



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Issue 7

The Truth About Easter

by – Robert McCurry (edited)

Is Easter Christian or pagan? Without hesitation the majority of people will answer, "Christian!" Many would probably consider anyone a pagan who would dare to say otherwise. Do you believe Easter is Christian? If so, Why? Have you taken the time to validate why you believe as you do?

Have you ever considered what rabbits have to do with eggs and what rabbits and eggs have to do with the resurrection of Christ or teachings of God's Word? Is there any scriptural record where the Christians of the New Testament ever used a rabbit as a symbol of the resurrection, or sponsored "Easter eggs hunts" or participated in "Easter sunrise services" or engaged in any of the other ritualisms that are now so commonly practiced in the Christian community on Easter Sunday? If not, then where did Christians get all of these ideas and practices?

Although millions of people, including Christians, are of the opinion that Easter and all of its customs are Christian and originated as a result of Christ's resurrection, it is a historical fact that the observance of Easter long antedates Christianity by centuries.

THE ORIGIN OF EASTER

The English name for Easter shows unmistakable traces of heathenism. The name "Easter," which is the slightly changed English spelling of the name of the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian goddess Ishtar, comes to us from the old Teutonic mythology where it is known as Ostera or Eostre. The Phoenician name of this goddess, Astarte (Ashtoreth), consort of Baal, whose worship is denounced by Jehovah in the Scriptures as the

most abominable of all pagan idolatry.

"The English Historian, the Venerable Bede (672-735), is our only source regarding the use of the word Easter. He wrote that in Britain the feast was named Easter after the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, Eostre, whose festival was celebrated at the Vernal Equinox. According to legend, Eostre opened the gates of Valhalla to Balder, the murdered Sun god who had brought light to mankind."¹

"Although Easter is (today) a religious holiday, we still follow customs that go back to an ancient festival that was at this time of year long before Christianity."²

"There is no doubt that the (Roman) church in its early days adopted the old pagan customs and have a Christian meaning to them. As the festival of Eostre was a celebration of life, in the Spring it was easy to adopt the pagan holiday and make it a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead."³

THE DYED EGG

Dyed Easter eggs also figured in the ancient Babylonian mystery rites, just as they do in Easter observance today.

"The ancient Druids bore an egg as the sacred

1. Robert J. Myers, *Celebrations: the Complete Book of American Holidays* (Doubleday & Co., 1972) pp. 103-109.
2. Bernice Burnett, *Greeks and Romans*, (Franklin Watts, Inc., 1955) p.16.
3. Alice Hazeltine, *The Eastern Book of Legends and Stories*, (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., 1947) p. 16.

(continued on page 55)

Greetings, Dear Saints!

This issue of the BSN marks the completion of our second year of publication. We printed two issues in our first year and five in our second. Our goal is to print at least six issues per year. In our second year we have also seen 15,000 copies of Issue #2 of the *Grace Testimony* printed. This issue contains *The Dictionary of the Gospel* by Thomas Bruscha. This work by Brother Bruscha is a very important tool and we are grateful for allowing us the privilege of printing it in newsprint format.

Our local bookstore, Grace Clearinghouse, has been expanded and is now open to the public. We are also developing Grace Library so that it also will be in full operation soon and available to the community. It is our desire that these will promote Bible study.

We want to take this opportunity to give a special thanks to those of you who are helping us make this ministry possible. This ministry continues because of the many who "join hands" to see that it is accomplished.

In 1990 we had the special privilege of enjoying the fellowship of many saints which we had never before met. This opportunity was provided during Bible conferences in Pennsylvania, Illinois, California and Michigan. We would just like to take this occasion to send a special greeting to each of you. These were times that we will cherish for eternity!

If any of you ever find yourself near the historic Virginia ocean front, please make plans to visit with us. We would be honored to have you in our church and home!

Our love to each of you,

Your servant,



Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.
II Corinthians 4:5
02/1991

Bible Student's Notebook

This biweekly publication (24 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of *rich* Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "Movement," "Organization," "Mission," or separate body of believers, but is sent forth to and for all "saints."

