

# Easter is not about bunnies

—by Jackie Georgiou

## EASTER FACTS

- Did you know that every year US Supermarkets sell 3.4 million Easter Eggs between March-April?
- UK shoppers have been in an uproar over the fact that some supermarkets started selling Easter eggs a week after Christmas
- US Army soldiers attend a sunrise Easter service at their base in Iraq
- The rabbit is a popular secular symbol for Easter. It seems to have originated from the hare, a symbol of fertility in ancient Egypt
- Western Christians celebrate Easter a week before Eastern Christians. This is due to the Orthodox Christian churches using the Julian calendar and Western churches using the Gregorian one. The Easter Season lasts fifty days until Pentecost. Easter also marks the end of Lent, a season of fasting, prayer, and penance. Easter is a moveable feast, meaning it is not fixed in relation to the civil calendar.



Easter is undoubtedly the holiest period on the Christian calendar. It is a time for believers to reflect on the magnificent sacrifice the Lord Jesus made for us on the Cross and to celebrate His Resurrection. Yet, as with all things, the secular media has hijacked the true meaning of Easter and commercialised it.

Easter eggs, chocolate bunnies and hot cross buns have come to symbolise 'Easter' to many children and unsaved households. Obviously this is a concern to all Christians and a money-making trend that we need to address, but with much wisdom and gentleness!

## THE ORIGIN OF EASTER

Before one can establish a Biblical response to the commercialisation of Easter, it is important to understand the motives and origination of the popular associations the world has with this event.

Now, I must tread very carefully when discussing the history of Easter, as the facts are sketchy at best. Some reference the Disciples as the group that initially set aside three holy days to honour and remember the work of the Lord, coinciding with the Passover feast in Jerusalem at the time.

The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible says that Easter was originally the spring festival in honour of the Teutonic goddess of light and spring known in Anglo-Saxon as Eastre, or Eostre.

They say, "The Church in its early days adopted certain pagan customs and gave a Christian meaning to them. As the festival of Eostre was in celebration of the renewal of life in the spring it was easy to make it

a celebration of the resurrection from the dead of Jesus. This adoption explains how in certain lands the Easter customs, such as Easter eggs, the Easter rabbit, and hot cross buns, came about. Concerning the custom of making hot cross buns, with their shiny brown tops marked by a cross."

The book *Easter and Its Customs* states: "The cross was a pagan symbol long before it acquired everlasting significance from the events of the first Good Friday, and bread and cakes were sometimes marked with it in pre-Christian times."

## THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE

Regardless of which account a person believes, the question remains, how should we respond? Without trying to offend anyone, I would like to suggest that we should not "throw the baby out with the bathwater" as the saying goes and do away with celebrating Easter (or Christmas for that matter).

Not only do current Christian celebrations and church services remind believers and the world of the immense Grace and Mercy of Christ through His death and Resurrection, but they also act as a city on a hill, shining the Light and Truth of the Gospel in a culture steeped in secular humanist beliefs.

## THE REASON FOR THE SEASON

Though the world has chosen to commercialise Easter and associate it with eggs, we as believers should not cease to celebrate Easter. Personally (you may disagree), I do not think it is worthwhile to try and 'fight' the production of 'Easter' eggs, 'Easter' bunnies etc. The best way for us

to reach the world with the Gospel is not to totally alienate ourselves from its practices, but to bring the salt and the light into our conversations and behaviour.

As a young girl, I loved Easter egg hunts, chocolate bunnies and grilled hot cross buns. I also had a strong Christian influence that ensured that I did not lose sight of the real "reason for the season". If you choose not to have an Easter egg

and act like the world - we should always stand out - but, at the end of the day, it is a matter of personal conscience and what you believe the Lord has laid on your heart to do or not to do.

If all Christians stopped celebrating Christmas (or Easter) what reminder would the world ever have of the true reason to celebrate? So many people stumble into churches over Christmas

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet 1:3*

hunt with your children, or to purchase Easter eggs, that is your prerogative.

## AN OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS

If you do however participate in these things, then why not take the time to explain the significance of Easter and the true meaning of why we have "a long weekend" every March/April.

Sometimes when we have a knee-jerk reaction to worldly ideas (like Easter bunnies, Father Christmas, Christmas trees etc) we can actually end up doing more damage for the Gospel.

Why? Because often when we limit or restrict popular customs within our family, we cause our children to rebel and see Christianity as oppressive, or, we cause our unsaved friends and family members to distance themselves from us because we are "party poopers" and "out of touch" with reality. I am not advocating that Christians become like the world

and Easter because they feel particularly sentimental or religious. This is a GOOD thing! We can use their 'warm and fuzzy' feelings to draw them to a Christmas play or an Easter production and deliver the powerful, life-changing Gospel message.

## HONOUR THE LORD

Whatever your family or church chooses to do this Easter in terms of celebrating the Atoning work of Christ, ensure that you are placing Christ at the centre of your focus. Infuse your children and grandchildren with the message of the Gospel and the values of Biblical Christianity.

