

CHAPTER 2

PAGAN TRANSFORMATIONS

“They have dealt treacherously with the LORD, for they have begotten pagan children....” ~ LORD

There is abundant historical evidence establishing the roots of various pagan holidays “put off” on the “Christian world,” and how many of these pagan days were cleverly used in an attempt to draw the Gentile masses. This attraction of the Gentile masses was accomplished in part by “replacing” God’s richly meaningful and commanded Holy Days and Sabbaths with old pagan holidays that were whitewashed, “Christianized,” and renamed. Over time this approach resulted in a complete transformation of many of God’s Feasts into worldly holidays. It was as if Passover and Pentecost went through a complete pagan morphogenesis, while other of God’s Holy Feasts were simply ignored, forgotten and replaced with completely new ancient pagan commemorations.

After the death of Yeshua’s (Jesus Christ’s) apostles, Pentecost morphed from God’s Feast of Firstfruits (representing the first harvest of God’s elect and the receiving of His Spirit and Law) into a twisted shadow of the beautiful Holy Feast Day God gave us. It morphed into yet one more pagan-rooted holiday, with a focus on the day named after the sun god. God prophesied this would happen (Dan.7:25). *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1911

edition, has much to say in regard to these types of changes. Also, *The Two Babylons* by Alexander Hislop, under the section “Festivals,” is quite revealing as to the methods used to entice the masses by “Christianizing” pagan holidays as substitutes for God’s commanded Holy Days.

Various church historians have recorded many attempts of an apostate Roman Church trying to “Christianize” pagan religious days by changing their names into names that depict real or so-called Biblical events. These same “religious authorities” also sought to “change” the dates for God’s appointed Holy Feast Days to that of their renamed *pagan* holidays. For example, Passover was quickly “changed” to “EASTER.” While, biblically, the date of Passover would fall on various days of the week, Easter was fixed to the SUNDAY of the Passover week (*The Two Babylons*, by Alexander Hislop, Festivals section, page 104).

Lent and “Easter Sunday” are inferior substitutes for:

- Passover, commemorating Christ as our Passover Lamb and Savior of Israel and the whole world.
- Turning people to God in meaningful ways through belief in the Messiah and by real repentance from transgressing God’s Laws; turning to God’s rich and loving way of life as pictured by the Days of Unleavened Bread.

- The hope-filled preparation and anticipation of God's help and instruction that is brought about by true numbering and keeping of Pentecost.

Passover depicts Christ as the perfect, sinless, humble (unleavened) and atoning Passover sacrifice for the sins of mankind, while the Days of Unleavened Bread signify the beginning of a new journey out of this sin-laden world. The Passover season teaches God's people to put away their old, sinful ways and eagerly anticipate and count down the days to the real freedom that the giving of God's Law and Spirit on Pentecost would bring. Compare that with Lent which lacks real Godly repentance, and Easter Sunday which was originally rooted in honor of the pagan "Easter goddess" (the goddess of fertility) and Baal the sun god!

This early attempt to draw the Gentile masses by "Christianizing" their pagan holidays and calling them "Christmas," (which originally was kept in honor of the sun god), or "Easter Sunday" in honor of the popular god Ishtar, (pronounced and phonically spelled "Easter") was a very popular and effective way of drawing the masses into this new spurious religion that sought to dominate and replace the teachings and practices of the small flock that Jesus founded and kept in His Father's Name (John 17:12). This clever and diabolical move was also designed to "Christianize" the first day of the week (Sunday), named after the sun god Baal, by teaching Easter Sunday in place of Passover, as the first perceived important "Christian day." By teaching and focusing upon the falsehood that Jesus rose at sunrise on a Sunday, it was implied and later taught that God's weekly Sabbath – which falls upon the seventh day of the week – was abrogated by this newly

found importance of Sunday. According to Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, a graduate of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, “*Today Italians still refer to Sunday as “pasquetta,” – which means little Easter” (From Sabbath to Sunday, Page 205 by Dr.Samuele Bacchiocchi).*

JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED ON A WEDNESDAY – NOT A FRIDAY

God’s Word clearly shows Christ was buried on a Wednesday afternoon, just before the High Holy Day that began the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is why God’s Word refers to this day as a “preparation day,” since it was the day before the High Sabbath of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread – not the weekly Sabbath! The phrase “High Day” always refers to one of God’s seven annual Feast Sabbaths. Notice the time and date of Jesus’ crucifixion as detailed by the apostle John:

John 19:14 – Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”

It was NOT the preparation for the weekly Sabbath, but for the High Sabbath of the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread! The approaching High Holy Feast Day was regularly called a “Sabbath.”

John 19:31 – 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.

Many, because they had not read their Bibles carefully enough, have assumed the preparation for the Sabbath was for the weekly Sabbath, and that Jesus was therefore crucified on the sixth day of the week – a Friday. However, this is *not* what the Bible teaches. Many are simply unaware of these Biblical facts. But there also seems to have developed a marked effort by some to ignore or undermine God's Feasts and to promote a Sunday resurrection. Once misinformation is taught and believed, it can be difficult to get people to re-examine the Scriptural evidences without bias. Admirable and blessed are you readers who carefully examine and accept Biblical facts without bias.

Do you remember the only sign Jesus said He would give?

Matt 12:38 – Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

40 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.

It is absolutely impossible to fit *three days and three nights* between a Friday afternoon burial and a Sunday morning resurrection.

I trust that God's people understand that three days *AND* three nights from ANY afternoon, will always end on another afternoon! Any count that includes three days *and* three nights will always end at the same time of day that the count began on three days later! But some teachers, who are influenced by an amalgamation of pagan Easter Sunday traditions with an acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, would have you believe Jesus did *not* mean, "three days *and* three nights," even though Jesus Himself said this would be the only sign He would give of His being *the Messiah!* Would you rather accept their *morphed interpretations* of Jesus' teachings, over Jesus' clear words? Jesus warned us that many teachers would proclaim Him as Christ but would deceive many with a false Gospel about Him (Matt.24:5). Do YOU believe those who want to minimize Jesus' Words and claim those three days *AND* three nights can fit into a 1½ day period?

- Friday afternoon to Saturday afternoon is *one* day.
- Saturday afternoon to Sunday morning is $\frac{1}{2}$ of another day. That is a full 1½ days short of the length of time Yeshua (Jesus) Himself said His body would remain in the grave!

These misguided teachers thus deny the Holy Days Jesus and His apostles and disciples kept, replacing them with “Christianized” ancient pagan rituals and days that honor the fertility *goddess* “Easter” (Ishtar) and her sacred animal – the hare – as well as Baal the ancient sun god. They put aside the Lord’s Passover and Sabbaths and kept in their place a pagan Gentile Easter and Sunday! As the examples of Jesus and His disciples keeping all seven of God’s Holy Festivals began to be ignored, the precious guiding meaning and the lessons each of God’s commanded Feasts teach us began to be lost to most people. ALL of God’s Sabbaths are a guiding sign, like a beacon in the night (Ex 13:6-9, Ex 31:13, Ps 119:105)! Most have unknowingly accepted a pagan transformation away from God’s Holy Festivals that Jesus and His disciples kept, to keep pagan renamed holidays instead. Satan uses deception as a snare to keep people back from a closer walk with God. Indeed, through deception, Satan has cleverly held many good people in the world captive against their will (2 Tim 2:26). But thanks be to God, because as He grants us each repentance, more and more people will come to the full truth (2 Tim 2:25). The acceptance of a pagan morphogenesis of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and God’s other Holy Days will not survive forever.

Jesus demonstrated that He knew how many hours are in a day and the distinction between the day and the night:

John 11:9-10 – Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if

one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

From the beginning, God's method of counting time has always been to divide days into two periods, so that, "the evening and the morning," makes up one day (Gen.1:5). Jesus understood that each day began with the evening, and that it was made up both of the dark evening hours – followed by the daylight hours.