SUBSCRIPTION

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2 years (48 issues) - \$72⁰⁰; 3 years (48 issues) - \$96⁰⁰;
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PATRIARCHS

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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emblem of their idolatrous order.”⁴

Eggs were sacred to many ancient civilizations and formed an integral part of the religious ceremonies in Egypt and in the Orient.

The association and use of brightly colored eggs, as the symbols of the renewal of life, are a part of a custom that goes back centuries before Christ. Ancient pagan history depicts the egg as a symbol of fertility.

“Eggs were hung up in the Egyptian temples. Bunsen calls attention to the mundane egg, the emblem of generative life, proceeding from the mouth of the great god of Egypt. Mystic egg of Babylon, hatching the Venus Ishtar, fell from heaven to the Euphrates. Dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt, as they still are in China and Europe. Easter, or spring, was the season of birth, terrestrial and celestial.”⁵

“The coloring of the egg at the spring festival is also of a very ancient origin. The Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans used it in this way. In medieval England the priest blessed the Easter egg in a form authorized by Pope Paul V in the course of which he said they were eaten ‘in thankfulness on the account of the resurrection of our Lord.’”⁶

“The ancient Egyptians and Persians often dyed eggs in spring colors and gave them to their friends as gifts. The Persians believed that the earth was hatched from a giant egg.”⁷

THE EASTER RABBIT

Although the use of the chocolate Easter bunny is rather recent, the use of the rabbit itself can be traced back to the ancients as a symbol of rapid productivity. Actually, it is the hare and not the rabbit that is the secular Easter symbol.

“Easter is a moveable feast dependent for its date on the phase of the moon, and from antiquity the hare has been symbol of the moon. Hares are born with their eyes open, rabbits are born blind, the Egyptian name for the hare is un, meaning ‘open’ or to open, and the full moon watched open-eyed throughout the night. According to legend, the hare was thought never to blink or close its eyes. Like the moon it is a nocturnal creature. It carries its seed for about a month before giving birth, like the moon and the hare were considered to be hermaphroditic, the waxing moon being masculine and the waning moon feminine.

“The hare and the egg were also supposed to have been symbols of the spring goddess Eostre, as such they were emblematic of fertility.”⁸

“The children are told that the rabbit lays the Easter eggs and the eggs are sometimes hidden for the children to find. This is the adaptation of the pagan custom of regarding the rabbit as an emblem of fertility, that is , of new life.”⁹ Thus the modern version of hunting eggs supposedly deposited by a rabbit is simply a simulation of an ancient fertility rite.

While it may not be pagan to simply color an egg or eat a chocolate rabbit (though it is not too healthy), It is indeed pagan to associate these symbols with the resurrection of Christ.

WAS JESUS REALLY CRUCIFIED ON FRIDAY

“Most of us have assumed that Jesus died on ‘Good Friday’ and arose from the dead early on ‘Easter’ Sunday morning. Jesus often said he would rise ‘The third day’ (Matthew 16:21; Mark 10:34). But he also spoke of this time period and gave it as a specific sign of his messiahship as being three days and three nights. ‘As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly,’ he said, ‘So shall the Son of man be THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS in the heart of the earth’ (Matthew 12:38-40). [There is no way you can get three days and three nights if Christ was crucified on Friday.]

4. Edward Davies, *The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids*, p.210.

5. James Bonwick, *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thoughts*, p.211-212.

6. Robert J. Myers, op. cit.

7. World Book Encyclopedia (1977) Vol. 6 pp. 25-26.

8. George William Douglas, *American Book of Days*, (The H.W. Wilson Co., 1937) p. 189.

9. George William Douglas, op. cit.

“Since there are twelve hours in a day and twelve hours in a night (John 11:9, 10), if we figure a full ‘three days and three nights,’ this would equal 72 hours. But was the time element exactly 72 hours? Jesus was to be in the tomb for ‘Three days and three nights’ and ‘rise after three days’ (Mark 8:31). We see no reason to figure this as any less than a full 72 hours. On the other hand, if he was to be raised from the dead ‘in three days’ (John 2:19), this does not seem unreasonable to assume that the time period was exactly 72 hours. After all, God is a God of EXACTNESS. He does everything right on schedule. Nothing is accidental with him.

