

## MUSLIMS ASK . . .

# WHY DO CHRISTIANS CELEBRATE EASTER?

What is Easter? And why do Christians celebrate it? What does the Easter Bunny have to do with Easter? And isn't Easter a Pagan holiday? All of these valid questions should and need to be answered by the Christian Community. After all, Easter is the greatest of all Christian holy days and needs to be properly explained by the Christian so it may be properly understood by the non-Christian. After briefly discussing what Easter is not, we will then answer the much more important question of what Easter is and why Christians celebrate Easter? In answering these questions we will cite the Bible (*Taurat, Zabur and Injeel*) as well as the Quran and Hadith.

### WHAT EASTER IS NOT

The derivation of the word "Easter" is unsure and has been debated for many years. The word is not found in the Greek biblical texts and so has been borrowed from other cultures and applied to the Christian commemoration of the death, burial and especially the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Historically, there have been many religious and cultural festivals that gravitate towards the vernal equinox in the Spring of the year. There can be little doubt that over many years the traditions of these non-Christian observances have affected the popular observance of Easter today. The Easter Bunny and the giving and hunting for eggs are cultural traditions that have long existed and been adopted by many who celebrate Easter. Unfortunately, for many in America Easter is equated with Bunnies and eggs. This phenomenon is not unlike the secularization of Christmas. Instead of celebrating Jesus birth, many Americans are celebrating Santa Claus and the Christmas Tree. And yet, there remains a significant minority of the America, those who are true Christians, which have not forgotten the true meaning of these holy days, and they spend them with Godly reverence and prayer.

So then, we see that the popular observance of Easter today which emphasizes these non-Christian elements (i.e. Easter Bunny, dyeing eggs etc.) has virtually nothing to do with the true meaning of Easter which has been celebrated (although not always in that name) since the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD. The fact that non-Christian elements have crept in to what is known as the popular observance of Easter in no way nullifies or taints the true meaning and significance of Easter or the event that it commemorates. To disagree with this line of reasoning would imperil the Kabba in Mecca which would need to be discarded since it was the center of prolific idol worship before the time of Muhammad. The Kabba itself held 360 pagan idols but is today the very focal point of the prayers and pilgrimages of Muslims all around the world. No, it would be foolish to assert that the Christian observance of Easter is wrong or tainted by paganism that has influenced its popular observance after its institution, and not say the very same thing or worse about the Kabba which was the center of idol worship before Islam adopted it as there focal point of prayer. So we see then that to discount or denigrate Easter because of how it has been misrepresented or syncretized by the secular world does not deal at all with its true meaning and significance to true Christians the world over. So then, what is the true meaning and significance of Easter to authentic Christianity? We will now endeavor by God's grace to answer that question for our reader.

## THE TRUE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EASTER (RESURRECTION DAY)

To even begin to understand the true meaning of Easter (or “Resurrection Day” as not to confuse our readers by a title which is disputed) one must understand the history of the Jewish holy time of Passover. We must explain this because Christians believe that Jesus Christ is our Passover and that the original Passover of the Jews was to point directly towards the coming Messiah the true and final Passover (1Corinthians 5:7). It often amazes Christians to learn that Islam, the Quran, the Hadith, and most Muslims know nothing about the Passover ceremony, and more importantly the miraculous event that it commemorates. One can never understand the purpose and meaning for Jesus Christ’s death (and thus Easter) without understanding the meaning and significance of the Passover.

### What is the Passover?

The Passover was one of the greatest events in biblical history. The Quran records nine plagues (See Surahh 7 *Al-Araf*) against the Pharaoh of Egypt but does not mention the tenth and the most devastating plague. And we know from the Quran that whenever the Prophet Muhammad was in doubt about a revelation he was supposed to consult the People of the Book, Surahh *Yunnus* 10:94:

And if thou (Muhammad) art in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture (that was) before thee. Verily the Truth from thy Lord hath come unto thee. So be not thou of the waverers.

