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**Easter and Covid-19 Pandemic in Indonesia: A reflection
Through the Allegoric-Typological Approach**

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the observance of Easter Day concerning the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. For this reason, an allegorical-typological approach is used to explain the theological meaning of the Easter celebration and the pandemic situation, both of which have spiritual meanings that need to be raised to the surface to become a reflection of the faith of God's people. Easter celebrations provide a catalyst for people to renew their spirituality and reorganise various aspects of Christ's followers' lives. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a change in mindset and new habits of life for the world community, including believers. The research data collection uses the literature study method, and the discussion uses an allegorical and typological approach. The findings indicate that interpreting Easter during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, with all of its consequences, is a push to appreciate Christ's work, which saves people from death and restores human relationships with God, others, and the environment, as well as providing directions for Christians to practise spiritual discipline. The results of this research are also a suggestion for every follower of Jesus Christ to apply for spiritual reinforcement.

Keywords: Easter; Covid-19 Pandemic; Indonesia; Allegoric-Typological Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Easter is an important celebration for the church and is the biggest holiday besides Christmas, which is observed every year by all Christians around the world. The Easter celebration itself is celebrated as a moment to commemorate the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as the basis of the Christian faith (1 Corinthians 15:12–17). The commemoration of Easter Day is certainly an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which the spiritual meaning of the Easter event has been lived and applied by Christians in their daily lives. There is a difference in Easter celebrations compared to previous years when believers around the world are facing the *COVID-19 pandemic*, especially in Indonesia.

This pandemic has brought about a big change for the world community, especially in a very significant field, namely the field of education with the application of online learning (Kristanti et al., 2021), and online worship (Sastrohartoyo et al., 2021). These two virtual activities are unavoidable and have become a new way of life that the world community will continue to maintain, even when this pandemic ends. This is coupled with the rapid development of digital technology and the needs of society 5.0, which is commonly called the digital society of today, namely a society that is very adaptive to technological developments in all fields. People continuously depend on their work and their daily needs by taking advantage of technological developments that make human life easier and deserve to be maintained. For example, the ministry in the church uses science and technology or is dominated by online interactions as spiritual responses to serve God and others and is increasingly updating its technological tools to reach all people for Christ as a religious community (Parish, 2020).

Several studies have been carried out to provide a theological perspective on online worship, including the Easter service carried out by the church when facing social restrictions (social distancing) implemented by the Indonesian government to break the chain of the spread of *COVID-19* (Baloy & Pali, 2022; Dwiraharjo, 2020; Nainggolan & Purba, 2021; Sunarto, 2021; Widjaja et al., 2020). Research in terms of worship is also carried out about family-based church discipleship in the New Normal era as a substitute for online worship, which is considered less able to fulfil the spirituality of the people (Haryono, 2021).

All the research that has been carried out above is an effort made to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation through online worship, whether it is regular worship every Sunday, celebrations of Christian holidays such as Easter, fellowship in small groups, or onsite family-based fellowship during the pandemic. It is undeniable that Christians need spiritual support when facing the *COVID-19 pandemic*, which has claimed many lives. Easter commemoration is an important moment to be interpreted and used as a reflection for the church to increase the faith of the people. For this reason, this article aims to examine the theological meaning of Easter celebrations celebrated by Christians in light of the impact of the *COVID-19 pandemic* with an allegorical and typological approach, which can enrich the spiritual meaning of Easter celebrations concerning the pandemic. This celebration also serves as a catalyst for self-reflection and reorganisation of various aspects of life, as well as an opportunity to adopt a new mindset and set of life habits. The benefits are for the spiritual reinforcement of believers as followers of Christ.

METHOD

This article was written using the literature study method. Various pieces of literature relate to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in most of the cities in Indonesia. The meaning of Easter in the Bible will be studied and analyzed, both offline and online, in the form of books and scientific articles. The writing of this article is done by presenting the impact of the pandemic in most cities in Indonesia, which is correlated with the meaning of Easter. The article is written with a descriptive, logical, and systematic description to explain the connection between the meaning of Easter and the pandemic by using an allegorical interpretation approach, or another meaning that is higher than the literal meaning (Wijaya, 2017), and typology, namely linking people and past events with the present (Verdianto, 2020). The relationship between these two interpretive approaches is an allegory based on things outside the text (extratextual) and typology based on tracking between texts in the Bible (intertextual) (Yuliana, 2018) to maintain the objectivity of ideas in accordance with Bible teachings about the meaning of Easter.