“Since there was an exact time for him to be born, an exact time for his anointing, and an exact time for his death, we have no problem believing there was also an exact time period between his burial and his resurrection – 72 hours exactly. If this is true, then the resurrection took place at the same time of day Jesus was buried – only three days later. What time of day was this?

“Jesus died shortly after ‘the ninth hour’ or three in the afternoon (Matthew 27:46-50). *‘The Jews, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away ... but when they came to Jesus ... he was dead already’* (John 19:31-33). By this time, *‘the even was come’* (Mark 15:42), it was late afternoon. The law said: *‘His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day;’* (Deuteronomy 21:23). In the time remaining in that day before sundown, before the high day sabbath began, Joseph of Arimathaea obtained permission to remove the body. He and Nicodemus prepared the body for burial with linen clothes and spices, and placed it in a nearby tomb (John 19:38-42) – all of this being completed by sundown.

“If the resurrection took place at the same time of day as when Jesus was buried – only three days later – this would place the resurrection close to sundown, not sunrise, as is commonly assumed. A sunrise resurrection would have required an extra

night – three days and four nights. This was not the case, of course. Those who came to the tomb at sunrise, instead of witnessing the resurrection at that precise time, found that the tomb was already empty (Mark 16:2). John’s account tells us that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb when *‘it was yet dark’* on the first day of the week and Jesus was NOT THERE (John 20:1, 2).

“The gospel writers tell of several different visits made by the disciples to the tomb on the first day of the week. In EVERY instance, they found the tomb EMPTY! An angel said *‘He is not here: for he is risen, as He said’* (Matthew 28:16). The first day of the week was when the disciples discovered that he was risen (Luke 24:1, 2, etc.), but nowhere does the Bible actually say this was the time of the resurrection.

“When Sunday morning came, Jesus had already risen, the resurrection having already taken place just before sundown of the day before. Counting back three days would bring us back to Wednesday. Would this make three days and three nights between the burial and the resurrection of Christ? Yes ... This would make a total of exactly three days and three nights or 72 hours.

“Since Jesus was crucified on the day before the sabbath, we can understand why some have thought of Friday as the day of the crucifixion. But the sabbath that followed his death was not the weekly sabbath, but an annual sabbath – *‘For that sabbath was an high day’* (John 19:14-31). This sabbath could fall on any day of the week, and that year apparently came on Thursday. He was crucified and buried on the preparation day (Wednesday), the next day was the high day sabbath (Thursday), then Friday another sabbath, the feast of unleavened bread; followed by the weekly sabbath (Saturday), making three sabbaths in a row that particular week (Leviticus 23:4-8). Understanding that there were three sabbaths that week explains how Christ could be crucified on the day before the sabbath came – yet fulfilling his sign of three days and three nights.”¹⁰

THE EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

10. Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion*, pp. 135-139.

There is no scriptural basis for Christians to observe a sunrise service to commemorate the resurrection (as we have already studied, Christ arose long before sunrise). “An ancient (Pagan) belief connected with the rising of the sun is that it was possible to see the sun dance in the sky, if you beheld it just at dawn.”¹¹

God has some strong words for sun worshippers: God showed the prophet Ezekiel the sins of his people in a vision.

“Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this O son of man? Turn yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD’s house, and behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have turned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them” (Ezekiel 8:15-18).

Is this not what millions are doing in Easter Sunrise “worship” services as they stand with their faces toward the east, as the sun is rising? Deceived into believing this is Christian, millions are practicing, unwittingly, the rites of ancient sun worship that honors the sun god Baal and his mythical idolatrous consort, the goddess Eostre (Easter).

WHY THE SHIFTING DAYS OF EASTER

“In A.D. 325 the Roman Catholic Council of Nicea decreed that the Easter festival should be celebrated on the Sunday following the full moon after (or on)

the Vernal Equinox being deemed to occur on March 21st: and that if the moon happened to be full on Sunday, then Easter Day should be the Sunday after. Thus it is that Easter is governed in its day by the spring moon and can never be earlier than March 22nd or later than April 25th, and has nothing to do with Christianity or the resurrection.