So as every good Muslim should follow the example of the Prophet, we too will look to the People of the Book and to the Book itself for answers to our questions. The Tenth Plague unmentioned in the Quran was the Passover that finally forced Pharaoh of Egypt to let the children of Israel leave Egypt and return to Canaan, the Promised Land. Passover can best be understood by looking at the Bible (*Taurat*) passages that recount its institution, occurrence, and commemoration.

The main biblical passage concerning the institution of the Passover is Exodus 12:1-14:

<sup>1</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, <sup>2</sup> This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* **the first month of the year to you.** <sup>3</sup> Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the **tenth day** of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of *their* fathers, a lamb for an house: <sup>4</sup> And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take *it* according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. <sup>5</sup> **Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year:** ye shall take *it* out from the sheep, or from the goats: <sup>6</sup> **And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses,** wherein they shall eat it. <sup>8</sup> And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it. <sup>9</sup> Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast *with* fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. <sup>10</sup> And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. <sup>11</sup> And thus shall ye eat it; *with* your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: *it is* the LORD’S Passover. <sup>12</sup> **For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the**

firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD. <sup>13</sup> **And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.** <sup>14</sup>

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

This is the institution of the Passover that God spoke to the Israelites through His servants Moses and Aaron. The Israelites were to take a lamb without blemish of the first year and sacrifice it the night of Passover. They were to take the blood of that innocent lamb and place over the top and side door posts of their houses. That night the Angel of the Lord was going forth to kill all of the firstborn of Egypt both Human and Livestock for this was the tenth and final plague. But, the Israelites would be saved if they obeyed the Words of the Lord. When God's Angel would see the blood of the innocent lamb over the doors of the Israelites' homes He would "Passover" their homes and spare the firstborn of the Israelites inside. It was this great judgment upon Pharaoh and Egypt that finally brought salvation to the Israelites who were delivered out of the hand of Pharaoh and Egypt the very next morning.

This great Passover has been commemorated by the Jews ever since its occurrence by the Holy festival of Passover. This holy day is remembered and memorialized by Jews all over the world even today. The date of the Passover is fixed as the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Abib (a.k.a. "Nisan"). This date from the Hebrew Calendar falls either in the end of the month of March or during the month of April. **It is no coincidence that Easter (Resurrection Day) is celebrated during the very same time period as Passover every year.** But why did Christians choose this time to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ? The very simple answer is that **Jesus, the Passover Lamb for Christians was crucified on the very same day that the Passover lamb was sacrificed by the**

**Jews.** This is a fascinating fact of the utmost importance. Jesus is seen by Christians as the ultimate Passover, the fulfillment of the Jewish Passover Lamb whose innocent blood kept the Israelites from destruction. Similarly, Jesus, known as the "Lamb of God," was sacrificed on the Passover and it was His innocent blood of infinite value that offers salvation to all who will accept Him as Lord. This is complete salvation from sin today and from the coming Day of Judgment.

One might ask how we know that Jesus was sacrificed on the very same day of the Jewish Passover? The answer is that all four of the Gospels in the Bible (*Injeel*) explain that Jesus and His disciples, all of whom were Jews, commemorated the Passover meal the night before He was crucified. And we know that the Jewish day begins at sundown and ends at sundown the next day. So Jesus and His disciples, being good Jews, kept the Passover meal at the appointed time, the beginning of the Jewish day which was after sundown, and **Jesus was crucified that very same Jewish day**, which would be the next afternoon in our terminology. **This is truly amazing! If Jesus was not crucified on that day but someone made to look like him (Muslim commentators often cite Judas Iscariot) why would the whole event take place on the very day of Passover, the recognized day of sacrifice, blood atonement, salvation and deliverance for Israel? The simple answer is that it was Jesus who died on the cross as the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover, becoming the Passover for all who would believe on Him!**

So then, we see that it is extremely important to recognize that when Christians celebrate Easter they are commemorating the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. There can be no resurrection without death. And Jesus Christ did in fact die on the cross the very day of Passover, so the Passover might be completely fulfilled in Him. For when John the Baptist first saw Jesus he proclaimed, "...behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). John the Baptist was speaking by the Holy Spirit who made clear crucial link between the Passover lamb and Christ Jesus, the ultimate and final Passover Lamb. So we see then that Christians celebrate Easter in accordance with the time of the year Jesus was killed, which is the time of Passover. This is further

evidenced by the fact that even today, Passover and Easter are always very close on the calendar.

