

# Midtown Messenger

Volume 2

March 17, 2019

Issue 11

## ASH WEDNESDAY, LENT, AND EASTER?

Ronnie Scherffius

Many in the “Christian” world began the time of Lent with the observance of Ash Wednesday as they look forward to the celebration of Easter. While none of these “Christian observances” are authorized by Scripture, as New Testament Christians set for the defense of the gospel (Phil 1:17; 1 Pt. 3:15) we ought to make ourselves aware of the origin and purpose of them that we might be able give a biblical answer as to why we do not participate.

The word *lent* originates from an old Germanic term meaning “long day” and referred to the lengthening of the days during the springtime of the year. Basically, *lent* simply referred to the spring season. The word has taken on a “religious” significance through Roman Catholic tradition. Today, *Lent* refers to the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter. Lent is supposed to be observed as a forty days time of fasting and spiritual reflection.

*Lent* has its origins in the traditions of men. While some seek apostolic authority for its observance, the earliest “authority” for the practice is found in such men as *Pope Leo I* (d. 461), *Socrates* (d. 433), and *Jerome* (d. 420). But the church historian *Eusebius* (d. 339) quoted from a letter written by the Christian apologist, *Irenaeus* (d. 202?) to *Pope Victor I* (d. 199) (the Roman church very early referred to their “bishops” as pope), in which Irenaeus observed, “some think they ought to fast for one day, others for two days, and others even for several, while others reckon forty hours both of day and night to their fast.” Irenaeus also indicates that this “diversity of fasting” had persisted for many years. This fact clearly indicates that there

was no apostolic teaching on a forty days observance of Lent, but that it was a gradual evolution of Catholic tradition. The forty days which is accepted today is based on either Jesus’ forty days fasting in the wilderness (Mt. 2; Lk. 2) or his “forty hours in the tomb.” In recent years, Lent has also been adopted by some Protestant denominations.

*Ash Wednesday* is the first day of the Lenten fast. According to “ancient custom” the participants come to the altar before Mass and the priest dips his thumb into ashes (which have been blessed), and the sign of the cross is placed upon the forehead. As he is placing the ashes on the forehead the priest will say something like, “Remember man that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return.” The ashes are prepared from the palm branches from the previous year’s *Palm Sunday* celebration. The significant of the ashes is drawn from such passages of Scripture as: “And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with **fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes**” (Dan. 9:3), and Jesus rebuke, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in **sackcloth and ashes**” (Mt. 11:21). There is no biblical authority for the observance of Ash Wednesday. The earliest reference to the practice is from the writings of Aelfric of Eynsham (d. 1025), an 11<sup>th</sup> century English abbot (head of a monastery), who wrote much to promote the worship of saints. In his work, *LIVES OF THE SAINTS*, Aelfric stated, “We read in the books both in the Old Law and in the New that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with

sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast.” The abbot then warned those who would refuse to participate by recounting an event in which a man “refused to go to church for the ashes on Ash Wednesday and who a few days after was accidentally killed in a boar hunt.”

*Easter* is a holiday surrounded by myth and uncertainty. Bede (d. 735), an English monk and historian, wrote that “April is known as *Eostremonath*, and is named for a Germanic goddess (*Eostre*) connected with renewal and fertility that the Anglo-Saxons honored in the spring.” Bede further noted that Anglo-Saxon Christians adopted her name and many of the celebratory practices for their Mass of Christ’s resurrection. If this is true the Easter holiday has its origins in the paganism of Germanic peoples. No surprise that the Catholic Church denies this.

Of our three “Christian” observances under consideration, only Easter is found in our English Bible. From the book of Acts we read, “And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after **Easter** to bring him forth to the people” (Acts 12:4). The Greek word translated Easter is the Greek word referring to the Passover and is so translated in every other instance in the New Testament! The word should be translated Passover here also.

Pope Leo I refers to Easter as the greatest Christian feast. According to Catholic tradition, Easter is “the commemorating of the slaying of the true Lamb of God and the Resurrection of Christ.” It is considered by Catholics as “the oldest feast of the Christian Church, as old as Christianity, and the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments.” Catholic scholars insist, the fact that neither the Bible nor the *Post-Apostolic Fathers* (uninspired Christians apologists dating to 150) mention an annual commemoration of Jesus death and that we hear of such principally through a controversy that was addressed as a side item at the first Council of Nicaea (325), nearly three-hundred years

after the church was established, “is purely accidental.”