“Because of these confusions, and the inaccuracies of early calendars, we do not know on what precise date the first Easter Day fell, nor whether it came in April or late March. But it was spring, in the season of new life and revival when from time immemorial, the pagan people of Europe and Asia held their Spring Festivals, re-enacting ancient regeneration myths and performing magical and religious ceremonies to make the crops grow and prosper, (which included orgies to entice their sun god to spend more time over their land).

“Inevitably, some of the cherished rites and symbols, like those of Tammuz and Osiris and Adonis were carried forward into the Easter customs of the new dispensation, Many of them (Easter eggs, Easter Hare, Lent) have survived into our own day, unchanged because of their timeless and universal nature, yet subtly altered in their new surroundings to bear a Christian significance.”¹²

EASTER IN SCRIPTURE

Is it not strange that the only time the word Easter is used in the Bible, it is in reference to a pagan king (Acts 12:1-6)?

Easter was a Roman holiday, which originated long before Christ was born. Herod was ROMAN, so he did not observe the Jewish passover but the ROMAN substitute – Easter. In case you still do not see the connection of Easter, colored eggs, bunnies, sunrise services, etc., the Holy Spirit has made sure that in the A.V. 1611 King James Bible that you would get the connection – Easter is PAGAN, Easter is ROMAN! Oh, the riches and superiority of the King James Bible, God’s inerrant Word!!!

EASTER AND CHRISTIANITY

11. Robert J. Myers, op. cit.

12. Christina Hale, Easter and its Customs, (M. Burrows & Co., 1961) pp. 8-9.

How was the pagan festival of Easter incorporated into professing Christianity?

“To conciliate the Pagans to nominal (Rome’s form of) Christianity, (the) Roman (Church) pursuing its usual policy, took measure to get the Christian and pagan festivals amalgamated, and by a complicated but skillful adjustment of the calendar, it was found no difficult matter, in general, to get Paganism and Roman Catholicism now far sunk in idolatry, in this as in many other things, to shake hands.”¹³

TRUE CHRISTIANS REJOICE IN THE RESURRECTION

If asked for the reason for an annual “Easter observation”, most will reply, “Well, I think it’s good to remember the resurrection of Christ.”

Fine – but why just once a year and in a manner that is unmistakably steeped in paganism and Romanism?

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is not an event to be observed as an “holy day” once a year. It is a truth that is to be remembered and lived every day by true Christians. It is a truth that is to be remembered and proclaimed every time the saints assemble for worship and the study of God’s Word.

“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain”
(Galatians 4:10, 11).

“For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God ...”
(Luke 16:15).

“Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the heathen ...” (Jeremiah 10:2).

13. Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* (Loiuzeaux Bro’s, 1961) p. 105.

What We Take for Granted When We Read Paul

by – William R. Newell

“I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office,” (Romans 11:13).

1. That Paul is speaking directly from the Lord to us (I Thessalonians 4:2).
2. Therefore, that he knows the mind of God for us (I Corinthians 2:16).
3. That he speaks with final authority: that the Lord Jesus will back up his words (I Corinthians 14:37).
4. That we, being Gentiles, his words take precedence over ALL Scripture to us Romans 11:13).
5. That the risen Christ is speaking in him in a completeness which, even if it sets aside temple worship, and all Jewish matters, as such, must govern our very thoughts, as to our relationship to God and or worship of Him (Ephesians 3:1-5).
6. That there is therefore no appeal from Paul to Christ (in the Gospels), for Christ risen speaks in Paul, in the full value of all His atoning work – which was not possible in the Gospels, not even in John (Romans 15:8).
7. That therefore, to reject Paul’s words is to reject Christ. *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me,”* (John 13:20).

Accepted in the Beloved

Ephesians 1:6

I. REPRESENTATION

Christ is our representative, our divine substitute. He hung on the cross FOR US (II Corinthians 5:21).

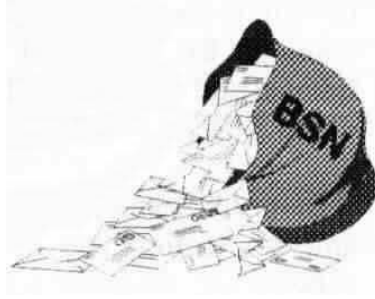
II. IDENTIFICATION

His experiences are reckoned as ours (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:4-6; 8:17, 30; Colossians 3:1; Ephesians 2:6). Christ is salvation! He is the center and circumference. We see God in Christ. God sees us “in Christ.”