Now that the reader has a rudimentary understanding of the Passover of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures we can explain much more understandably why Christians celebrate Easter.

**In celebrating Easter, Christians commemorate the two most important events in history, Jesus Christ's death and His resurrection from the dead.** Jesus' death was not an ordinary death but the offering of an innocent and sinless sacrifice in place of guilty and sinful humanity. You see, this concept is found throughout the Bible in both the Old and New Testaments. Once again Christians are very surprised to learn that Islam, the Quran and Muslims seem to know very little about the sacrificial system of the Old Testament (*Taurat*) as evidenced especially in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. To fully understand why Christians insist on believing that Jesus died on the Cross and thus celebrate Easter, we must learn at least something about this crucially important sacrificial system of the Israelites from the *Taurat*.

## The Sacrificial System of the Taurat and the People of the Book

In order for Israel to remain in good standing with God, blood sacrifices had to be made both corporately for the nation as well as individually for the sins of each man. Notice a key verse from the Book of Leviticus (what Muslims call the *Taurat*), Leviticus 17:11: **“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”**<sup>1</sup> This concept of an innocent animal slain for guilty man was continued by the Jews from the time of Moses until the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70AD. If Muslims will follow all of the Scriptures that have been sent down to them including the *Taurat* just as Allah and Muhammad have commanded them to, they would know just how fundamental this system of blood sacrifice for sins really was to the religion of the Jews. Note this command from Allah to Muslims in the Quran Surahh *An-Nissa* 4.136

O believers! Believe in Allah, His Rasool, the Book which He has revealed to His Rasool, and every Book which He previously revealed. He who denies Allah, His angels, His Books, His Rasools and the Last Day has gone far astray.

The following passage taken from the *Taurat* vividly illustrates the centrality of the sacrificial system, both in the shedding of blood and in the bearing of our sins, each carried out by the two innocent animals in the following quote concerning *Yom Kippur*, which is the famous Day of Atonement in Judaism.

### Leviticus 16:15-22 (The Day of Atonement)

<sup>15</sup> Then shall he [the Priest] kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: <sup>16</sup> And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth <sup>0</sup> among them in the midst of their uncleanness. <sup>17</sup> And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. <sup>18</sup> And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. <sup>19</sup> And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it

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<sup>1</sup>*The Holy Bible : King James Version.* 1995 . Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. <sup>20</sup> And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy *place*, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: <sup>21</sup> **And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit <sup>0</sup> man into the wilderness:** <sup>22</sup> **And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.**

Notice that an animal had to be sacrificed as “the sin offering, that is for the people...” (v. 15). An innocent animal was sacrificed once every year for the sins of the Israelites as a nation. And additionally there was an innocent “scapegoat” that would “**bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited**” (v. 22). In this one Jewish festival we find both the innocent blood sacrifice of an animal needed as a substitute for the guilty blood of the Israelites, as well as another animal that “bears” or takes away the sins of the people. The Israelites later became convinced by the Prophet Isaiah that the Messiah to come would ultimately, finally and completely bear the sins of the people Himself. The following passage from the Bible was written over 700 years before Jesus was born and is perhaps the most famous prophecy concerning the Messiah.

### Isaiah 53 :4-12

<sup>4</sup> Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> **But he *was* wounded <sup>0</sup> for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.** <sup>6</sup> **All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid <sup>0</sup> on him the iniquity of us all.** <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. <sup>8</sup> He was taken from prison <sup>0</sup> **and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.** <sup>9</sup> And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death <sup>0</sup> ; **because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.** <sup>10</sup> **Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.** <sup>11</sup> He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: **by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.** <sup>12</sup> Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; **because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.**

Here in Isaiah 53 the Word of God points to the Messiah as the one who will fulfill both roles of the two lambs offered in *Yom Kippur* as well as the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb. This passage is viewed by both Jews and Christians as referring to the Messiah (yet they differ as to His identity). Muslims and Christians both agree that Jesus was the Messiah and so it is helpful to read these words about Him from the Bible.