Invite unsaved or wayward friends and family to church, followed by a lunch on Good Friday and reflect in a true and loving way upon the amazing sacrifice Christ made for us. Use Easter Monday to enjoy a devotion with family or Christian friends and to take Communion, pray, worship and honour the Lord. ■





# It's about *Jesus*

—by Peter Hammond

Christ is our Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5:6-8); our Sin Offering (Rom 8:3); our Atonement (Rom 3:25). When Christ, the perfect Son of God, a Lamb without spot or blemish (1 Pet 1:19) shed His precious Blood on the Cross it was a substitutionary death.

He died for us, in our place (1 Pet 3:18), the innocent for the guilty, the just in the place of the unjust.

## HE WAS PIERCED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS

*"He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed...the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...for the transgression of my people He was stricken...and the Lord makes His life a guilt offering...my Righteous Servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities." Isa 53:5-11*

There is no doubt that Jesus Christ remains the greatest person who ever lived because He made the greatest sacrifice to fill the greatest need for the greatest number of people.

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16*

He is the Saviour, the Eternal King and Judge. He is the giver of life and of forgiveness. We need forgiveness for sin and freedom from sin. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom 6:23*

Jesus dying on the Cross brought about so many significant, eternal consequences. He redeemed us from the

wages of sin. He rescued us from an eternity separated from God. He transferred us into the Kingdom of Heaven where we experience unparalleled hope and joy.

## CHRIST HAS GIVEN MANKIND THE OFFER OF SALVATION, REDEMPTION AND ETERNAL LIFE

On earth, the consequences of Jesus' death included that, the curse of sin was broken over all who believe and follow Christ. *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." John 10:10*

of Jesus at Calvary, we can know that His Blood has covered every sin and washes us white as snow.

## THE LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD

Over 3 400 years ago God said: *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you, upon the altar, to make atonement for your soul; for it is the Blood that makes atonement for the soul." Lev 17:11*

No one could have understood until quite recently just how profound that truth is. The first reference we have to Blood in the Bible is in Genesis 4:10-11: *"What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood*

*"You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seal; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your Blood...Worthy is the Lamb...to receive power..." Rev 5:9-13*

Jesus Christ gives us our spiritual life, eternal life and abundant life. We need Grace – undeserved favour – and it is in Jesus Christ that we find the mercy we so desperately need.

*"For by Grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Eph 2:8-9*

Because the blood of an innocent had to be shed, Christ was the perfect and only propitiation for our sins. *"He is the propitiation for our sins." 1 Pet 2:2*

Because His Blood was shed for us, we are able to enjoy communion and fellowship with the Father and an eternal life in Heaven. There is power in the Blood and this Easter, when we partake in Communion and remember the atoning work

*cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."*

## THE PROTECTION OF GOD

Whatever situation we are facing, we can know that Christ's Blood offers protection to us. *"Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see that blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." Exo 12:13*

## THE FOUNTAIN OF SALVATION

*"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." Zech 13:1.*

# It's about *Jesus*



wages of sin is death. All men have broken the Law of God and are under the sentence of eternal death. Christ Jesus died as our substitute, in our place. He rendered complete obedience to the Law of God and made full atonement for our sins.

*"Much more than, having now been justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."* Rom 5:9

## SET FREE

The greatness and sacredness of man's soul is attested to by two facts: First, the creation of our soul is in the image of the Eternal God. Second, the price that has been paid for the redemption of the soul is the precious Blood of Christ.

Christ redeemed us from the bondage and slavery of sin. *"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct...*

*the precious Blood of Christ. "And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in Heaven, having made peace through the Blood of His Cross."* Col 1:20

*"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."* 1 John 1:7

*"In Him we have redemption by His Blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the richness of His Grace."* Eph 1:7

## TRANSFORMED BY THE BLOOD

*"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by His Blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall*

The Blood of Christ is a synonym for the Gospel. It is the Blood of Christ that redeems us from all sin. *"But this is My Blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."* Matt 26:28

## REDEEMED BY HIS BLOOD

The first greeting that Christ received was that which hailed the power of His Blood when John the Baptist cried out: *"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."* John 1:29

And the last recorded salutation that Christ will receive will be the Song of the Redeemed: *"You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seal; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your Blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation..."*

*Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing ... forever and ever!"* Rev 5:9-13

Sin is the breaking of the Law of God. A broken Law demands a penalty. The

**The Blood of Jesus justifies us from the guilt of sin, redeems us from the slavery of sin, reconciles us after the separation of sin, and cleanses us from the shame of sin.**

*but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."* 1 Pet 1:18-19

## RECONCILED

Sin has alienated and separated us from God. *"Behold, the Lord's Hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.*

*For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity."* Isa 59:1-3

Sin always alienates and separates us from the presence of God. The question is: How can man and God be reconciled? By

*we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus...through Whom we have now received reconciliation."* Rom 5:8-11

## A VISION OF THE CROSS

Charles Spurgeon once said: "Stand at the foot of the Cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed. See the crown of thorns, mark His scourged shoulders, still gushing with incrimsoned rolls..." and if you do not surrender your life to Christ "on the ground before that Cross, you have never seen it." Have you seen it? Have you been to Calvary? Christ died for you. Are you living for Him? ■

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