No one denies that the expression "in three days" could include portions of each of three days. However, when the Hebrew expression "three days *and* three nights" is used, it always means three full 24-hour days!

Notice what *The Companion Bible* Appendix notes say regarding Jesus' promise to be in the tomb "three days and three nights":

The fact that "three days" is used by Hebrew idiom for any part of three days and three nights is not disputed; because that was the common way of reckoning, just as it was when used of years. Three of any number of years was used inclusively of any part of those years, as may be seen in the reckoning of the reigns of any of the kings of Israel and Judah.

But, when the number of "nights" is stated as well as the number of "days", then the expression ceases to be an idiom, and becomes a literal statement of fact. (The Companion Bible by Kregel Publications, *Appendix 144, The Three Days and Three Nights of Matt.12:40.*) (emphasis mine)

Jesus was placed in the tomb on a Wednesday afternoon – before the beginning of the High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After resting in the grave for three full days and three full nights, Jesus rose late on Saturday afternoon (the weekly Sabbath) during the days of Unleavened Bread. Two good articles setting forth the Scriptures on these points that can be read in *The Companion Bible*, (Appendixes #144 and #156, Kregel Publications).

The fact that Jesus' resurrection was on that Saturday afternoon is the reason why Mary found the tomb already empty when she arrived early Sunday before morning broke – BEFORE SUNRISE – while it was still dark. Notice:

*John 20:1 – Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.
2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."*

Therefore, since we know Jesus was put into the tomb in the afternoon of Passover day (Wednesday) – just before the High Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread – it stands to reason that “three days *and* three nights” later He rose on an afternoon! What afternoon? Since Jesus had already “risen” (past tense) “very early” on the first day of the week – before light even began to break (John 20:1) – and since the preceding day was a weekly Sabbath, the true

Biblical chronicle of time dictates that Jesus' resurrection was on Sabbath afternoon!

(NOTE: The Gospel accounts DO NOT say that Jesus rose early on the first day of the week. There were no eye witnesses of His resurrection. The eye witness accounts are of His death, and that He appeared alive to His disciples again after three full days.)

Thus we are left with the very sign Jesus gave of His being the Messiah – that He would be raised 72 hours after He was put into the tomb. Jesus was raised then, on the afternoon of the weekly Sabbath which fell within the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Therefore, it is clear that from the afternoon of Passover day, Wednesday, (when Jesus [Yeshua] was put into the grave) to Saturday afternoon (weekly Sabbath) during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, there were exactly three days and three nights! The Word of God is not broken!

How clear and refreshing God's Word is when we fit our beliefs into what God's Word says instead of trying to fit the Scriptures into our beliefs.

This plain truth, however, has not yet stopped the masses from following and believing their teachers who say Jesus rose at sunrise on Sunday morning, and then proclaim Sunday to be a holy day in honor of this supposed Sunday sunrise resurrection. But the impossibility of this teaching is beginning to be realized as well. Satan historically used this false teaching to effectively transfer pagan masses who

worshipped Baal and their other Babylonian gods and goddesses on the pagan day of the sun to be called “Christians” and thus to alter the composition, doctrine and practices of the original church. Today, Sunday is “just accepted” by the masses, and though the history and roots of what they believe and practice is available, they seem not yet able to see or digest it. God speed the day when the great deceiver is bound and his influence “shut up” (Rev 20:3)! But even today, God is opening the eyes of many of His people and as God promised through Daniel, in the latter days, knowledge would increase (Dan 12:4, 9).

In the mean time, this clever deception continues to confuse the truth of Christ and His Passover – turning it into yet another reason to assemble the masses on the day of the sun – i.e., Easter Sunday. But that’s not all it did. It also set up the second perceived New Testament “holy day” as also being on a Sunday – Pentecost! Many historians believe Pentecost, fitting in with Easter, was CHANGED TO ALWAYS FALL UPON A SUNDAY!