RESULTS

COVID-19 Pandemic and Escape from Death

Historically, the Passover has been celebrated by the Jews since 1300 BC, which is recorded in the Book of Exodus and tells how the Israelites came out of slavery in Egypt. This story confirms how God chose Moses to lead a chosen nation out of slavery by giving punishments in the form of plagues, known as the 10 plagues in Egypt. At God's command, the Israelites celebrated the first Passover, with the blood of the lamb affixed to the upper lintels and the two doorposts of the Israelites' houses so that the firstborn of this people would be protected from the tenth plague (Exodus 12:1–28) (Green, 2012). The lamb that was sacrificed and whose blood protected the homes of the Israelites from the deadly plague is a typology (symbol) of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who died on the cross to escape and deliver His people from the threat of eternal death due to sin (John 1:29; 3:16; Romans 6:23). The Apostle Paul referred to Christ as the Passover lamb that had been slain (1 Corinthians 5:7). Bread represents Christ's body, and wine represents Christ's blood.

Exodus 12:1-3 confirms that Easter is an initiative from God himself, with the goal of the Israelites celebrating Passover after being liberated from Egypt. Passover itself means "pass or not be disturbed" and comes from the Hebrew word "*Pesach*," where at that time the angel of God was assigned to kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians but passed through the house of the Israelites, who had been stained with the blood of the Passover lamb (Baker, 2016, p. 280). Passover itself is a feast appointed by God so that the Israelites remember the event of deliverance from Egypt. This celebration also aims to remember how God has done many terrible and miraculous things for the Israelites and will become an annual commemoration. This celebration also shows how the Israelites were redeemed by God because of the extraordinary love in God, which was manifested in His saving act for Israel, so that the power of his message was still effective and relevant three thousand years into the future.

When comparing the Old Testament Easter to the New Testament Easter, there is a common thread between the COVID-19 pandemic and Easter. This pandemic is a plague or epidemic that results in restrictions on the worship activities of God's people today, while Pharaoh restricts the Israelites from worshipping Yahweh until the Exodus event

occurs. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic killed or severely injured many people, and the events of Easter resulted in the deaths of all Egyptian firstborn children. Many people managed to escape death due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, as well as the Israelites, who managed to escape the plague of death that befell the firstborn of the Egyptians through the blood of the Passover lamb that was smeared on the doorsteps of every Israelite's house. Likewise, in the events of Easter in the New Testament, sinners escaped from eternal death due to sin (Romans 6:23) and God's wrath through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, whose blood was shed on the cross (Romans 5:9–10).

The COVID-19 pandemic that is sweeping the entire world has become a phenomenon that is seen as a disaster that God uses to educate His loved ones. This pandemic is something that causes hardship, loss, trials, suffering, panic buying (Hall et al., 2021), trauma (Shead, 2021), and the threat of death, not only for people around the world but also for His church. Through this Easter commemoration during the COVID-19 pandemic, the church is reminded of the great love and sacrifice of Christ and not to forget the forgiveness and escape from death that God has bestowed upon every believer through Christ's sacrifice. Easter during a pandemic is also a sign of the Son of Man, namely, Jesus Christ, who was sacrificed to take away the sins of the whole world.

Social distancing and relationship recovery

In this digital era, almost all people in the world have become slaves to technology. This automatically alters all of one's habits. Computers and the internet have become symbols and tools that regulate all human activities more in cyberspace, and as a result, relations between humans have become tenuous. The government's policy of implementing social distancing has an impact on many things. Many factories are closed, and people are working from home (Work from Home, or WFH). Many family members who previously rarely got together are now free to do activities together and have a pleasant experience at home. Worship activities are also carried out at home so that each family member can experience a more conducive family worship atmosphere. This condition is redirecting the tenuous relationship between family members.

The fact that this happened before the pandemic took place and how busyness eliminates the focus and purpose of human life without exception for Christians Families are no longer harmonious, and the role of parents as good educators begins to be eroded by busyness, and this has an impact on the younger generation. The universe becomes so sick, chaotic, and destroyed that humans can no longer carry out their main task of caring for His creation, which is marked by environmental destruction and factory and vehicle fumes that damage the earth's atmosphere so that global warming occurs, changes in the earth's climate, and infectious diseases both through water, food, and water, air pollution (Duarsa, 2008). In the pandemic era, Easter can be interpreted as a liberation event from the slavery of human life that pursues mortal goods and life's pleasures that lead to destruction and destruction. The pandemic has also brought about a restoration of relations between humans and God, the Creator, and even the universe, where the earth can breathe a sigh of relief because previously it was filled with a lot of smoke from ozone-depleting factories operating around the world (Selanno et al., 2021; Tudor et al., 2021).

