

# The Real Easter Story

## *The Origins of Easter*

### **The pagan side of Easter:**

An 8<sup>th</sup> century scholar, the venerable Bede, says the name 'Easter' derives from the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, fertility and new life – 'Oestre' or 'Estre'. Springtime festivals were common in almost every culture of ancient civilization, and in some of those cultures, many of the rituals were of a sexual nature...

Winters, to ancient people, were very hard. Their houses were cold, and they didn't know how to can food, so there was almost no food left after winter. When spring came, they celebrated. They also wanted to please the gods of agriculture, so their harvest that year would be a good one. And because they were humans (but without the moral compass of Christianity) many of their spring celebrations degenerated into debauchery. Springtime meant rebirth, which in some cultures lead to sexual things such as temple prostitutes, sacrificing virgins for a good harvest, raucous celebrations, etc. The Roman god of grain was named 'Ceres'. This is where we get the word 'cereal' from...

### **Easter Symbols:**

1. Rabbits
2. Easter eggs
3. Easter parades

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## Easter Symbols (continued):

### 4. Easter lilies

### 5. Mardi Gras

When 2<sup>nd</sup> century Christian missionaries encountered these northern/western tribes (from Israel and Greece) with their pagan celebrations, they converted them to Christianity. However, to make the transition to Christianity easier (and to save their lives) the missionaries decided to spread their Christian message slowly through the populations by allowing these festivals to continue, but to do so with a 'Christian' flavor as they taught these people to celebrate Christ's death and resurrection. Eventually, all of the carousing and sinful rituals ceased, but the blending of the pagan and Christian symbols did not. Hence, we celebrate with the Easter bunny, Easter eggs, and so on...

# Lesson 1

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## The Christian side of Easter:

The Jewish 'Passover': by about 1500 BC, the Jews were all living in Egypt, which was ruled by a king (a 'Pharaoh'). God called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. Pharaoh wouldn't hear of it, so God sent nine different plagues on Egypt to convince him to let the Jewish people go (they were slaves in Egypt). The tenth plague was about to fall on Egypt. God gave Moses instructions for the Jews so that they would be able to avoid this plague. (Read **Exodus 12:1-13, 24-42**) The tenth plague was when the 'death spirit' would come into every house and kill the eldest child of each family. The Jews were to stay in their houses that night, and do certain things in preparation so that the 'death angel' would 'pass over' their house and not enter it. This was the start of what has become known as the Jewish Passover. The next day, Pharaoh let the Jews go. They left Egypt and returned to the land of Canaan, the 'promised land'. Every year, Jewish families celebrate the Passover – a time when God set them free from slavery. The Jewish Passover meal has many symbolic things that we, as Christians, would understand but that they, as Jews, do not fully comprehend. Some of those things are:

### 1. The Passover Lamb

The substitutionary death of this lamb brought forgiveness to the Jews by protecting them from the wrath of the Almighty. The Lamb's blood washed them clean of Egypt's contamination. Jesus was called the perfect lamb of God. His death brings us forgiveness and protects us from the wrath of the Almighty. His blood washes us clean from the effects of sin.

### 2. The blood on the doorposts

See **John 10:9**. Jesus is the door. What motion did the Jews trace out when putting the blood on their doorposts? The sign of the cross...!

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## The Christian side of Easter (continued):

### 3. Three pieces of matzo bread

These are symbolic of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Jews would break the middle piece (Jesus), eat part of it (“take and eat, for this is my body, broken for you”) and take the other part, wrap it in white linen (Jesus’ burial clothes) and hide it (His body buried in the tomb). For dessert, they would find it, unwrap it (the resurrection), rejoice and then eat it...

There are many, many more identifying things about this Passover meal that so totally point to Jesus Christ that it’s uncanny. If you ever have the chance to go to a Messianic Passover Seder meal, go! See **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:7,8**.

The ‘Last Supper’ of Christ was a Passover Seder meal. At this meal, Christ gave a new meaning for the matzo bread and wine... This is where we get ‘communion’ from. See **Luke 22:14-21**.

“...For Christ, our Passover lamb,  
has been sacrificed.  
Therefore let us keep the Festival,  
not with the old yeast,  
the yeast of malice and wickedness,  
but with the bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:7,8**

# Lesson 1