

# The History of Easter

Each year in spring most of the Christian world celebrates a holiday called Easter. Many assume that this holiday originated with the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this study is to reveal the truth about the origins of this spring 'Christianized' pagan holiday. When you have read through this study and find the true facts about the history, the meanings and the symbolisms of this pagan holiday that early Catholic Church leaders decided the church would observe, then you have to decide is it man who decides which day is HOLY and is to be observed or is it God?

If God tells us to observe days he calls HOLY, why does the church observe other days that honor false God's, even if they use the name of Jesus as their reasoning?

There is no command in Scripture for the observance of Easter as a holy day, rather the contrary, such observance are contrary to the principles of the Christian faith and is conducive to willful false worship and is not in agreement with the Gospel of Jesus Christ or the Word of God.

## Pagan Meaning and Definition

1. (*n.*) One who worships false gods; an idolater; a heathen; one who is neither a Christian, a Mohammedan, nor a Jew.
2. (*n.*) Of or pertaining to pagans; relating to the worship or the worshipers of false goods; heathen; idolatrous, as, pagan tribes or superstitions

## History of Easter

"The term 'Easter' is not of Christian origin. Easter was implemented to replace the Hebrew celebration and Jewish festival of pesach or Passover and the feast of unleavened bread. Passover is celebrated to mark the freedom of the Israelis from bondage and slavery after 300 years. It was during Passover in 30 A.D that Christ was crucified and the resurrection of Jesus happened three days later and is the reason God gave us the Holy festival of Passover to observe forever.

Pasch the pagan festival of 'Easter' was quite distinct and was introduced into the apostate Western religion as part of the attempt to adapt pagan festivals to Christianity.

The festival of which we read in Church history under the name of Easter, in the third or fourth centuries was quite a different festival from that now observed in the Church today and at that time was not known by any such name as Easter. It was called Pasch or the Passover and though not of apostolic institution it was observed by many early professing Christians in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ, It is a memorial of Jesus death, not His resurrection. That festival agreed originally with the time of the Jewish Passover when Christ was crucified. That festival was not idolatrous as with the images of the cross, crucifixion, bunnies, eggs, candy, lilies, etc... and it was preceded by no Lent.

The name Easter was originally derived from the word Eostre or Eastre, an Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, in her honor sacrifices were offered at the time of the vernal equinox. It was believed that every year, Eostre/Eastre returned to Earth after a long, cold winter and brought along with her the light and warmth of spring. Thus, ancient Greeks held pagan festivals to welcome Eostre/Eastre and herald the onset of spring.

The name of a feast, according to the Venerable Bede, comes from Eostre/Eastre, A Teutonic goddess whose festival was celebrated in the spring. The name was given to the festival in celebration of the resurrected Eostre/Eastre, it was who, according to the legend, opened portals of Valhalla to receive Baldur, called the white god because of his purity and also the sun god because his brow supplied light to mankind. It was Baldur who, after he had been murdered by Utgard Loki, the enemy of goodness and truth spent half the year in Valhalla and the other half with the pale goddess of the lower regions. As the festival of Eostre/Eastre was a celebration of the renewal of life in the spring it was easy to make it a celebration of the resurrection from the dead of Jesus.

"The English word Easter is derived from the names 'Eostre'/'Eastre', 'Astarte' or 'Ashtaroth'. Astarte was introduced into the British Isles by the Druids and is just another name for Beltis or Ishtar of the Chaldeans and Babylonians. The book of Judges records that 'the children of Israel did evil ...in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and forsook the LORD, and served not Him.' Easter is just another name for Ashteroth 'The Queen of Heaven.' Easter was not considered a 'Christian' festival until the fourth century. Early Christians celebrated Passover on the 14th day of the first month and a study of the dates on which Easter is celebrated will reveal that the celebration of Easter is not observed in accordance with the prescribed time for the observance of Passover. After much debate, the Nicaean council of 325 A.D. decreed that 'Easter' should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the vernal equinox. Why was so much debate necessary if 'Easter' was a tradition passed down from the Apostles?

The Pagan festivals always coincided with the vernal Equinox on the 21st of March every year. Though the Greek were not fully cognizant of why and when spring comes, they believed Eostre/Eastre must be pleased to ensure that she returns year after year. The festivals were lavish feasts that celebrated the booming of new flowers, the chirping of birds, butterflies, and sunshine and in general the feeling of rejuvenation that is inherent of spring.

