

Ignite: Why We Don't Celebrate Easter

Objective: By the end of the lesson the student will understand why we do not observe the holiday of Easter.

Bible Verses:

Acts 12:3-4

I Corinthians 16:8

Acts 2:1

Luke 22:14-20

Acts 20:6, 16

John 13:4-17

I Corinthians 5:7-8

Deuteronomy 12:29-32

Essential Question? Does God expect us to celebrate Easter or the days of Unleavened Bread?

Opening:

How many of you used to celebrate Easter? What did you like about it?

Read Acts 12:3-4

Teacher Note: Make sure all scriptures are read out loud in the class by student volunteers.

These scriptures discuss Peter being put in prison about 10-12 years after Christ's death. Because the early church continued to keep those holy days for many years before Easter became popular.

Q. Why would the writer of Acts mention the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover as the timeframe in which these events occurred?

A. Because the early church continued to observe the holy days known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread/Passover.

Why would this be significant? It shows the idea of Easter is a much later tradition in Christian history. Before moving on ask the class what they already know about the origin of Easter.

Content:

Let's start by discussing some history on this subject from the Encyclopedia Britannica (11th edition, Volume VIII, pp. 828-829)... "There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers... The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed. Thus the Passover, with a new conception added to it, of Christ as the true Paschal Lamb and the first fruits from the dead, continued to be observed. Although the observance of Easter was at a very early period in the practice of the Christian Church, a serious difference as to the day for its observance soon arose between the Christians of Jewish and those of Gentile descent which led to a long and bitter controversy.... Polycarp, the disciple of John the Evangelist, and bishop of Smyrna, visited

Rome in 159 to confer with Anicetus, the bishop of that see, on the subject, and urged the tradition which he had received from the apostles of observing the 14th day (Passover). Anicetus, however declined (the Western church was celebrating Easter on the Sunday after the 14th)....A final settlement of the dispute was one among the other reasons which led Constantine to summon the council of Nicea in 325. At that time the Syrians and Antiochenes were the solitary champions of the observance of the 14th day. The decision of the council was unanimous that Easter was to be kept on Sunday, and on the same Sunday throughout the world, and that 'none hereafter should follow the blindness of the Jews.'...This became known as the 'Quartodeciman controversy.'"

What do we learn from this excerpt of the Encyclopedia? That in about 300 years after Christ the Church officially decided to observe Easter rather than Passover.

What was some of the reasoning for doing this? The Church had an anti-Jewish bias and wanted to move away from anything that was observed by the Jews (Sabbath and holy days).

What can we learn from the following scriptures (Acts 2:1; Acts 20:6, 16; I Corinthians 5:7-8; I Corinthians 16:8)? These scriptures provide more evidence the early church continued to observe God's holy days.

Teacher Note: Have the students break into groups to read these scriptures and discuss what they think these verses prove. Have them report back to the class.

What should we be doing instead of observing Easter? Observing the annual commemoration of Christ's death.

Teacher Note: Have the students read Luke 22:14-20 and John 13:4-17 and discuss.

Independent Practice:

Have students look up the following subjects on Google using cell phones: Easter, Lent, Easter eggs, Easter rabbits, and Quartodeciman controversy. Ask them to share what they can find about these subjects. Have them share what they find with each other.

Close/Reflect

How does this scripture relate to what we have discussed today: Deuteronomy 12:29-32? We need to focus on what God wants us to do rather than what man thinks God wants us to do.

Have any of you had issues with your friends or family about observing Passover/Unleavened Bread rather than Easter?

What final comments or questions does anyone want to share on this topic?

Besides the sources mentioned in the lesson I also used *The Plain Truth About Easter*, by the Worldwide Church of God, 1973.