Look at two very important excerpts from the passage above: Isaiah 53:8 “...**for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken...**” and Isaiah 53:10 “...**when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin....**” We see from verse 8 that this individual was “cut off out of the land of the living” which is to say “killed.” Why was he killed? If we look at the second part of verse 8 quoted above we read: “for the

transgression of my people was he stricken.” Clearly we see that the Messiah was to be killed for the transgression or sins of the People of God (at that time the Israelites). Now look at the quote from verse 10”when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin” The soul, “*nepesh*” in the original Hebrew, means “life” and here especially “life in the blood” Notice in 53:12 that this Messiah “**poured out his soul unto death.**” This refers to the pouring out of Messiah’s blood at the cross just as the blood of the sacrificial lamb would be poured out by the Jews during Passover and *Yom Kippur*.

### **The Role of Essa Al-Masih (Jesus the Messiah)**

When Jesus is first spoken of in the Gospel of John, John the Baptist sees Jesus for the first time and by the Holy Spirit said of Jesus, “**behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.**” (John 1:29) The Jews were looking for the Messiah at the time of Christ and some believed that John the Baptist was that Messiah. Yet John the Baptist explained, “and he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.” (John 1:20) He then said, “...I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.” (John 1:23) John the Baptist is quoting from Isaiah 40:1-5. Notice it says, “make straight the way of the **LORD.**” John the Baptist quotes this passage in the Hebrew (as any Jew of time would quote the Hebrew Scriptures in Hebrew) using in this prophecy the name “*Yahweh*” which is the personal name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. John the Baptist goes on to say that, “...I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” (John 1:26-27).

Now Notice what John the Baptist says the next day when he sees Jesus: “ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. **This is he** of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.” (John 1:29-30). **NOTICE HERE THAT JOHN THE BAPTIST IDENTIFIES JESUS AS THE ONE WHOM HE WAS PREPARING FOR. THAT SAME ONE JOHN THE BAPTIST SPECIFICALLY DECLARED TO BE “YAHWEH” THE GOD OF ISRAEL. NOW JOHN THE BAPTIST CLEARLY IDENTIFIED JESUS AS THE ONE HE WAS PREPARING FOR THUS IDENTIFYING JESUS AS “YAHWEH” THE GOD OF ISRAEL.**

The Messiah (or Christ) was to be the one of Isaiah 53 who would take away the sins of the people of Israel by his death. He was to be the one who would offer his own innocent blood in keeping with the demands of God to offer a substitute for the guilty souls of the people of God who had all sinned. And the Messiah was in fact expected to be God. Look at a few short passages from the Bible delivered to the Jews.

**Isaiah 7:14** “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*”[which means “God with us”]. (Expecting Messiah born of a virgin to be in fact “God with us”)

**Isaiah 9:6** “**For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called** Wonderful, Counselor, **The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.**”

(A child is born yet he will be the “mighty God,” “the everlasting Father,” “the Prince of Peace?” Who could fulfill this but Jesus? that is to say God the Son who is one with the everlasting Father but chose to enter the flesh through the virgin Mary)

**Micah 5:2** “ **But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting .**”

(Jesus was born in Bethlehem and was and will be the ruler in Israel (from the tribe of Judah) whose “goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Only Jesus the Messiah (God the Son) could fulfill this prophecy)

**Zechariah 9:9** “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” (Jesus alone entered Jerusalem as King, on a donkey, and having salvation)

**Zechariah 12:10** “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: **and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son**, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

(Notice that God is speaking these verses to the Israelites. He equates Himself with the one who they have pierced and says that they will mourn for Him as for His only Son. Jesus is the Son of God spiritually and so Jesus and God have the same spiritual essence yet different roles as Father and Son.

**Malachi 3:1** “ Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and **the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple**, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”

(The Lord whom the Israelites were seeking was the Messiah the God of Israel who would come to *His* Temple. Notice that only the True God could claim that the Temple was His. So the Lord Jesus, who was God, came into His Temple. It is significant that Malachi is the final book of the Old Testament coming just before the account of Jesus’ birth, life, and His literal appearance in His temple.