A Greek legend tells of the return of Persephone, daughter of Demeter, goddess of the earth, from the underworld to the light of day; her return symbolized to the ancient Greeks the resurrection of life in the spring after the desolation of winter. Many ancient peoples shared similar legends. The Phrygians believed that their omnipotent deity went to sleep at the time of the winter solstice, and they performed ceremonies with music and dancing at the spring equinox to awaken him.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox religious changed the Pagan festival from a celebration of spring to a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus in spite of the command to observe Passover by God himself. In 325 A.D. the church also changed the date of the festival. The festival was no longer held on the spring equinox. Instead, as per the Church Council of Nicaea henceforth it was to be held on the very first Sunday following the full moon on or after the vernal equinox. Thus, today Easter is celebrated on different dates every year and can occur as early as March 22nd or as late as April 25th.

There is evidence that Early Christians originally celebrated the resurrection of Christ every Sunday, with observances such as Scripture readings, psalms, the Eucharist, and a prohibition against kneeling in prayer. At some point in the first two centuries, however, it became customary to celebrate the resurrection especially on one day each year. Many of the religious observances of this celebration were taken from the Jewish Passover.

The specific day on which the resurrection should be celebrated became a major point of contention within the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church leaders. First, should it be on Jewish Passover no matter on what day that falls, or should it always fall on a Sunday? It seems Christians in Asia took the former position, while those everywhere else insisted on the latter. The eminent church fathers Irenaeus and Polycarp were among the Asiatic Christians and they claimed the authority of St. John the Apostle for their position. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church majority officially decided that Easter should always be celebrated on a Sunday.

A question of no small importance arose at that time [c. 190 AD]. The dioceses of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should always be observed as the feast of the life-giving pasch, contending that the fast ought to end on that day, whatever day of the week it might happen to be. However it was not the custom of the churches in the rest of the world to end it at this point, as they observed the practice, which from Apostolic tradition has prevailed to the present time, of terminating the fast on no other day than on that of the Resurrection of our Saviour. Synods and assemblies of bishops were held on this account, and all with one consent through mutual correspondence drew up an ecclesiastical decree that the mystery of the Resurrection of the Lord should be celebrated on no other day but the Sunday and that we should observe the close of the paschal fast on that day only. The next problem was to determine which Sunday to celebrate the resurrection. The Christians in Syria and Mesopotamia held their festival on the Sunday after the Jewish Passover (which itself varied a great deal), but those in Alexandria and other regions held it on the first Sunday after the spring equinox, without regard to the Passover.

This second issue was decided at the Council of Nicea in 325, which decreed that Easter should be celebrated by all on the same Sunday, which Sunday shall be the first following the paschal moon (and the paschal moon must not precede the spring equinox), and that a particular church should determine the date of Easter and communicate it throughout the empire (probably Alexandria, with their skill in astronomical calculations).

The policy was adopted throughout the empire, but Rome adopted an 84-year lunar cycle for determining the date, whereas Alexandria used a 19-year cycle. Use of these different "paschal cycles" persists to this day and contributes to the disparity between the eastern and western dates of Easter.

### **Popular Easter Customs and symbols**

Over the centuries, these religious observances have been supplemented by popular customs, many of were incorporated from springtime fertility celebrations of European and Middle Eastern pagan religion. Rabbits and eggs, for example, are widely-used pagan symbols for fertility. Christians view the Easter eggs as symbols of joy and celebration and of new life and resurrection. A common custom is to hide brightly colored eggs for children to find.

## **Easter Bunny**

The Bible makes no mention of a long-eared, short-tailed creature who delivers decorated eggs to well-behaved children on Easter Sunday; nevertheless, the Easter bunny has become a prominent symbol of Christianity's most important holiday.

"Nobody seems to know precisely the origin of the Easter bunny, except that it can be traced back to pre-Christian fertility lore. It has never had any connection with Christian religious symbolism.

The exact origins of this mythical mammal are unclear, but rabbits, known to be prolific procreators, are an ancient symbol of fertility and new life. The Easter Rabbit lays the eggs, for which reason they are hidden in a nest or in the garden. The rabbit is a pagan symbol and has always been an emblem of fertility. "The Easter hare was no ordinary animal, but a sacred companion of the old goddess of spring, Eostre."

