

The Real Easter Story

Two kinds of “Proof”

*There are two ways to prove something:
the ‘Scientific Method’ and the ‘Legal/Historical Method’*

Scientific Method: (This method depends on three steps)

1) **Observation:** we must be able to observe what it is we’re testing.

Example: we throw a rock off a cliff...

2) **Measurement:** we must be able to accurately measure what it is we’re observing.

Example: we must be able to measure the force with which we throw, the angle at which we throw, and the gravitational force of the earth at that point...

3) **Repeat:** we must be able to repeat the experiment – many times, if necessary. By repeating our action of throwing a rock off the cliff, we can predict where it will land by knowing with what force and at what angle we throw it...

The scientific method works for things like developing medicines, or making airplanes, or building bridges. The scientific method would not work with anything relating to history or something like a murder. We can’t go back and observe history, or a murder, so it can’t be proven scientifically. We may use scientific tests (like DNA) to help us prove a murder happened in a certain way, but the scientific tests aren’t observing the actual event.

Lesson 1

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Legal / Historic Method:

This method only needs a **preponderance of evidence that is beyond a reasonable doubt** to prove something. Notice it’s beyond a *reasonable* doubt, not beyond *any* doubt at all... To prove George Washington existed, we need to find archaeological evidence and / or historical evidence. That is, people referring to him in written documents, or actual things that belonged to him like homes, letters with his signature, etc. His proof of existence must come from multiple reliable sources, and it must be consistent. For instance, one source can’t say he was born in 1710, and another one claims it was 1820...

So, if someone asks you to scientifically prove that God exists, or that the Bible is reliable, they’re asking you to prove it the wrong way. It would be like asking someone to scientifically prove that love exists; it is impossible. We can prove that God exists, or that the Bible is reliable, or that Jesus rose from the dead – but not scientifically. We can prove these things by using the legal / historic method.

The purpose of The Real Easter Story is to educate the student as to the biblical reasoning and fact about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and to tell them how the Easter traditions have come into being. The student will know:

Where does the word Easter come from?

What do colored eggs and a bunny have to do with Jesus’ resurrection?

Where did all of the Easter traditions come from and how are they related to Jesus?

How to prove that His body wasn’t stolen or that He just passed out on the cross

How to medically prove that Jesus really did die

How to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Jesus really did rise from the dead

Lesson 1

THE ORIGINS OF EASTER

I. The pagan side of Easter...an 8th century scholar, the venerable Bede, says the name 'Easter' derives from the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, fertility & new life.. 'Oestre or Estre'.

Springtime festivals were common in almost every culture of ancient civilization...and in some of these, many of the rituals were of a sexual nature.

A. 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 good. 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 good harvest crops, etc.

B. Easter Symbols

1. Rabbits...since ancient times, pagans have worshipped rabbits as sex & fertility gods because of their reproductive capabilities. In the late 1700's, the Germans brought this symbol of the Easter rabbit over to America.
2. Easter eggs....from the earliest of times, the egg was a symbol of rebirth in most cultures. They were often wrapped in gold leaf or colored brightly by boiling them with leaves or petals of certain flowers. They were presented as gifts or charms to bring a successful harvest, good luck in fertility and sexual success each springtime.
3. Easter parades....
 - A. young, unmarried virgins would be paraded around the village, signifying that they were ready to be married and bare children.
 - B. in the early church, people who were to be baptized at Easter, dressed in a white robe. Those who already had been baptized in previous years wore new clothes. Years later, the tradition of walking thru the village after the baptism, was added.
4. Easter lily's....about 100 years ago, the white trumpet lily, which blossoms in springtime, was brought to American from Bermuda.
5. Mardi Gras....Lent is a 46 day period prior to Easter Sunday. Lent is a time of us giving up something to symbolize what Christ gave up for us (His life). Lent starts on Ash Wednesday. Mardi Gras (French for 'fat Tuesday') is a raucous celebration one day before Lent. Its kind of like...lets party before we go into this time of sacrificing. Mardi Gras is also known as Shrove Tuesday.

C. When 2nd century Christian missionaries encountered these northern tribes with their pagan celebrations, they converted them to Christianity. However, to save lives, the missionaries decided to spread their Christian message slowly thru the populations by allowing these festivals to continue but to do so with a 'Christian flavor'. Eventually, all of the carousing and sinful rituals stopped, but the blending of the pagan and Christian symbols did not. Hence, we celebrate with the Easter bunny, easter eggs and so on...

THE ORIGINS OF EASTER

2. The Christian side

A. **The Jewish Passover**.....by about 1500 B.C., 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 9 different plagues on Egypt to convince them to let the Jewish people go (they were slaves in Egypt). The 10th plague was about to fall on Egypt. God gave Moses instructions for the Jews on how to avoid this plague. Read Exodus 12:1-13, 24-42. The 10th 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 so that the 'death angel' would 'passover' 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 the doorposts?**
3. 3 pieces of matzo bread (symbolic of Father, Son & Holy Spirit)...they 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 eat it.
4. There are many, many more identifying things about this passover meal that are so totally point to Jesus Christ, its uncanny. If you ever have a chance to go to a Messianic Passover Seder meal, go! See 1 Cor 5:7,8
5. The 'Last Supper' of Christ was a Passover Seder meal. At this meal, Christ gave a new meaning for the bread and wine. This is where we get 'communion' from. See Luke 22:14-21.