There are many other passages in the *Taurat* and the Hebrew Old Testament that refer to the coming Messiah, but the ones above are some of the most explicit.

Now we want to share some evidence from Islam that Jesus was in fact the only one qualified and designated to be the Messiah. Also, according to Islam the Messiah must be the one who is free from sin and alone would be worthy to be offered on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, thus finally and completely fulfilling the need of the Passover and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) Sacrifice.

Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 4.506 Narrated by Abu Huraira

The Prophet said, "When any human being is born, Satan touches him at both sides of the body with his two fingers, except Jesus, the son of Mary, whom Satan tried to touch but failed, for he touched the placenta-cover instead."

Al Quran Surah 5.117 “Nothing did I tell them beyond what Thou didst bid me [to say]: ‘Worship God [who is] my Sustainer as well as your Sustainer.’ And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt in their midst; but since Thou hast caused me to die, Thou alone hast been their keeper: for Thou art witness unto everything

Al Quran Surah 3:55 Lo! God said: “O Jesus! Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee unto me, and cleanse thee of [the presence of] those who are bent on denying the truth; and I shall place those who follow thee [far] above those who are bent on denying the truth, unto the Day of Resurrection. In the end, unto Me you all must return, and I shall judge between you with regard to all on which you were wont to differ.

Al Quran 19:33 “Peace be upon me the day I was born, the day I shall die and the Day I shall be raised to life again”

(Remember this *aya* was spoken by Jesus as a baby in the cradle)

We see from Sahih Al-Bukhari that Jesus alone was born without sin or the touch of the Satan. Even Islam’s Prophet Muhammad is not excluded and was thus touched on both sides of his body by Satan while in the womb of his Mother.

All three of these passages from the Quran indicate that Jesus did in fact die. In 19.33 we see that Jesus would die

and be raised to life again. All of these excerpts from the Quran teach exactly what the *Tauat*, *Zabur*, and *Injeel* teach about Jesus!

Jesus was born without sin, born of a virgin and thus without the inherited sin though his earthly Father Joseph. Jesus was planned by God from the very beginning to come into the world as the sinless and innocent Lamb of God, without blemish, of the first year, whose blood would be shed on the very day of Passover, and all who would take that blood and apply it to the door posts of their hearts would be safe from eternal death. For God will one day judge the world and when He sees the blood of Jesus Christ He will Passover the sins of those who believe on Jesus and will forgive their sins. But for those who do not believe and who have not applied the blood to the doorposts of their hearts, judgment will come and there will be no more sacrifice for sins and no help for those who refuse to believe.

## **JESUS, THE PERFECT AND COMPLETE FULFILLMENT**

Now that our reader has obtained a rudimentary understanding of the meaning of Passover, *Yom Kippur*, the Old Testament Sacrificial System and how Jesus the Messiah is central to all three, let us now conclude by giving a Christian understanding of the great importance and need to celebrate and commemorate Easter (the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus).

We believe that in one man, one prophet, one Lord, the man Christ Jesus all of the Old Testament Sacrifices have been fulfilled and completed so that there is no need for further blood sacrifice. Jesus alone completely fulfilled the requirement of God that we be holy, keeping His laws and staying free from sin. Jesus alone was born without the touch of Satan (Hadith Sahih Al-Bukhari 4.506) and thus He was the only human in history who could be offered as a sacrifice without blemish (sin or defect).

**Jesus alone** was able to be the “Christ our Passover [who] is sacrificed for us” (1Corinthians 5:7).

-First of all, Jesus was crucified or sacrificed on the **very day of Passover**. Once again this is amazing! How could one think that this is mere coincidence? No, this timing was very crucial and ordained by God from eternity past. The Passover was so important in Judaism that the whole Jewish calendar was changed so that the year begins with the month of Passover (Exodus 12:2).