According to some sources, the Easter bunny first arrived in America in the 1700s with German immigrants who settled in Pennsylvania and transported their tradition of an egg-laying hare called "Osterhase" or "Oschter Haws." Their children made nests in which this creature could lay its colored eggs. Eventually, the custom spread across the U.S. and the fabled rabbit's Easter morning deliveries expanded to include chocolate and other types of candy and gifts, while decorated baskets replaced nests. Additionally, children often left out carrots for the bunny in case he got hungry from all his hopping.

## **Easter Eggs**

Easter eggs are linked to pagan traditions. The egg, an ancient symbol of new life has been associated with pagan festivals celebrating spring. From a Christian perspective, Easter eggs are said to represent Jesus' emergence from the tomb and resurrection. Decorating eggs for Easter is a tradition that dates back to at least the 13th century, German Protestants wanted to retain the Catholic custom of eating colored eggs for Easter, but did not want to introduce their children to the Catholic rite of fasting. Eggs were forbidden to Catholics during the fast of Lent, which was the reason for the abundance of eggs at Easter time. . One explanation for this custom is that eggs were formerly a forbidden food during the Lenten season, so people would paint and decorate them to mark the end of the period of penance and fasting, and then eat them on Easter as a celebration.

The precise origin of the ancient custom of coloring eggs is not known. Many eastern Christians to this day typically dye their Easter eggs red, the color of blood, in recognition of the renewal of life in springtime (and, later, the blood of the sacrificed Christ). Some also use the color green, in honor of the new foliage emerging

after the long dead time of winter.

The idea of an egg-laying bunny came to the United States in the 18th century. German immigrants in the Pennsylvania Dutch area told their children about the "Osterhas," sometimes spelled "Oschter Haws." "Hase" means "hare," not rabbit, and in Northwest European folklore the "Easter Bunny" indeed is a hare, not a rabbit. According to the legend, only good children received gifts of colored eggs in the nests that they made in their caps and bonnets before Easter.

"The egg has become a popular Easter symbol...In ancient Egypt and Persia, friends exchanged decorated eggs at the spring equinox, the beginning of their New Year. These eggs were a symbol of fertility for them....Christians of the Near East adopted this tradition, and the Easter egg became a religious symbol. It represented the tomb from which Jesus came forth to new life

In ancient times eggs were used in the religious rites of the Egyptians and the Greeks and were hung up for mystic purposes in their temples. From Egypt these sacred eggs can be distinctly traced to the banks of the Euphrates. The classic poets are full of the fable of the mystic egg of the Babylonians; and thus its tale is told by Hyginus, the Egyptian, the learned keeper of the Palatine library at Rome, in the time of Augustus, who was skilled in all the wisdom of the native country: 'An egg of wondrous size is said to have fallen from heaven into the river Euphrates. The fishes rolled it to the bank, were the doves having settled upon it, and hatched it, out came Venus, who afterwards was called the Syrian Goddess'--that is, Astarte. Hence the egg became one of the symbols of Astarte or Easter; and accordingly, in Cyprus, one of the chosen seats of the worship of Venus, or Astarte, the egg of wondrous size was represented on a grand scale.

"In northern Europe, Eostre, the Teutonic-Anglo-Saxon goddess of dawn, evolved from Astarte in Babylon and from Ishtar from Assyria. Eggs dyed blood-red and rolled in the newly sown soil at spring equinox, ensured fertility of the fields. The Moon Hare, sacred animal totem of Eostre, laid more colored eggs for children to find. From the name, Eostre, Astarte, and Ishtar, we derive the scientific terminology for the female hormone and reproduction cycle: estrogen and estrus. Easter also derives from Eostre

### **Easter Candy**

Easter is the second best-selling candy holiday in America, after Halloween. Among the most popular sweet treats associated with this day are chocolate eggs, which date back to early 19th century Europe. Eggs have long been associated with Easter as a symbol of new life and Jesus' resurrection. Another egg-shaped candy, the jelly bean, became

associated with Easter in the 1930s (although the jelly bean's origins reportedly date all the way back to a Biblical-era concoction called a Turkish Delight). According to the National Confectioners Association, over 16 billion jelly beans are made in the U.S. each year for Easter, enough to fill a giant egg measuring 89 feet high and 60 feet wide. For the past decade, the top-selling non-chocolate Easter candy has been the marshmallow Peep, a sugary, pastel-colored confection. Bethlehem, Pennsylvania-based candy manufacturer Just Born (founded by Russian immigrant Sam Born in 1923) began selling Peeps in the 1950s. The original Peeps were handmade, marshmallow-flavored yellow chicks, but other shapes and flavors were later introduced, including chocolate mousse bunnies.

