

RALPH WOODROW EVANGELISTIC ASSOCIATION INC.  
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## SPECIAL *FREE* BOOK OFFER:

### **EASTER—IS IT PAGAN?**

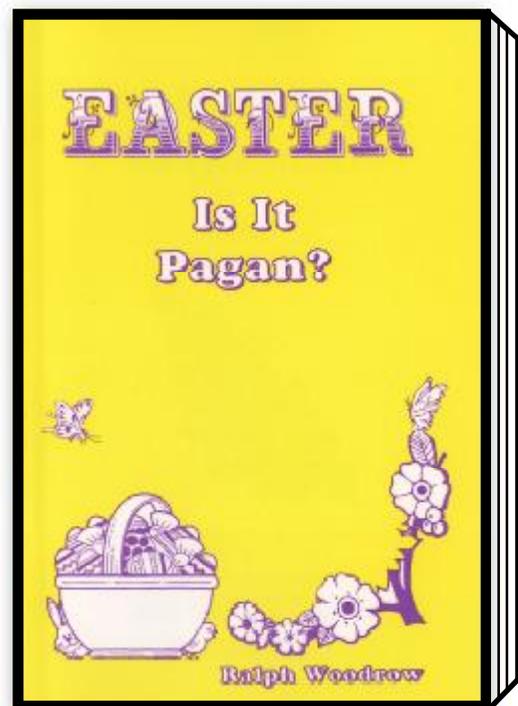
As we again approach Easter, multiplied thousands of Christians will victoriously celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But others—those who hold an anti-Easter teaching—will continue to circulate negative misinformation about this special day. One claim, repeated over and over, is that “Easter” is the name of a pagan goddess, implying that today’s Easter celebration is a continuation of pagan worship!

Is “Easter” the name of a pagan goddess? One writer, among others cited in my book **EASTER—IS IT PAGAN?** provides a good answer in these words:

“Generations have been raised on the theory that the word ‘Easter’ came from pagan mythology. The Venerable Bede, an English historian and theologian of the eighth century, when the holiday first began to be called Easter, wrote that it was named for *Eostre*, an Anglo-Saxon goddess. This must have been conjecture on his part, because recent scholars can locate no reference to such a goddess in northern mythology.

“The German word *Ostern*, as well as its English equivalent, ‘Easter,’ is derived from the Norse *eostur*, *eastur*, or *ostara*, which means ‘the season of the growing sun,’ or ‘the season of new birth.’ A similar word, *ost* or ‘east,’ is used for the direction in which the sun rises. So it looks as if our English word for the spring holiday commemorating the Resurrection comes from the season *and not a pagan deity.*”

If the observance of Easter is a continuation of the worship of a pagan goddess, as some claim, who is it that worships a goddess on Easter? I can tell you about Christians who at Easter worship “the MAN Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5), who rose from the dead—but *not a female goddess*. Even with the emphasis that many Roman Catholics place on Mary, Easter is not Mary’s day!



But let’s assume the word “Easter” was, at some time or place, the name of an ancient, obscure goddess—and thus a pagan word. Would this necessarily mean the word is *still* pagan? It is evident that words can change in meaning and significance over time—even words based on the names of pagan gods and goddesses! Once such words have acquired a general, non-pagan meaning, we need not refrain from using them.

We do not refrain from using the word “janitor,” even though it comes from Janus, the Roman god of doors and gates. We do not refrain from using the word “cereal,” even though it comes from Ceres, the goddess of grains. We do not refrain from using the word “panic,” even though it comes from the god Pan who went about scaring people!

We do not refrain from calling a book of maps an “atlas,” even though it comes from Atlas who was, in

mythology, condemned to support the earth for eternity. We don't refrain from using the word "money," though it is said to come from Juno *Moneta*, a goddess to whose temple a Roman mint was attached.

We do not hesitate to call the central building of the United States government the "Capitol," even though the word comes from Jupiter Capitolinus, the temple of the god Jupiter which stood on Capitoline Hill in ancient Rome.

