

# An Open Letter to Jesus Christ's Church

by

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, our Lord,

As I begin writing these thoughts, it is the Tuesday after Easter Sunday, 2025. We've just come through another Holy Week. Interestingly, I have come through this one with mixed emotions. The reason? Don't get me wrong when I explain this. I believe we can and should remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ with a celebratory attitude in our hearts any time of the year. It's just that I have come through this Holy Week hearing so many of my favorite preachers and Christian speakers referring to *the Easter holiday* as a day that has a historical and factual connection to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, all while I'm keenly aware that it has no such connection.

For example: while listening to a very well-known, popular, trustworthy Christian radio talk show program—one that has earned my unwavering trust—I heard the host of the program ask his guest how our society has gotten so far away from associating Easter with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. All they could come up with for an explanation was that we've created an Easter version of a “Santa Claus,” called it the “Easter Bunny,” and then added to it Easter Eggs, etc. The real answer to their question is more insidious than that. In our hearts and minds, there is only a faint (if any at all) connection between the day we observe the resurrection of Jesus Christ and **the day Jesus offered Himself up as the Jewish Passover sacrifice.**

Jesus died at the 9<sup>th</sup> hour on the eve of the Passover—the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan on the Jewish **lunar** calendar; which, in that year, was a Friday. Passover day occurs on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan on the Jewish **lunar** calendar; which, in that year, was a Saturday (the Jewish Sabbath). Jesus rose from the dead on the day after Passover—the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan on the Jewish **lunar** calendar; which, in that year, was a Sunday. Naturally, for the first two centuries of its existence, the church observed the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the Sunday that fell closest to the Jewish Passover. In contrast, Easter Sunday of today is determined by our **solar** calendar. That is, Easter Sunday has been appointed to be observed on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring equinox. Consequently, in some years, Easter Sunday and Passover occur weeks apart from each other. What prompted the church to move its observance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ away from its historical and factual connection to the Jewish Passover to the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox?

In its infancy, the church consisted of only Jewish people. But, in obedience to God, they invited the Gentiles into the family, and, over time, the gentile church was growing and becoming “Romanized.” In the second century, a debate arose in the church about when the resurrection of Christ should be observed. Many influential individuals in the young church wanted to disassociate the observance of Christ's resurrection from its historical, factual connection to the Jewish Passover. There was a **Godly Bishop of Smyrna by the name of Polycarp who**

**staunchly maintained that the observation of Christ's resurrection must remain connected to the Jewish Passover sacrifice for which Christ so earnestly offered Himself up to fulfill.** At that time it was still illegal to be a follower of Christ, and Polycarp was arrested and burned at the stake in 155 AD. **Remarkably, it is said that his burning flesh produced no odor of burnt flesh, but rather, emanated incense or the smell of baking bread.**

By the time the Roman Emperor, Constantine, began his reign in the year 306, the Church had become even more "Romanized," and Constantine, to his credit, made it **legal** to be a follower of Christ. Beyond this, he claimed to have received a vision from God that he was to conquer the world through the cross. Sadly, the flip side of that is he viewed **all Jews to be Christ-killers.** To hold such sentiments toward the Jews, he had to **ignore several realities.** He had to ignore the fact that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was a **joint effort** between a narrow group of **jealous, elite, Jewish leaders who cried out, "Crucify Him!"** and his own **gentile predecessors in the Roman government** who decreed and carried out His crucifixion. He had to ignore the fact that **Jesus, Himself, was Jewish!** He had to ignore the fact that **the authors of all Scripture that he claimed to cherish were Jewish!** He had to ignore the **mass of Jewish people who loved Jesus, saw Him enter Jerusalem riding on that colt, and gave Him a triumphant reception!**

Yes, contrary to Constantine's belief that all Jews were Christ-killers, the masses of lay Jewish people **loved Jesus**, as evidenced by the **zealously enthusiastic reception they gave Him** during His triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan on the Jewish **lunar** calendar—the day that every year drew millions of Jewish people from the remotest parts of Israel and the inhabited world to make their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover week. It was the day on which Passover week began. We observe it on *Palm Sunday* today, but back then, it was ***lamb selection day***—the day on which all the Jewish families selected their most precious (valuable, unblemished) lamb for the Passover sacrifice that would take place on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan. The lay Jewish people only felt let down by Jesus when He refused to save Himself from the cross and become their King who would set them free from Roman oppression. They simply didn't understand that their Messiah was born not to be their king who would set them free from Roman oppression, but to **offer Himself up as the Passover Lamb for the Passover sacrifice that would set them free from their own sin.** It was more than just a coincidence that the man John the Baptist referred to as ***the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*** received such a **triumphant reception** when He made His entry into Jerusalem on ***lamb selection day!***

In spite of all these realities, in his attempt to conquer the world through the cross, Constantine spread his antisemitism far and wide. As an illustration of how far and wide geographically and how far into the future such antisemitism spread, it is well known that Martin Luther was a vehement anti-Semite! How could antisemitism spread so widely and far into the future? In his antisemitism, Constantine did not want the resurrection of Jesus Christ to be celebrated in connection with the Jewish Passover sacrifice. He said it was a **Christian duty to have nothing in common with the murderers of our Lord.** In the year 325, from May until the end of July, he convened the first Council of Nicaea—a meeting of 200 bishops representing all of Christendom to achieve consensus on such issues as the Christological issue of the divine nature of God the Son and His relationship to God the Father, the construction of the Nicæan Creed, the promulgation of early cannon law, and, you guessed it, **the mandating of uniformity of the**

**date Christ's resurrection should be observed by the church around the world.** That first Council of Nicaea is credited with accomplishing much good toward eliminating heresy in the church. But it got one thing **wrong! It moved the observance of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection away from their historical and factual connection to the Jewish Passover sacrifice to the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox.**

In short, today's observance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring equinox was **born purely out of antisemitism!** And, although I do not know many people today who would call themselves anti-Semites, here we are, observing the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with nary a thought about the **Jewish Passover sacrifice for which He so earnestly offered Himself up to fulfill, once-and-for-all-eternity!** While it may not be overt antisemitism, it is residual antisemitism.

Many will ask, "What difference does it make?" The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an event that we can remember and understand with a celebratory attitude in our hearts all year long. But it is to our great spiritual benefit to **earnestly remember, observe, and understand the resurrection of Jesus Christ** on an annual basis **in conjunction with and in the context of what He was resurrected from—His death as the Passover Lamb for which He so earnestly offered Himself up to fulfill.** It's one thing to say and think that Jesus died for us to save us from our sins, and then rose from the dead. **It's a whole other thing to understand the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the context of the picture that God has painted with His words surrounding Passover week.** When we see and understand the Passover as God has written it—in word pictures—we see the most beautiful salvation poem ever written! We see the *intimacy* with which God shelters and redeems His people! *We see our Savior for who He really is—our Passover Lamb who died for us to set us free from our own sin.*

I've done my very best to try and explain this in my book, *'Twas Christmas to Passover: God's Graphic Image of a Savior Who Would Die for His People*. It is available on my website, [www.TwasChristmas2Passover.com](http://www.TwasChristmas2Passover.com) and Amazon or Barnes 'n Noble. Happy reading any time of the year, and may you—may we all—have extra meaningful Advent and Lent seasons in the future.

His for life,

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