



History of the Word “Easter”; The Voluntary Physical Death of Christ: Necessary for a Resurrection Body; Consignment of His Human Spirit to God

# CHRIST AROSE!

Christendom annually celebrates the resurrection of Jesus on what is popularly called Easter. Of all the major English translations of the Bible only the Authorized King James Version uses this word and that just once in:

**Acts 12:4 - (AKJV) When the king, Herod Antipas, had apprehended Peter, 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.**

The English word “Easter” is of eighth-century Saxon origin and makes reference to Eastr, the goddess of spring, in whose honor sacrifices were offered around the time of Passover each year. Thus Eastr is the Saxon version of the Chaldean goddess Astarte who was worshipped as the “queen of heaven.”

There is no celebration of the resurrection noted in the Bible. Jewish Christians in the first century linked it with the Passover and celebrated it on 14 Nisan regardless of the day of the week on which it fell. However Gentile Christians in the first century celebrated the event on Sunday.

A system for celebrating the resurrection on a particular day was determined by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. This body ruled that Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the full moon that occurred following the vernal equinox. The spring equinox occurs on or about March 21. Thus, the celebration can occur anywhere between March 22 and April 25. (Tenney, *New International Bible Dictionary*, 289.)

For some reason, back in the early 1600s, the British translator of Acts decided to use the word Easter in Acts 12:4. Thus its use is a gross anachronism that is not only wrong it is confusing. The Greek word in question is the noun:

**πάσχα, pascha** - “Passover”

**Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 2d ed., F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 633:**

**The Passover. A Jewish festival, celebrated on the 14th of the month Nisan, and continuing into the early hours of the 15th. This was followed immediately by the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th to 21st. Popular usage merged the two festivals and treated them as a unity.**

**In later Christian usage the Easter festival.**

Passover was instituted at the Exodus. On 10 Nisan, every head of household chose a lamb without spot or blemish as a sacrifice. On 14 Nisan they killed the animal between 3 and 6 P.M. A branch of hyssop was dipped into the lamb’s blood and applied to the two doorposts and lintel of the house where the Seder was to be eaten. The meal was eaten that evening. The Jews were instructed to have their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and staff in hand ready to march out of Egypt on a moment’s notice.



This festival became a mandated event to be observed every 14 Nisan followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It was a type for the Person and work of Christ on the cross. The lamb without spot or blemish pictured the impeccability of Christ qualifying Him to become our substitute. This lamb was totally innocent of any offense as was Christ. Yet this innocent creature died so that the first born of Israel might be passed over by the destroyer angel. In Romans 8:29 the Lord is said by Paul to be the “firstborn of many brethren.” Because of the sacrifice of Christ, those who believe in Him are spared eternal death and instead are transferred immediately at physical death to heaven where they continue in the presence of the Lord in eternal life. The impact of the sacrificial lamb at the original Passover is a type for the impact of the work of our Lord on the cross. His Person and work is uniquely tied to the Passover lamb by John the Baptist when he is quoted as saying, in:

**John 1:29b** - “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

Indeed He was the Lamb of God and He did indeed take away the sin of the world with His work on the cross. Paul sums up John’s analogy in:

**1 Corinthians 5:7b** - Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed as a substitute for us.

Our Lord understood His mission and therefore prophesied His substitutionary sacrifice to His disciples. On the first Passover of His public ministry, the Lord went to Jerusalem to observe the festival. Upon entering the Temple he discovered the money-changers selling animals and birds in defiance of the Mosaic Law. As any property owner would oust thieves from his own property, the Lord threw them all out of His house, asserting in:

**John 2:16b**- “Stop making My Father’s house a house of merchandise.”

The Lord’s use of the phrase “My Father’s house” caught the immediate attention of all in earshot:

**John 2:18** - The Jews, therefore, answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?”

**v. 19** - Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”

**v. 20** - The Jews therefore said, “It took forth-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?”

**v. 21** - But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

**v. 22** - When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.

**Matthew 16:21** - From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

**John 10:17** - “... the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

**v. 18** - “No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”

Our study today will emphasize the laying down of the Lord’s life and His taking it up again. We do, of course, recognize that our salvation was bought by the sacrificial, substitutionary, spiritual death of our Lord. Only after this judgment was over and fellowship with the Father restored did our Lord conclude that His work was both completed and propitiatory. He proclaimed the fact with the one word assertion from the cross in:



**John 19:30** - When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished [ *Tetelestai* ]."

**Τετέλεσται** is the perfect passive indicative of the verb:

**τελέω, teleō** - "to bring to an end"

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| perfect:    | Consummative denoting completed action. It refers to a present state that is the result of a past action.                                      |
| passive:    | Jesus Christ received this past completed action by being imputed our sins and being judged as a substitute for them.                          |
| indicative: | Declarative; the indicative is the mood of certainty. The declarative indicative is a statement of historical, biblical, and theological fact. |

A more precise translation of the single word *tetelestai* in John 19:30 would read this way:

**John 19:30** - When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "*Tetelestai*: It is finished in the past with the result that it stands finished forever."

