

Lent

Lent in the church calendar is a 40 day fast leading up to Easter, supposedly in remembrance of the 40 day fast of Jesus in the desert. But Jesus' fast was in the Autumn and certainly did not lead up to his death and resurrection.

The word *Lent* is an old word meaning *spring*. The real origin of Lent is the 40 days of weeping for the Sumerian demi-god Tammuz who was killed by a wild boar when he was 40. This mourning is described as an abomination in [Ezek 8:13-15](#).

Other Church Festivals

Alexander Hislop in his book [The Two Babylons](#) gives a lot of tedious detail illustrating that every festival in the church's calendar goes back to ancient heathen worship.

I have covered church festivals in much greater detail in [Christmas and other Church Festivals](#).

Summary

Old Covenant festivals were solemnly ordained and commanded by God. They served a temporary purpose in pointing forward to spiritual realities yet to be revealed.

New Covenant festivals belong to the invisible realm of the spirit. To those born of water and the spirit into the kingdom of God they are substantial and real and vastly superior to anything manmade. They are above the Old Covenant festivals as heaven is above the earth.

Church festivals were never ordained by God. They are heathen in origin and mainly materialistic in practice. They are foreign to the fundamental principles of the New Covenant.

Festivals in the Old Covenant New Covenant and Church

Rome's official religion a triumph or a tragedy? Was the "Christianising" of heathen places of worship and customs a wise and generous compromise, or was it departure from the truth?

I believe that Scripture and history unite to testify that the organised church went progressively into darkness rather than into light. The church lost the spiritual dimension of the New Covenant. Then, instead of simply retreating into the truths of the Old Covenant, its leaders, like Jeroboam of old, produced idols and festivals out of their own hearts to satisfy the people; or perhaps to be more accurate, they turned to paganism for their inspiration! Consequently, the period when the church held undisputed sway over all Europe has, with unbelievable irony, become known to historians as the dark ages.

Christmas

Almost everything relating to Christmas is heathen in origin.

- The Date of Christmas (25th December) comes from the Roman Saturnalia, which celebrated the Roman god Saturn.
- Mother and Child Worship originated in Babylon with the mother goddess Semiramis and her child Tammuz.
- Christmas Decorations were also part of the Roman Saturnalia.
- Carol Singing also had its origins in the Roman Saturnalia.
- Holly and Mistletoe were both used in pagan ceremonies.
- Christmas Trees came into Christmas celebrations much later probably coming from Germany in the 16th century.

Easter

Easter also has heathen origins. The word Easter comes from the name of the fertility goddess Astarte of Nineveh. Easter eggs are obviously a fertility symbol. Rabbits (Easter bunnies) are also a fertility symbol. Springtime, when Easter occurs, is the great fertile time of the year.

The name Easter occurs nowhere in the Bible except in the corrupt KJV translation of [Acts 12:4](#) where the actual Greek word is *πασχα* meaning Passover.

Bible quotations are taken from the ESV or retranslated

a living, spiritual experience of forgiveness through the sacrifice of Christ. Pentecost becomes the wonderful baptism with the Holy Spirit. Tabernacles speaks of further experiences still largely future for the people of God.

Paul spells these things out to the Colossians in chapter 2 verses 16 and 17: 'Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink; or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day - things which are a shadow of what is to come; but the substance is of Christ.' To the Galatians (4:9-11) he writes: 'But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have laboured over you in vain.'

What did Paul mean by a shadow? A shadow or a photograph or painting is a perfect 2-dimensional replica of a 3-dimensional object. In itself it has no value. Like a signpost, its whole value lies in that to which it points.

All the ceremonies of the Old Covenant were just two-dimensional shadows pointing to the three-dimensional realities of the New Covenant. The sacrifices and ceremonies that God had solemnly commanded Moses were of no value in themselves but pointed to infinitely greater spiritual truth. We are not seeing a new religion or a changed religion, but a mind-blowing development of the old. The flat square has become a solid, substantial cube; the flat circle has become a solid sphere; the bare foundation has become the finished building; the dead has become alive.

I have written a separate article, [Festivals of Israel](#), explaining the spiritual meaning of these Jewish Festivals in much greater detail.

Church Festivals

What shall we say then about Christmas and Easter and other church festivals?

Before answering this question, we must ask some controversial and radical other questions. After the departure of the original apostles, did the church steadily grow into maturity, or did it steadily decline into darkness? Was the establishment of Christianity under the emperor Constantine as

Introduction

Most religions have festivals. Some involve eating and drinking and some involve fasting. Some involve processions in the streets.

Muslims fast for a month in Ramadan and celebrate the end of it with a three-day feast called Eid.

Hindus have many festivals of which the most important is Diwali.