-Secondly, as mentioned above, **Jesus alone** was divinely prepared to be a perfect sacrifice untouched by Satan and sin. For **Jesus alone** was untouched by Satan in the womb, and untouched by any sin in his life on earth. It is important to remember that according to the *Taurat*, (Exodus Chapter 12) the Lamb that was to be sacrificed must be:

**“without blemish” 12:5** (Jesus alone was without sin or blemish)

**“a male of the first year” 12:5** (Jesus in the prime of His life)

**“neither shall you break a bone thereof” 12:46**

(Jesus’ bones were not broken though He was crucified. The legs of the two thieves crucified with him were broken to hasten death, but Jesus had already died and so His legs were not broken so the prophecy and type of Passover was perfectly fulfilled. (John 19:31-33)

**Taken on the tenth day and sacrifice on the fourteenth day 12:3, 6**

(Jesus entered Jerusalem on the Sunday before His Crucifixion. He entered the Temple, which was the place for the

sacrifice of animals, on Monday. Four days later he was sacrificed on Friday. Thus Jesus perfectly fulfilled the ordinance of Passover that the Lamb should be taken on the 10<sup>th</sup> day and sacrificed four days later on the “14<sup>th</sup> day of the same month” (Exodus 12:6).

### **The Passover Lamb brought deliverance and healing**

(The Israelites were delivered the very next morning from Pharaoh on their way to the Promised Land (Exodus 12-15), And, we know from the *Zabur* that on that day there was “not one feeble among their tribes” Psalm 105:37. (Jesus mission was to bring salvation, and deliverance to the Promised Land of Heaven, as well as healing to those who would believe on Him)

Jesus fulfills not only the Passover, but also the needs of *Yom Kippur*. Remember on that day two animals were offered for the sins of the people. One, was chosen to be sacrificed and its innocent blood would atone for the sins of the people. The second animal, the “scapegoat” was to receive by way of transfer through the High Priest the sins of the people that would be carried away by this Scapegoat into the wilderness. Jesus both died for our sins, shedding His own innocent blood for our guilty souls but He also bore our sins to the grave (a true wilderness) and carried out transgressions away.

Jesus not only fulfills the need of the Passover and *Yom Kippur*, but the entire Old Testament sacrificial system of the *Taurat*. And Jesus, as the ultimate sacrifice, also put an end to the entire sacrificial system. How, you might ask? The answer is given by God in His Holy Word the Bible. The Old Testament or Covenant made between God and the Jewish People was broken by the Jews, who turned away from God as a Nation. Therefore, since the People had failed to keep their covenant, God made a New Covenant with Man. And that covenant was that God would send His Son (spiritually speaking) into Humanity through the Virgin Mary. No man was able to keep all of God’s laws perfectly. So, God Himself, because He so loved the world, gave His only Son to take on human flesh and to perfectly obey and fulfill all of the demands of the Old Testament Law. And Jesus, the Son of God come in the flesh, lived a perfectly righteous life and was sacrificed as the innocent and unblemished Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. For the blood of animals could only cover the sins of man temporarily, but the blood of God alone, once offered, can completely wash away our sins and thus make us free from the need of continual (and ultimately ineffective) washings of the flesh. Look at the following words from the Bible:

Hebrews 9:1 Then verily the first *covenant* [Old Testament] had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. <sup>2</sup> For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. <sup>3</sup> **And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;** <sup>4</sup> Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; <sup>5</sup> And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. <sup>6</sup> **Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.** <sup>7</sup> **But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people:**

<sup>8</sup> **The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:** <sup>9</sup> Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; <sup>10</sup> *Which stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances <sup>0</sup>, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation. <sup>11</sup> **But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;** <sup>12</sup> **Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.**

Notice that in the Jewish Temple (and the Tabernacle that preceded it) of God from the *Taurat* there is the Holiest Place (Holiest of Holies) that is separated from the rest of the Temple by a veil. No one could go in to the

Holiest Place except the High Priest, and even He could only enter once a year on *Yom Kippur* (The Day of Atonement) and that not without sacrificing an animal for his own sin.

Thus, the Jewish People and (Man in general) were separated from God and His presence which was to reside in a powerful way in the Holiest Place. This separation has really existed ever since Adam and Eve broke God's commandment and fell from face to face fellowship and the privilege of the presence of God. This separation existed from the time of Adam and Eve's sin and fall until the time a great sacrifice was made.