If you merely count 50 days from Easter, you will arrive on what most people call Pentecost! The Apostle John’s early 2nd century disciple, Polycarp, vigorously resisted the new Easter Sunday teaching in favor of keeping the traditional Passover as he was taught by John and as was practiced by all of Jesus’ apostles. Eusebius and other historians bear clear record of Polycarp’s persecution for resisting the heretical new fixed Easter Sunday date in favor of the Passover which fell on various days of the week. But the new misguided Gentile “Christian movement” under the leadership of Rome proved too popular and influential to be long resisted. In 325 A.D. the Council of Nicea fixed Easter to be the Sunday after the Paschal full moon in the spring,

thus fixing their Pentecost to always fall on Sunday as well. (The very rare exception to this Easter rule occurs as the result of a lunar technicality in the Gregorian calendar. Easter Sunday 2008 was called “early,” as it was one such rare exception, falling about a month before Passover. It should not be that “early” again for another 220 years.)

It’s interesting to note that the time between Easter and Pentecost is still called by many churches, “The seven weeks of Easter.” Many people will have a hard time accepting the fact that men fixed Pentecost to Sunday, but it is a fact nonetheless. Just count seven Sundays after Easter, and you’ll arrive on the world’s Pentecost. But is it really Pentecost?

Concerning the changing from Passover to Easter and its association with Pentecost and Sunday, Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi wrote:

In numerous patristic testimonies the weekly and annual Easter-Sunday are treated as basically the same feast commemorating the same event of the resurrection. In a document attributed to Irenaeus it is specifically enjoined not to kneel down on Sunday nor on Pentecost, that is, the seven weeks of the Easter period, ‘because it is of equal significance with the Lord’s day.’ The reason given is that both feasts are ‘a symbol of the resurrection.’ Tertullian confirms that custom but adds the prohibition of fasting as well: ‘On Sunday it is unlawful to fast or to kneel while worshiping. We enjoy the same liberty from Easter to

Pentecost.” He continues quoting F.A Regan, “In the season extending from Easter to Pentecost, the same custom was followed, thus showing the relation between the annual and weekly feasts. (Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, Page 204.) (Author’s emphasis throughout)

The link between Passover being “changed” to Easter Sunday, and the “seven weeks of Easter” always culminating in a Sunday Pentecost, as part of a broader attempt by a new and counterfeit church to make these two Sundays, and thus all Sundays, the new “Sabbaths” or “holy days,” cannot be honestly or factually denied.

Many historians have recognized the historical effort to attach Pentecost to Easter Sunday as an effort by a new group of “formerly” pagan theologians to “Christianize” their former method of worshiping on Sunday. This was done by claiming Sunday to be the new “holy Sabbath” by proclaiming it as both the day our Savior arose from the dead and the day the church was founded. Thus, these Gentiles, who now called themselves “Christian,” also changed the day upon which God’s Feast of Firstfruits (called “Pentecost” by the Gentile Greeks) was kept. [No man can actually change God’s appointed Times or Laws, though they may deceive others into accepting and believing that they have (Dan.7:25).] Again, this was done by linking Pentecost to Easter Sunday, instead of the Biblical Hebrew link to Passover and the first Annual Sabbath of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

When one uses the ancient standard Hebrew Biblical method of establishing Pentecost, one finds that Pentecost can fall on a variety of days of the week. This is borne out

by the context of Leviticus 23 and the account in Deuteronomy 16.

Roman Catholics called this new so-called “Christian holiday,” “Whit-Sunday,” meaning “White Sunday.” This Greek Pentecost, which means, “count fifty,” began to be counted from Easter Sunday to another Sunday, 50 days later. This change, and the change of focus, seems to have fooled all but the Jews and Jewish Christians, who continued to number Pentecost as they had always counted it, beginning on the morrow after (day after) the first annual Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, regardless of which day of the week it happened to fall.