Buddhist festivals vary from country to country, but the most important one in most countries is New Year; but they also celebrate the birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha at the first full moon in May.

Jewish people still celebrate the festivals God gave to Moses described in [Leviticus 23](#), which include Passover (Pesach), Pentecost (Shavuot) and Tabernacles (Succoth).

What about Christians? Should they keep the same festivals as the Jews, as described in the Bible? Or has God replaced them with Christmas and Easter and other festivals in the various church calendars?

In this writing I will consider festivals in scripture, firstly in the Old Covenant and then in the New Covenant. After that I will briefly consider Christmas, Easter and other church festivals.

Old Testament Festivals

God gave Israel through Moses an annual calendar of festivals. God ordained three main festivals, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles which are described in [Exodus 23:14-17](#) [Leviticus 23](#) and [Numbers 28](#) and [29](#) and [Deuteronomy 16](#).

The Passover (Pesach) took place in the first month and included the Festival of Unleavened Bread and the Festival of the First Fruits. It celebrated deliverance from slavery in Egypt and also the beginning of harvest. The Exodus from Egypt and the birth of the nation were events that the Jewish people could never forget and of course they remember them till this day.

Pentecost or the Festival of Weeks (Shavuot) fell in the third month, fifty days on from the Passover. It celebrated the giving of the law on Mount

Sinai when God Israel the ten commandments. That also was an event they could never forget.

Tabernacles (Succot) fell in the seventh month and included the Blowing of trumpets on the first day of the month and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) on the tenth. Tabernacles also was associated both with Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and with the produce of the land. The tabernacles reminded the Jews of how they had left their houses in Egypt and dwelt in temporary abodes while they travelled.

All these festivals were ordained by God and were times of great national solidarity. All Jewish males were required to go up to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate them. They were times when all work ceased and, apart from Yom Kippur when all had to fast and afflict their souls, they were times of joy and rejoicing before the Lord.

Sometime after Joshua, observance of these festivals declined, and they were not observed regularly for several hundred years. They were restored by the kings Hezekiah and Josiah with much repentance, and later by Ezra after the exile in Babylon.

We read of one further festival in the Old Testament in [1Kings 12:31,32](#). After the division of the kingdom between Solomon's son Rehoboam in the south and Jeroboam in the north, Jeroboam felt it necessary to set up a rival religion to keep his subjects from going up to Jerusalem to worship. He set up golden calves at Bethel and Dan and instituted a festival on the 15th day of the 8th month. Scripture describes this as a date which he had 'devised in his own heart'. As we read on through the pages of Israel's history, we find repeated references to him as 'Jeroboam the son of Nebat who caused Israel to sin'.

I have explained the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament Festivals in [Festivals of Israel](#).

New Testament Festivals

What happened in New Testament times? Did the followers of Jesus switch from keeping Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles to Christmas and Easter?

We find no mention of Christmas or Easter anywhere in the Bible, but we find continuing references to the Jewish festivals in the New Testament.

- In John 2:13, we read, "The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem".
- In [John 7](#), we find Jesus going up to Jerusalem for the Festival of Tabernacles.
- In [John 13](#), we read of Jesus celebrating his last Passover with the disciples.
- In [Acts 2](#), we find celebration of the day of Pentecost.
- We read that Paul "was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost" (Acts 20:16).

Clearly we see celebration of all the Jewish festivals in the New Testament, but we see them gradually taking on a new meaning.

When Jesus celebrated his last Passover with the disciples, he spoke words that must have totally shocked them: "Do this in remembrance of me" ([Luke 22:19](#)). We have probably heard these words 1000 times, but never thought of what they meant to those Jewish disciples. For more than 1500 years the Jews had celebrated the Passover in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt and the birth of their nation. Jesus was hijacking their most sacred national, religious festival and giving it a totally new meaning. "Do this in remembrance of me!" He was about to bring a much greater deliverance than the Exodus from Egypt. Imagine the shock of his hearers!

Fifty days later, Jews gathered from all the surrounding countries to celebrate Shavuot or Pentecost as we call it. This festival remembered the dramatic event of the law-giving on Mount Sinai. The Holy Spirit came down with great power, this time to write the law on the hearts of the assembled people. Once again, a fundamentally new meaning for an old festival.

We find, therefore, no question or suggestion of replacing Jewish festivals with new and different Christian celebrations. Rather the outward ceremony is superseded by the inward reality. From sacrificial lambs we do not move sideways to goats or cows, but forwards and upwards to Jesus, the Lamb of God. We do not transfer across from the sacred Jewish temple to magnificent churches and cathedrals, but we progress to spiritual temples of living stones. Similarly, then we do not change Passover for Easter, but for