We do not refrain from using the word "cloth," even though Clotho, a daughter of Jupiter and Themis, was the goddess that spun the thread of life. We do not refrain from using the word "flower," even though Flora was the goddess of flowers. We do not refrain from using the word "ocean," even though Oceanus, son of Uranus, was the god of the sea.

We do not refrain from using the word "insomnia" (sleepless), even though Somnus was the god of sleep. He was the father of Morpheus, god of dreams, from whose name we obtain the word "Morphine."

We do not refrain from using the word "echo," even though Echo was a mountain nymph whom Juno deprived of speech except when spoken to. Luke did not hesitate to use the Greek word *echos* "echo" when describing the reverberating "sound [echos] from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind" on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2).

We do not refrain from using the word "fury," even though the Furies were, in mythology, three hideous, winged female deities who went about punishing people and inflicting plagues.

The "Muses" were the nine daughters of Zeus who presided over learning and the arts. From "Muses" we obtain our words *museum* and *music*. Does this make "museum" a bad word? Is it "pagan" to visit a museum? Should we preach against "music" because the word once had pagan linkage?

As we look into the night sky, we do not refrain from using the term "Milky Way," even though it comes from the myth that Juno, while nursing Mercury or Hercules, scattered milk across the sky.

We do not refrain from using names for planets such as Mercury, Venus, or Mars, even though these were originally pagan names. The book of Job even represents the LORD as saying, "Can you bind the sweet influences of *Pleiades*, or loose the bands of *Orion*? Can you bring forth *Mazaroth* in his season? Or can you guide *Arcturus* with his sons?" (Job 38:31,32; cf. 9:9).

The *Pleiades*, in mythology, were the seven daughters of Atlas who were transformed by Jupiter into a group of stars when they were pursued by Orion. *Orion* was a giant hunter slain by Artemis, figured in the stars by a man with a sword, three stars on a line forming his belt. *Arcturus* is a

fixed star near the tail of the Great Bear. *Mazaroth* is linked with the signs of the Zodiac.

Pagan deities, along with the sun and the moon, have provided the basis for the naming of the days of the week: Sunday (Sun day), Monday (Moon day), Tuesday (Tiw's day), Wednesday (Woden's day), Thursday (Thor's day), Friday (Frig's day), and Saturday (Saturn's day). But these names are in such common use now, they no longer convey any pagan significance.

If we announce the church is going to have a "Friday night service," for example, no one would take this to mean we would be worshipping the goddess Frig.

How, then, is "Easter" any different? Even if the word came from the name of an ancient goddess, it does not have that meaning now.

Those who oppose the celebration of Christ's resurrection at the Easter season, sometimes make the wild claim that those who do so, are really worshipping the Sun-god Baal! They quote Ezekiel 8:14-16 about "women weeping for Tammuz" and men worshipping "the sun toward the east." This, it is claimed, was the *real* origin of Good Friday and Easter Sunrise Services! But there is no valid *connection*. If a Christian group chooses to have a special service at sunrise to proclaim the good news of an empty tomb and resurrected Christ, it is not pagan. After all, it was at sunrise that the women came to the tomb and discovered it was empty: "And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun" (Mk. 16:2). No Christian has *ever* gone to an Easter Sunrise Service to worship the Sun-god Baal.

We admire Christians who desire to stand for the purity of the gospel, who do not want paganism in the church. But we should be certain that what we reject is *indeed* pagan, so that in pulling up weeds, we do not pull up the wheat also.

I have given here only some *highlights*. In my book I present many reasons why the negative, anti-Easter teachings should be rejected. Did Constantine start Easter at the Nicean Council? Did the idea of 40 days of Lent come from Babylon? Are eggs and rabbits abominable symbols? Is decorating Easter eggs a pagan fertility rite?

You may request a FREE copy of my 64-page book **EASTER—IS IT PAGAN?** as a gift from our ministry by mail, e-mail, or phone.

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