The ultimate conclusion is that Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Easter are of human tradition and have no part in New Testament Christianity. The observance of these as special religious days or times of worship have no biblical authority. In fact, one who assume their observance of these days and their “worship celebrations” on these days should give serious heed to the words of Jesus, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Mt. 15:9)

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### Let Go Of The Bee

“To carry a grudge is like being stung to death by one bee” (William H. Walton).

Maybe that person said something very insulting to you. Or maybe they did something to hurt your feelings. It’s easy to hold on to those grudges. If we do, all we’re really doing is holding on to that furious bee and letting it continue to sting us. The more we hold on, the more it stings. The more it stings, the more miserable we become.

While it’s not always easy to do, the solution isn’t rocket science: let go of the bee! The Bible is very clear regarding how we should treat each other when it comes to grudges, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

If we still need more motivation, then let’s consider Matthew 6:14-15, “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”

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**PRIVILEGED TO SERVE**  
Week of March 17, 2019

**Sunday Morning:**

Announcements: Bryant Siegel  
Scripture Reading: Isaac Jobes

**Lord's Supper & Offering**

Bread: Lupe Escojido  
Fruit of the Vine: Clifton Rutherford  
Offering: Don Lynn  
Assist: Sammy Scherffius, Kirk FitzSimmons, Brant Jacobs

**Sunday Evening:** Lupe Escojido, Clifton Rutherford

**Prayer**

A.M. Closing: Mike Atkinson  
P.M. Closing: Wayne Martin

**Ushers:** Don Lynn  
Allen Clifton

**Wednesday Devotional:** Steve Randle

**Open/Close Building:**

**Sound System:** Curtis Scherffius

**Greeters:**

Don Lynn  
Allen Clifton

Prepare Communion: Jamison

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Please mark your calendar for MidTown church of Christ's Annual Spring Gospel Meeting from March 24th through March 27th, 2019. Our speaker will be Wade Webster. Theme is "Tell Us Plainly". Wade is an evangelist and missionary for the Bryan/College Station Church of Christ and will be speaking on Evangelism, Membership, Leadership, Baptism, the Church and the Cross. There will be a potluck luncheon and a 1pm afternoon service in lieu of the 5pm evening service.

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**TUESDAY, MARCH 26:**

Men's and Ladies' Tuesday class at 10 am on March 26th will be a combined class in the auditorium. Wade Webster will be speaking about Missions and there will be a potluck luncheon afterwards. All are invited to attend.

**IN NEED OF PRAYERS:**

Wayne Martin, who was recently diagnosed with Lymphoma and has started treatment. Jerri York, who suffered a heart attack last week.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

March 19,26: Men's and Ladies' Bible Classes @ 10 am

March 24-27: Spring gospel meeting with Wade Webster. Potluck luncheon after morning worship and a 1pm afternoon service.

April 14: Quarterly Men's Business Meeting

**AREA EVENTS**

Mar. 29-31: Gospel meeting @ Adams Street church of Christ. More info on the bulletin board in hallway.

Mar. 30: South Texas Youth Lectures @ Adams Street . More info on the bulletin board in hallway.

April 6: Ladies Day at Riverside church of Christ.

**BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES:**

Happy Birthday: Connie Kasper (19); Manny Flonory, Parker Foerster, Tom Pitchford (20)



Congratulations to Emily DeDear and Dallas Presley who have announced their engagement to be married.

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**KEEP IN PRAYER**

**MIDTOWN MEMBERS:**

Jeff Cannady  
Les Daltry  
Dee Gilpatrick  
Ann Pantel  
Mickey Tissue  
Clark Withers

**SHUT-INS:**

Faye Henderson  
Sandy Malone

If you would like to add or remove a name on the "Keep in Prayer" List, please see Nina Siegel.

# MIDTOWN CHURCH OF CHRIST

**Minister:** Ronnie Scherffius  
**Secretary:** Nina Siegel

## TIMES OF SERVICES

Sunday Bible Class: 9:00AM  
Sunday Morning Worship: 10:00AM  
Sunday Evening Worship: 5:00PM  
Wednesday Bible Class: 7:00PM

## RECORD OF ATTENDANCE

Week of March 10, 2019

Bible Class.....100  
A.M. Worship.....120  
P.M. Worship.....94  
Wednesday Bible Study.....94

Offering      \$4,101

## QUICK REFERENCE

Use this quick reference to help you grow in knowledge:

### Youth

Examples.....1 Tim. 4:12  
Eccl. 12:1; Rom. 12:1-2; Luke 2:52



## SUPPORTED WORKS

India - Mani Pagidipalli  
New Zealand - James & Emily Cammock  
Bible Land Passages - John & Carla Moore  
Southwest School of Bible Studies - Cody Kilgore

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