.

For seven days they would eat only unleavened bread, that which was made *without yeast*. In Scripture, leaven often represents the influence of sin in a person (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). A little bit can spread throughout to create a lot of corruption! This is why our Father demands **communal righteousness** throughout a home or faith community. NO ONE can fellowship with unconfessed sin!

It's important to recognize that our God was demonstrating *abundant grace* to His people. By accepting the substitutionary blood of a lamb on behalf of the Israelites who trusted His promise and obeyed His command, God was preserving the lives of their firstborn. That grace to redeem not only the firstborn but all of Israel by delivering them out of slavery was designed by God to fulfill a particular purpose: to *call out a people* specifically chosen in advance through His eternal promise to Abraham to *proclaim Him among the nations* (Genesis 12:2,3).

These *called-out ones* were a type of the redeemed to come from *every kindred, tongue, people and nation* through the blood of the Lamb of God (Revelation 5:9). The Israelites who were saved by the blood of the lamb experienced their exodus into freedom from Egyptian slavery. The redeemed of the slain and risen Christ are *freed to serve Him* in our own exodus from the slavery of sin.

The account in Exodus reveals that this Passover commemoration was not to be taken lightly. In fact, no outsider was to eat of it, nor anyone not a part of the covenant of circumcision among Israel's males. (See Exodus 12:43-48.) Let's pause for a moment and consider what appears to be *exclusivity* on God's part. Through Abraham, God had set apart a people unto Himself and His purposes through the covenant sealed by

circumcision. Those were the only ones privileged by God to partake of Passover.

By the redeeming blood of Jesus, *our* Passover Lamb as His called-out ones, we are no longer "foreigners," outsiders. We are "circumcised of heart", grafted in as His people and children of Abraham as we walk in his footsteps of obedient trust (see Romans 4:11,12).

But those who are *not* covered by His atoning blood through obedient trust in Jesus are still "foreigners" to God. Without His indwelling Spirit Who evidences His redemptive work in their lives, they are not identified as His people (see Romans 8:9). Therefore they are unqualified to partake of His Passover of the new covenant sealed in His blood. As we'll discuss shortly, partaking of communion in Him if you neither know Him nor have repented of sins constitutes an "unworthy manner." As Paul warned, this can bring about illness or even death for defaming His sacrifice (see 1 Corinthians 11:27-31).

The Israelites were commanded by God to keep this Feast of Passover remembrance year by year from *generation to generation* (Exodus 12:24-27). They were to diligently *recount to their children* not only the events of the first deliverance, but also carefully cultivate a dependence on and gratefulness to God that's expressed by *obedience to Him* (Deuteronomy 7:9). Only the pure, unsyncretised, unadulterated truth was shared with their children. No mix of the pagan practices and gods which had surrounded the Israelites for 430 years.

Are *you* prepared to restore only the pure, unadulterated truth of Christ as our risen Passover Lamb for *your* children and grandchildren? That's the pattern of God's Word, the only reliable source of what pleases Him!

Why Is the *Blood of the Lamb* So Important?

If you've been in the habit of ignoring the Older Testament, you've missed out on so much of the glorious foundations of our walk as followers of Jesus! People fall into error when they believe only half-truths or limited truth. You may not think you have time to go through the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures. But for the sake of your own trust walk and that of your family, at least give them a "crash course" in the essential connection between the two Testaments. Sit down with your family with your Bibles opened to the Newer Testament book of Hebrews. You need this snapshot into the nature of sin and the necessity of Jesus as the mediator through His blood on your behalf!

Our sins are so vile before our holy God that *we deserve death* for them in His sight. Only by *His loving grace* did He allow the life blood of an unblemished animal sprinkled on His altar substitute for that of a sinful, guilty Israelite. According to His holy requirements, only through the *shedding of blood* is there forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22, apperceived from Leviticus 17:11).

Yet, what a wonder that He has provided *His own blood once and for all* as the eternal substitution for our deserved death! The sinless life of Lord Jesus was exchanged for our guilty lives so that through faith in His atoning work, we might be forgiven and live. What a staggering culmination of sacrifice so that we might be reconciled as adopted children by this ultimate Passover Lamb! (See Ephesians 1:5.)

Keep in mind that the Israelites were required to *remove all leaven* from their homes during this Feast. In Christ, our

Passover, we as His people are called upon to rid ourselves of any *leaven of iniquity* so that our lives are filled with the "unleavened bread" of sincerity (by implication, *purity*) and truth (see 1 Corinthians 5:8). Just going through the motions of *any* spiritual endeavor while still entertaining sin is detestable and unacceptable in the sight of the God Who *examines our hearts*. The heart that our just and holy God finds acceptable *manifests love* for Him and for others, and *determination to obey* His commands (see 1 Samuel 15:22; Mark 12:33).

The Lord's Supper — His Passover Covenant Remembrance

It was no mere coincidence that Jesus had gathered His twelve disciples together to *celebrate* the Passover just as He Himself was to become the Sacrificial Lamb. This was no somber time for the Jews. It was a celebration of God's faithfulness to His chosen people! God had *remembered* His covenant with Abraham to bring them to the land He would give them (Exodus 6:4,5). The first Passover *commemorated* His glorious redemption of their firstborn from the destroying angel and their deliverance into freedom from Egyptian slavery.