Salvation has always been available to any individual of any dispensation—pre-cross, mid-cross, or post-cross—who expresses faith alone in Christ alone. Abraham is the model for Old Testament pre-cross believers:

**Genesis 15:6** - And he [ **Abram** ] already had been caused to believe [ אָמַן *'aman*: **Hiphil causative perfect tense: had been caused to believe in the past with its results continuing forever** ] in Jehovah [ יְהוָה *YHWH* ]. And He [ **God** ] kept on imputing [ חָשַׁב *chashav*: **Qal imperfect tense** ] it to him [ **Abram's faith alone in Jehovah alone** ] for righteousness [ **imputation of plus-R** ].

The thief on the cross is the model for mid-cross believers. He revealed his faith in Christ with this comment recorded in:

**Luke 23:42** - "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"

**v. 43** - And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.

Salvation remains the same in the Church Age: faith alone in Christ alone, expressed precisely by Paul in:

**Acts 16:31** - "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Once our salvation was secured then the Lord's mission on earth was completed for the time being. He must now exit this physical life so that He can go to prepare a place for us:

**John 14:1** - "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

**v. 2** - "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

**v. 3** - "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."



In order to accomplish these objectives the Lord must have a body that has capacity to transcend space and time and exist in the third heaven's environment of eternal life. Therefore, the Lord must experience physical death before He can then be equipped with a resurrection body. Jesus Christ is said be the first fruits of resurrection in:

**1 Corinthians 15:20** - But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

**v. 21** - For since by a man [ **Adam** ] came death, by a Man also [ **Jesus Christ** ] came the resurrection of the dead.

**v. 22** - For as in Adam all die [ **spiritual death** ], so also in Christ all shall be made alive [ **eternal life** ].

**v. 23** - But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.

"His coming" is the rapture of the Church when all believers of the Church Age will receive a resurrection body just like Christ's:

**1 John 3:2** - Beloved, now we are students of God, and it is not yet revealed what we shall be. We know, however, that if He should appear [ **in our lifetime** ], we shall be similarly like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

In order for our Lord to be resurrected and become the first fruits of our resurrection and the prototype for our resurrection body, then He had to die physical death. The Holy Spirit provides three different perspectives of our Lord's physical death through the writers of the four Gospels. We will note the translations from the King James Version and then analyze:

**Matthew 27:50** - Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up [ ἀφίημι, **aphiēmi** ] the spirit [ **human spirit** ].

**Mark 15:37** - And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up [ ἐκπνέω, **ekpneō** ] the spirit.

**Luke 23:46** - And when Jesus, had cried with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into thy hands I commend My spirit": and having said thus, He gave up [ ἐκπνέω, **ekpneō** ] the spirit.

**John 19:30** - When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished": and He bowed His head, and gave up [ παραδίδωμι, **paradidōmi** ] the spirit.

These four writers use three Greek words to describe our Lord's physical death:

1. Matthew uses the aorist active indicative of the verb:

ἀφίημι, **aphiēmi** - "To release; to let go"

It means to release something from a legal relationship; i.e., an office, obligation, or debt. Our Lord's human spirit was under legal contract to fulfill the predetermined grace plan of God concerning the salvation of the human race. Once that obligation was finished, Christ, from His volition, was free to release His human spirit. This, in effect, was an announcement of "mission accomplished."

2. Mark and Luke use the aorist active indicative of the verb:



ἐκπνέω, *ekpneō* - “To breath out; to expire”

Behind this word is the idea that at physical death the vital force leaves the body in the breath. This verb is associated with the noun πνεῦμα, *pneuma* which is translated “spirit.”

- John uses the aorist active indicative of the verb:

παραδίδωμι, *paradidōmi* - “To give over; to commit; to consign”

### Principles:

- Paradidōmi* means to voluntarily entrust something to another. Christ, from an act of His own volition, entrusted His human spirit over to the Father. *Paradidōmi* is a compound that means literally “to give up.”
- To give up something that is in your possession requires a volitional decision. This verb used by John emphasizes the fact that Jesus Christ was not subject to physical death.
- Nothing man could have done to Him could have brought about His death. Our Lord was void of any of the mundane requirements of death: He had no genetically formed sinful nature. He was not imputed Adam’s original sin. He never committed any personal sins.
- Christ was total perfection in body, soul, and spirit therefore He was never subject to physical death. The only way Christ could die physically was from an act of His own volition.
- Thus our Lord’s vicarious sacrifice for us on the cross was also an act of supreme volition. He did not have to stay on the cross and endure the punishment for our sins. Christ could have dismissed His spirit anytime he chose.
- But we know from Hebrews 12:2b that “for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”
- Since physical death was a voluntary act by Christ, it becomes obvious that He did not choose to give up His spirit until He had completed His assigned mission of dying spiritually for our sins.
- This enables us to conclude that the mission was accomplished while He was still physically alive. That mission was to become identified with our sins in His own body as a substitute for us. He became a curse so we might be justified before God through faith in Him.
- The spiritual death of Jesus paid for our sins. He did not dismiss His spirit until that work was done. When this work was done, He offered up His human spirit to the custody of the Father.
- The best English word to describe the Lord’s transfer of His human spirit from His physical body into the third heaven is “consign.”

**Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “consign”:**

To give over to another’s care; to give, transfer, or deliver into the hands or control of another.