### **Easter Lilies**

"The so-called 'Easter lily' has long been revered by pagans of various lands as a holy symbol associated with the reproductive organs. It was considered a phallic symbol!"

### **Sunrise Services**

"The custom of a sunrise service on Easter Sunday can be traced to ancient spring festivals that celebrated the rising sun."

"Cults of the sun, as we know from many sources, had attained great vogue during the second, third, and fourth centuries. Sun-worshippers indeed formed one of the big groups in that religious world in which Christianity was fighting for a place. Many of them became converts to Christianity . . . Worshipers in St. Peter's turned away from the altar and faced the door so that they could adore the rising sun." (Gordon J. Laing, *Survivals of Roman Religion*, p. 192)

### **Lent**

"The word Lent is of Anglo-Saxon origin, meaning spring." "The celebration of Lent has no basis in Scripture, but rather developed from the pagan celebration of Semiramis's mourning for 40 days over the death of Tammuz (cf. Ezek 8:14) before his alleged resurrection---another of Satan's mythical counterfeits."

## **Pagans Still Celebrate Easter**

"Sabbats in Modern Witchcraft--Spring Equinox--A solar festival, in which day and night, and the forces of male and female, are in equal balance. The spring equinox, the first day of spring, marks the birth of the infant Sun God and paves the way for the coming lushness of summer. Dionysian rites are performed. The Christian version of the sabbat is Easter.

"Witches celebrate eight major festivals or sabbats each year. The sabbat is a religious ceremony deriving from ancient European festivals celebrating seasonal and pastoral changes. The first is Yule, 20 or 21 December, celebrating the winter solstice. The next is 1 or 2 February, Oimelc, Imbolc, or Candlemas, at which initiations often take place. 20 or 21 March, Eostre, the vernal equinox, is a fertility festival. 30 April is Beltane."

## **Conclusion**

There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament. The sanctity of special times or the Holy Days appointed by God was in the minds of the early Christians who continued to observe the Jewish Holy festivals given by God, but in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed. Thus the Passover was now observed with a new attitude recognizing Christ, as the true Lamb of God and the first fruits from the dead, which is how we are to continue to observe today.

There is no doubt that the church in its early days adopted the old pagan customs and gave a Christian meaning to them." The pagan festival of Easter originated as the worship of the sun goddess, the Babylonian Queen of Heaven who was later worshipped under many names including Ishtar, Cybele, Ideaea Mater (the Great Mother), or Astarte for whom the celebration of Easter is named.

Easter is not another name for the Feast of Passover and is not celebrated at the Biblically prescribed time for Passover as commanded by God to observe. "Satan, the great counterfeiter, introduced a counterfeit Sabbath (Sunday) to take the place of the true Sabbath of God. Sunday stands side by side with Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Holy (or Maundy) Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Whitsun day, Corpus Christi, Assumption Day, All Souls' Day, Christmas Day, and a host of other ecclesiastical holidays too numerous to mention. This array of Roman Catholic feasts and fast days are all man made. None of them bears the divine credentials of the Inspired Word of God.



"The Roman Catholic Church took the pagan philosophy and took the pagan Sunday and made it the Christian Sunday and they took the pagan Easter and made it the day to observe Jesus resurrection. Sunday and Easter are much the same if we consider how they were derived. The pagan Sunday observance was in effect an unconscious preparation for Easter."

Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. **Jeremiah 10:2**

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. **Deuteronomy 4:2**

The choice to reject "Easter" and keep the same days that Jesus Himself kept should be weighing on your conscience as the right thing to do after reading these facts. We encourage you to step out in faith and "be separate" from the world.

Reject the holidays of men and learn about the genuine Holy days of God, which in early spring with barley season comes Passover and the weeklong Feast of Unleavened Bread. With the later spring wheat season comes the Feast of Harvest or First fruits, also known as the Day of Pentecost and with the late summer and fall ingathering season come four festivals, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, and the Eighth Day, now referred to as the Last Great Day.

**The seven annual Holy Days are annual Sabbaths; they are holy occasions and commanded assemblies of God's people. These days are holy because they are sanctified (set apart) by God. He commands His people to assemble for worship and to learn about Him and His plan. His command goes further than worship only; it includes fellowshiping and rejoicing together, honoring God as a holy God on his Holy days as he has commanded and every day.**