III. ACCEPTABILITY

All believers are accepted positionally “in Christ” (Colossians 2:10). But not all we do is acceptable (II Corinthians 5:9; Romans 12:1, 2). We are accepted by faith, but we labor that our daily walk may become acceptable (II Timothy 2:15).

Letters to the Editor



“... I also appreciate very much receiving your catalog and BSN. All of these forms of outreach are effective reaching people with the truth ...” (Pennsylvania)

“Thanks much for continuing to send us the BSN. We study what you have written very carefully and enjoy it all ...” (North Carolina)

“... I am thrilled when I read your articles because I can feel the earnestness of your convictions, which to me mean everything! ... Believe me this truth is hated ... Here are some names of those who, I am sure would like to receive your paper ...” (Michigan)

“Would you be so kind to put me on your mailing list for the BSN. It looks like a first rate publication ...” (Michigan)

“... I do pray for you, your family and your work every day ... Thanks so much for the literature. It is impossible to find correct information around here ...” (North Carolina)

“I am interested in your Christ Witnessing Organization and would be very pleased to get more information about the Organization. I would be very grateful if this my request is favorably considered and by return mail, you can send to me some tracts and any available Bible Literature Books that will be very good for Gospelling ...” (Nigeria)

“Just a word of thanks for the materials. They have been a big help in study and in trying to rightly divide the truth. I don't mind telling you I have been saved for some 24 years and have been preaching for about 15 of those years; but have always tried to have an open mind about

the Word of God and what He teaches because it is so precious to me. I have, by the help of the Holy Spirit, learned not to accept tradition so much as the Word of God, and this material has helped more, not only in how to study and pray, but how to rightly divide the Word. Again, thanks so much.” (Alabama) [Note: *This Baptist preacher responded to one of our dispensational packets - for this we thank God!*]

“Your labor in the Lord is a cause for praise and thanksgiving. The articles you write are clear and understandable - free from jargon the unlearned use today. Issue 3 is every bit as good as the others ...” (California)

“... I want you to know your ministry has been a blessing in every way, and I praise God for you and your materials, periodicals and tracts. I do pray God would so bless your ministry and continue to use you and guide you for His Glory.” (Indiana)

“Thanks so much for giving me the opportunity of reading your fine church publication, the BSN. It is a privilege to read it and have two copies coming our way is a blessing because we get to place one in our Grace Bible Institute school library and that is a big help to our Bible students as far as dispensational literature is concerned ...” (Philippians)

“... I have been excited to hear from you and your folks through the ministry of your paper, BSN ... Thank you for your faithfulness and unbounded zeal ...” (Wisconsin)

“Thank you for the mailings to me. Your article on ‘Suffering’ in issue 2 BSN is the very best I have ever read on the subject anywhere ...” (Colorado)

“... I like how your studies are in outline form ...” (Arizona)

“Thank you so much for the paper you sent our way. It looks like good material ...” (Florida)

Death Is Gain

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:2).

I. Because to be absent from the body is to be present with Jesus Christ!

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (II Corinthians 5:8).

II. Because we Gain a better body.

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (II Corinthians 5:1-8).

“The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (I Corinthians 15:47-49).

III. Because we Gain a better home.

“Present with the Lord!” Where is the Lord? In the glories of Heaven!

IV. Because we Gain our better possessions.

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ephesians 1:11).

V. Because we Gain a greater fellowship.

“And so shall WE ever be with the Lord ...” (I Thessalonians 4:17).

The saints will be united – ever with the Lord!

CONCLUSION:

If your life is CHRIST, your death will be GAIN! Truly those who can say “To live is CHRIST” will be able to say “To die is GAIN.” This is not true for others:

“To live is money, to die is loss”

“To live is worldly and fleshly pleasure, to die is loss”

“To live is sin, to die is loss”

What is your LIFE?

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and THE LIFE; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

“When Christ, WHO IS OUR LIFE, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4). ■