This unforgettable evening with Jesus would also become a *commemoration*. Every time they partook of the bread which He called His body and the wine which was the new covenant in His blood, they would remember His redemptive work to free them from slavery to sin. This *new covenant* would fulfill the promise God had made to His people through the prophet Jeremiah long ago:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new

covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Let’s look at some of the specifics that help us connect the first Passover with the “ultimate Passover” Jesus was establishing. The Israelites were told by God that His redemption and rescue into freedom would encompass four promises stated in Exodus 6:6,7. Therefore the Passover *seder*, or set order of celebration which the disciples were observing the same way their forefathers had, contained four cups of wine — two before the meal and two afterwards.

The first cup of wine addressed this promise: “*I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*”

The second cup recalled the next promise: “*I will rescue you from their bondage.*”

The third cup of promise, coming after the meal, was directly noted by Jesus. This, called the *cup of redemption*, had a twofold meaning to our Lord. Looking back, His Father had promised the Israelites, “*I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.*” For those who would trust that His blood redeemed them from the penalty of sin and would trust God through His Messiah, this new covenant of redemption would be fulfilled by Jesus

and ratified by His blood. He presented His blood to His Father, and His Father accepted it as fulfilling His just requirements. The *resurrection* of Jesus from the dead is total and complete proof that His blood sufficed!

But what about the fourth cup, the one called the *cup of consummation* based on the fourth promise to the Israelites? “*I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.*” Jesus refused to drink this cup, telling His disciples that He would only drink this cup with them at the future banquet in the Kingdom of God (Mark 14:25).

This particular promise of *belonging* to God connotes an incredible union of intimacy. It speaks of the relationship between *husband and wife*. Note that in our Exodus Passover passage, God had referred to Himself as a *husband* — One against Whom they committed spiritual adultery and broke their end of their covenant with Him.

Using this same imagery, Jesus as the heavenly Bridegroom won’t “take His Bride as His own” until the wedding feast in eternity when this relationship is consummated (see Revelation 19:7-9). We His people are *betrothed* to Jesus — promised to be His Bride so that we might bear spiritual fruit:

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God (Romans 7:4).

Each time we share together the bread and the wine that remind us of His victory over death and sin, we are *renewing our marriage covenant* to our heavenly Bridegroom!

The unleavened Passover matzo with

its pierced, striped markings recalls Jesus's proclamation as the Bread of life, "*This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me*" (Luke 22:19). We partake of "one loaf" as each person shares a piece from it, signifying that we are one body in Him (1 Corinthians 10:17).

The cup of the new covenant in His blood is *poured out for us* (Luke 22:20). Therefore how needful it is that each person examines his heart to make sure there is nothing unholy, impure or unfaithful in the sense of entertaining unclean spirits within. How grievous a thing it is to provoke our Bridegroom to jealousy by "fellowshipping with demons" while renewing our marriage vows in Him (see 1 Corinthians 10:21,22)!

Each time we share the bread and the wine, we are participating in the body and blood of Christ *because He said so!* (See 1 Corinthians 10:16.) No other mediator between God and man is needed, since Christ alone is our Mediator and High Priest (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14). Each time we partake of the bread and the wine, we are *internalizing* the reality of His death on our behalf, and the confirmation of His covenant with His called-out ones, His Church.

You may be wondering where wafers as well as so much of the liturgy often attached to communion services came from. *Pagan Mithraists* long before the earthly life of Jesus worshiped the sun. Setting apart one day a week as Sun-day in honor of the Sun/Mithras, the priest would elevate a flat disc of bread to receive the sun's first rays. At that moment he would chant magic words to *transform the bread* into the actual presence of the sun. Faithful followers ardently believed that if they ate that bread, they would possess the power of

Mithras. Later on, controversy over the "*Sacrifice of the Mass*" and whether the priest would actually be serving either a "spiritual" manifestation of the body of Christ or the "physical" transubstantiation would continue until the latter was established as Roman Catholic doctrine at the fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

How Then Shall We Live?

All of this background material has been presented to bring you to a decision point for you and your household. Once again you'll be bombarded by customs and traditions that mix the *truth and reality* of the atoning work of Jesus on the cross and His glorious resurrection with *pagan traditions and customs* that not only belittle and defile His work but also hack off the deeper fulfillment of Christ as our Passover as His followers.

Think about that. Will you continue to water down the biblical root of commemoration with worldly lies? Or, will you boldly claim allegiance to walking wholly and only in His Spirit and His Word as your standard for living? NOW is the appointed time for you to choose.

We strongly encourage you to forsake pagan Easter before God takes action against you! Establish a *Christ-focused Passover* of your own by celebrating the victory He achieved for you on the cross. The crucifixion *and* resurrection should bring Jesus followers as great joy as it did Him:

*Let us **fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*** (Hebrews 12:2).

Celebrate that His death has set you free!