The pandemic is an opportunity for God's people to reflect, adopt attitudes, and make decisions about how to interpret and view Easter, whether to renew faith and hope in life with Christ's grace and love (Gegel, 2021), or vice versa, they only focus on the problem of the pandemic. The choice is whether they want to be forced slaves like the

Israelites were enslaved by forced labour and “unfreedom due to the hustle and bustle of the world” so that they forget or lose the true meaning of life. Or is it getting closer to restoring relationships with God, others, and nature? Global warming is becoming a trigger for natural damage and resulting in pandemics where the church is held responsible for the environmental crisis (Tanhidy et al., 2022).

During this pandemic’s Easter holiday, confirms an experiment that resulted in more infections and harmed humans on a large scale (Diederichs et al., 2022). The church must examine itself in the mirror to determine whether it is imprisoned or free from slavery to sin. Easter in this pandemic period should be interpreted as a moment of liberation from all the busyness that imprisons faith and the restoration of damaged relationships with God, others, and nature so that they are readjusted to God’s glorious and beautiful design for this world. The pandemic during the Easter period should also awaken Christians to rely more on the love and power of Christ in living life in this world, living a new life in fellowship with Christ (Lewy & Tanhidy, 2019), which allows the church to be free from the shackles of sin, tyranny, and other things that are mortal.

This pandemic outbreak serves as a reminder for every believer to express love for themselves through acts of love for others. The highest measure of love is how a believer can love his neighbour as he loves himself (Matthew 22:39); moreover, that love is shown to fellow believers in Christ. In this way, everyone will know that when every follower of Christ loves one another, they are His disciples (John 15:1–17). This truth was confirmed by the Apostle John, who explained that the measure of a person’s love for God is marked by his love for his fellow believers; otherwise, he is a liar. This means that if a follower of Christ cannot love his visible brother, it is impossible to love the invisible God (1 John 4:20). God is the source of love, and every human being, if he surrenders himself to Him as the source of that love, will find it easier to love God. Therefore, the Apostle John said that the proof of a man’s love for God is that he loves his neighbor. The proof that God loves His people at this time is the culmination of the work of Jesus Christ’s salvation by dying on the cross. God first loved us, so we should love one another (1 John 4:11). This is emphasised by the Apostle Paul in explaining that the three essential things in the Christian life are faith, hope, and love, and among the three the greatest is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The second commandment in the Golden Rules is God’s commandment to love one’s neighbour as oneself (Mark 12:31). Josh McDowell explained that if a person loves his neighbour with true love, that person will not kill him or steal his property, nor will he even commit adultery with him (Rom 13:9) (McDowell, 2002, p. 36). These are the divine attributes of the Christian who has lived a new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). The love that the Lord Jesus refers to is a love that is not limited, a love that is a concrete action as an expression of being able to help people in every individual believer’s life as he loves himself. Love like this is not limited by ethnicity, religion, or race but is an expression of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who first loved His church.

The moment to commemorate Easter with family at home can also be formed through various activities that can make the unity of each family member closer, for example, by conducting family prayer services and online worship. The goal is to reflect on the greatness of God’s love through Christ’s sacrifice. If the world only shows death due to COVID-19, then as Christians, we have a different perspective. Following the teachings of the Bible, as a follower of Christ, we believe that there is hope for eternal life based on the stability of faith in the face of the threat of death due to a pandemic because it already

belongs to God, Romans 14:8 (Lukito, 2020). Every family member can be strengthened in their faith through worshipping together at home, praying for each other, and meditating on God's words written in the Bible. Thus, it will lead to a restoration of relations between fellow family members, especially with Allah, the Creator. These two aspects, both physical and spiritual (theological), become a single unit or link to form the implementation of ethics in the family that encourages the growth of the church at the end (Tanhidy, Daliman, et al., 2021).

Easter celebrations for God's people during the COVID-19 pandemic and afterward have become a celebration to introspect themselves and a tool to reflect on the work of Christ's sacrifice which has brought salvation to Christians whom He loves and who should, as His people, feel the love and sacrifice of Christ as the essence of the Easter celebration actually is (Sidharta, 2013). Through it, the church should take part in diligently carrying out the Great Commission of Christ, namely preaching the gospel to the whole world, both through daily life testimonies at home and by using social media to communicate the gospel message during this pandemic. The church can become a diaconal church that is service-oriented, especially during Easter, to meet the immediate and tangible needs of the people, like food, shelter, medical care, and psychological support (Klaasen, 2020).