As many church historians have noted, a new church, totally unlike the one Jesus founded, was formed within less than seventy years of the original Jerusalem Church of God.

Jesse Lyman Hurlbut wrote:

For fifty years after St. Paul’s life a curtain hangs over the church, through which we strive vainly to look; and when at last it rises, about 120 A.D. with the writing of the earliest church fathers, we find a church in many aspects very different from that in the days of St. Peter and St. Paul. (Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, *The Story of the Christian Church*, page 33.)

The faithful “little flock” Jesus established (usually called “Jesus’ disciples” or “saints” in the Bible) was soon overshadowed by a new and much larger Gentile church with an amalgamation of “Christianized” pagan doctrines and holidays, intermingled with some Biblical truths – all

in the name of Christ. This new church proclaimed and took to itself the “name” of Christ, while its message deceived the masses because it did not proclaim the same Gospel that Christ proclaimed (Matt.24:5). This new religion became a spurious bastardization of the church Jesus founded. It’s affect was so far reaching that it influenced even some of the true Church of God leadership (Rev.2:13-16, 20-21).

Soon the clergy of this new Roman church (based out of Rome instead of Jerusalem), twisted and changed many doctrines. It began to abandon the Holy Days, the Hebrew calendar (Dan.7:25), and the true teachings of the original primarily Jewish disciples and apostles of Christ. A strong anti-Semite bias quickly took hold in this new Roman church as the Jews were blamed for the death of the Messiah – although the Romans participated, and even though Jesus died for the sins of US ALL! Although Jesus Himself was a Jew, as were most early Disciples of Christ, anything considered “Jewish” or perceived as going in the direction of “Judaism,” was soon frowned upon as anti-Christian. So strong and pervasive was this anti-Jewish influence that this prejudice is still felt and practiced by many today – even among God’s Church! This is evidenced by the feelings some still harbor against Messianic Jews and Judaism. Many thoughtful people in the fellowship of the Sabbath keeping Church of God have no qualms about using various commentaries written by Sunday-keeping authors who reject God’s Holy Sabbath Days. However, many of those same people would shun ANY commentary from the Talmud or from a Messianic Jew! One receives the impression today that many well-meaning Sabbath-keeping Churches of God, under the

influence of this misguided almost anti-Semitic “fear of Judaism,” are more accepting of teachers and “scholars” who are steeped in pagan ideas and customs than they are of anyone (or anything taught by anyone) whom they perceive as “Jewish” or related in any way to “Judaism.”

This often unconscious prejudice is sufficiently prevalent so that the minds of MANY students of God’s Word have closed their minds to a valuable vein of knowledge, because they perceive it as “Judaism.” This influence has affected what many teachers have taught. This includes the way one counts Pentecost seven weeks from Easter-Sunday, instead of from the first annual Sabbath of the Days of Unleavened Bread (as the Jews yet do) and as many Jewish and non-Jewish historical sources cite as the ancient practice from Old Testament times.

Is it possible that this pagan influence regarding Pentecost also deeply affected and infected past and present teachers and members of God’s Church? History suggests that it has. Being misguided does not make a person “bad.” Many are better than I. But it does hold a person back from the full potential and blessings that God’s full truth brings.

There is no denying that an incredibly deceptive transformation of Passover and Pentecost, with pagan-rooted teachings have taken hold, and that the early Church of God battled but eventually succumbed to many Gentile heresies that were being foisted upon God’s flock (Rev.2:13-16, 20-21, Gal.1:6-7, Acts 20:30).

Thankfully, we still have Scriptural and historical evidence to counter this confusion – for those who have eyes to see

and ears to hear. As you continue reading, be sure to carefully compare what you read with God's Word. Then decide for yourself what is really TRUE, based upon the evidence from God's Holy Bible, and confirmed by an abundance of historical and archeological evidences.

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