Muslims already recognize one great sacrifice in biblical history, that was Abraham's near sacrifice of his son in accordance with the Word of God. Remember that God stopped Abraham from killing his son and instead redeemed or ransomed Abraham's son with a mighty or tremendous sacrifice. The verse in the Quran says, "**And We ransomed Him with a tremendous sacrifice**" (37.107).

God asked Abraham to sacrifice his firstborn son and Abraham was willing and obedient to do just that. But God loved Abraham and had promised to bless his offspring and so he spared Abraham's son. He ransomed him with the life (blood) of an animal. This innocent animal was killed in place of one man who, like all men had not always obeyed God's law perfectly. That is to say all men but one.

Unfortunately, the blood of one animal is not enough to take away the sins of all men who all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. So, all men on earth are condemned to judgment and to eternal separation from God except those who have been ransomed. But who or what could have enough value to ransom the untold multitudes of people throughout human history? There is only one sacrifice that bears an infinite value, and that is the sacrifice of God in the flesh, Jesus Christ the Son of God in human flesh whose blood was of infinite value. That blood is more than enough to cover and destroy even the memory of the sins of you dear reader and me and any one who will believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for our sins, and that God raised Him from the dead.

Notice what happened to the separation between God and man and the veil in the Temple which had separated God and man for so long when Jesus offered Himself up as the ultimate sacrifice:

Matthew 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost [died]. <sup>51</sup> **And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;** and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; <sup>2</sup>

What does this mean? Listen to the Word of God from the Book of Hebrews:

<sup>10:19</sup> **Having therefore, brethren, boldness <sup>0</sup> to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated <sup>0</sup> for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; <sup>21</sup> And *having* an high priest over the house of God; <sup>22</sup> Let us draw near with a true heart in full asSurahnce of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>3</sup>**

**This is why we celebrate Easter! God has in His infinite love decided to provide a way for us to have restored relationship with Him and complete asSurahnce of salvation not based on our good and bad deeds but on the finished good (the best) deeds and work of Jesus Christ who was offered as an innocent sacrifice for you, for me, and for all who would believe on Him.**

**If you are reading this book and have not believed on Jesus now is your opportunity to do just that. God loves you so much that He allowed His perfect and sinless son to die for you. He wants to bless you with His perfect love, peace, and asSurahnce of salvation. Please consider praying this prayer to receive God's mighty sacrifice made for you some 2000 years ago on a cross in Jerusalem:**

**Dear God, I admit that I am a sinner and am unworthy to be in your presence. I know that I deserve to be judged as I have fallen short of the requirements of your law. I believe that you sent your only Son Jesus Christ Who is one in Spirit with You, to perfectly fulfill the demands of your law and to completely fulfill the needs for blood sacrifice to ransom me from the judgment of my sins. I believe that Jesus died for my sins and that You raised Him from the dead on the third day. I believe that Jesus my Lord died for me, now I want to live for You and for Him the rest of my life. I call upon your name dear God to save me, and I believe by faith that I am now saved and redeemed from my sin. I believe that your Holy Spirit now resides in my heart and guides and enables me to serve and follow you all the days of my life.**

**I love you Lord God, and I thank you for loving me,**

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dated** \_\_\_\_\_

### **We Would Love to Hear from You!**

If you have decided to become a Believer we would love to hear from you and help you to grow in your new faith. Please let us know that you have made this most important decision of your life, so that we can rejoice and pray for you.

Even if you haven't made the decision to accept Jesus as your Savior, please feel free to write us with any questions you may have.

Thank you so much for reading this booklet. For those of you who have become Christians I want to welcome you by praying along with the Apostle Paul this prayer He made for **you** recorded in the Bible from Ephesians 1:16-23:

[I] Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; <sup>17</sup> That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in <sup>0</sup> the knowledge of him: <sup>18</sup> The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, <sup>20</sup> Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, <sup>21</sup> Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: <sup>22</sup> And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, <sup>23</sup> Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

For more information write to:

Muslims Ask  
PO Box 633  
Cherryville, NC 28021

Or e-mail  
Muslimsletstalk@yahoo.com