Health Protocols and Spiritual Discipline

To break the chain of transmission of COVID-19, the Indonesian government has implemented strict health protocols for the public, especially when travelling to public places such as markets, restaurants, malls, etc. The implemented Health Protocol includes the 3M slogans (wear masks, wash hands, keep distance). In its development, even up to 6M, which is wearing a mask, washing hands with soap under running water, keeping a distance, staying away from crowds, reducing mobility, and avoiding eating together (Ruswanto et al., 2021). All these rules are implemented to protect the public from the transmission of the deadly coronavirus.

The Health Protocol that must be followed by the community during this pandemic gives the meaning of "spiritual discipline" if it is reflected in the Christian life. Although according to Flora Slosson Wuellner (2015), the word "discipline" is less preferred, especially in referring to spiritual things, because the word "discipline" itself has a connotation of routine and is not suitable for matters related to spirituality. The word "discipline" comes from the Latin word *discern*, which means learning. It was then developed as the word *discipline*, which has the meaning of education and training. In English, it uses the word "disciple," which means follower or disciple. The spiritual discipline itself in Christianity is a spiritual exercise to build a personal relationship with God by obeying God's laws or commands, intending to increase the quality or maturity of the faith of a disciple of Christ (Istiono, 2021).

Spiritual discipline is obtained when having a close relationship with God and is a personal effort of a follower of Christ to want to imitate the lifestyle of Christ, which includes reading the Bible, praying, worshiping, and serving. In addition, spiritual discipline is also very much needed, especially in carrying out the task of preaching the gospel. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has caused community activities to be limited by the implementation of social distancing and has become a challenge for the church to be disciplined and consistently spread the good news, namely the gospel of Jesus Christ, it is the church that has received the great mandate from Christ (Matthew 28:19–20) that is

required to be self-disciplined in spreading the teachings of God's word in the form of living testimony, teaching the word of God, and preaching the gospel of Christ so that as many people as possible can believe in Christ and become His people (Darmawan, 2019). With the development of science and technology, all forms of church activities will be carried out more online during the pandemic, and therefore social media is the right tool for building communication between churches and fellow believers and the wider community. This opens a wider way for expanding the outreach of the church's mission to proclaim the work of salvation in Christ across countries and cultures (Tanhidy, Natonis, et al., 2021). Therefore, what is needed by followers of Christ is a spiritual discipline in the form of consistency and faithfulness in showing a living testimony and spreading the gospel.

In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government implemented the Implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM). The government is trying to be able to provide the best service in terms of serving the community so that they can avoid COVID-19. Theologically, God's people are also called to submit and obey God's authority by learning self-control as a form of Christian learning or education as a result of the pandemic and post-pandemic (Wenas, 2016). Self-control is a form of the fruit of the Spirit that must be developed as a believer's spiritual practise in his daily life (Galatians 5:22–23). Spiritual practise with self-control in commemorating Easter can be interpreted as liberation from slavery to hedonism and subjugation of lust, restoration of relationships with God and others, and living the original love for Christ (Revelation 2:4).

If you look back before COVID-19 appeared, Christians were carried away with busyness at work every day, including church service activities as meaningless routines that did not prioritise personal relationships with God. The services are also focused on activities rather than on who is worshipped. In addition, every holiday that is commemorated is celebrated extravagantly and far from the simplicity that causes the meaning of death and suffering through the crucifixion of Christ to experience a decline in its original meaning. Easter has a deep meaning about the magnitude of God's love, the victory over death, the forgiveness of sins, and the hope of eternal life expressed through the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Son of God, who is powerful and will judge the world in righteousness at the time of judgment. Didn't the Lord Jesus Himself say, "Isn't life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" (Matthew 6:25b).

CONCLUSION

Celebrating Easter during the COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity to interpret the essence of Easter as taught by the Bible. How could celebrating Easter during this pandemic period, which is rich in spiritual meaning, not inspire Christians to live more honourably and in obedience to God's commands? The findings indicate that interpreting Easter during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, with all of its consequences, is a push to appreciate Christ's work, which saves people from death and restores human relationships with God, others, and the environment, as well as directions for Christians to practise spiritual discipline. The results of this research are also a suggestion for every follower of Jesus Christ to apply to obtain spiritual reinforcement.

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