



WHAT IS EASTER?

Have you ever wondered what rabbits and decorated eggs have to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

As with some of our Christmas rituals, there are pagan traditions associated with the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. However, as I stated in my article on the subject of Christmas: "I'm just relaying information; I'm in no way insinuating that we should ignore Christmas (or Easter) simply because of its association with paganism. I personally see nothing wrong with celebrating the season as long as we are adoring and worshiping Jesus Christ."

On the other hand, I respect the views of others who choose not to celebrate due to the ties with paganism. It is a compelling argument that God judged the Israelites for adopting the customs of the pagan nations around them. (See [Deuteronomy 12:28-32](#)). I'd like to give the early Christians the benefit of the doubt by thinking that they tied these customs to the resurrection of Jesus in the hope of making more converts; however, there's always the probability that Satan had a hand in it as well!

"The missionaries had to find ways within the existing pagan cultures to help the Gentiles appreciate who Jesus was...Many early church evangelists incorporated Christian teachings into existing celebrations, "Christianizing" these traditions.

Whether that was a good or bad thing has long been the subject of debate." (Koinonia House, "Dealing with the Easter Dilemma", link below.)

As always, I encourage you to examine your own conscience and, if you think it's warranted, do your own research. There's way more ground to cover on this topic than I could put in one article.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD

It may come as a surprise to some that the word "Easter" is not in the Bible, except for one instance in the King James Version ([Acts 12:4](#)), in which it is a mistranslation of the word for "Passover".

Most evangelical Bible scholars agree that the word Easter is derived from the name of a Babylonian goddess named Ishtar, also known as Astarte and various other names. She was called "the queen of heaven" and was associated with sex and fertility rites, incest, temple prostitution, hierogamy and other unsavory practices too numerous to mention. Others maintain that the word comes from "Ostara" or "Eostre", the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, although it seems reasonable to assume that this goddess was also named after Ishtar/Astarte. The religion of Wicca claims that the word "estrogen" comes from Eostre and her two symbols are the egg and the rabbit.

In "[A Manual of Church History](#)", Albert Henry Newman writes: "The fact that vernal festivals were general among pagan peoples had much to do with the form assumed by the Eastern festival in the Christian churches. The English term 'Easter' is of pagan origin." (page 299).

DATING EASTER

There was controversy within the early church as to when Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection should be celebrated. It became a major issue which lasted for centuries and, surprisingly, was largely due to a sense of anti-Semitism within the church authority at Rome. Easter continues to be what is called a "moveable feast". For more information, see Koinonia House, "A Question of Dates", link below.

EASTER TRADITIONS

The pagan symbolism of eggs (fertility and birth) was linked to Christianity by associating them with the emergence of Jesus from his tomb. The eggs were colored red to suggest blood, and later any kind of painting and decorating of the eggs became popular.

It's unknown what rabbits have to do with resurrection except that they're a symbol of fertility and thus new birth, and there is a German tradition of an egg-laying hare. The rabbit brings baskets to children with gifts of candy or other "goodies". The "Easter Bunny" has been likened to the Christmas version of Santa Claus. Because of this, Easter—like Christmas—has become a highly commercialized time of year.

There are many other Easter customs that may or may not have roots in paganism. Even sunrise services have fallen under criticism by some denominational churches.

CONCLUSION ?

Should Christians separate themselves from the traditions surrounding "Easter"? Here's another quote from "Dealing with the Easter Dilemma":

"Hunting Easter eggs hardly makes children think of Babylonian fertility goddesses, and there is nothing intrinsically evil in eggs or chocolate rabbits. At the same time, we do have knowledge of the Feasts of Israel, the original celebrations meant to point the way to Christ...And yet, we have a responsibility to not cause our brothers to stumble...We need to do everything we do with the heart of Christ, with love, and not out of pride or selfishness or judgmentalism. After all, the whole point of any Christian celebration is to bring glory to God. Let's make sure every decision we make is focused on that goal" (!)

SOURCES AND RELATED WEBSITES:

[Dealing with the Easter Dilemma](#)

[A Question of Dates](#)

[A Brazen Epitaph: Nehustan](#)

[Easter: Wikipedia](#)

Please see the Bible Study article: *The Man Who Lived*.

For those interested in another "Fringe File" topic related to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ:

[Russ Breault: The Shroud of Turin](#) (YouTube Video: Prophecy Watchers)

[A Quantum Hologram of Christ's Resurrection: An Easter Surprise](#)