
THE TRUTH ABOUT THAT TRADITION

Celebrating Easter



In the beginning of the Pandemic (Spring 2020), when the US actively and anxiously began their attack against the spread of the deadly Covid-19 Coronavirus, I read an article in The New York Times (March 24, 2020) about a speech given by (then) President Trump. The headline read, “Trump Wants U.S. ‘Opened Up’ by Easter, Despite Health Officials Warnings”. The article was in reference to his remarks regarding the executive orders restricting travel abroad, in an effort to decrease the spread of the dreadful disease. I chuckled when I read that his decision regarding the timeframe was not based upon any scientific data or Intelligence briefing; he was quoted saying that he just thought Easter was “*a beautiful time*”. His comment made me think...

*Is Easter
really “a
beautiful
time”?*

There was a time in my life, many years ago (childhood, to be exact) that I too thought that Easter was a beautiful time. In the Christian household that I grew up in, going to church was mandatory, and we all especially looked forward to

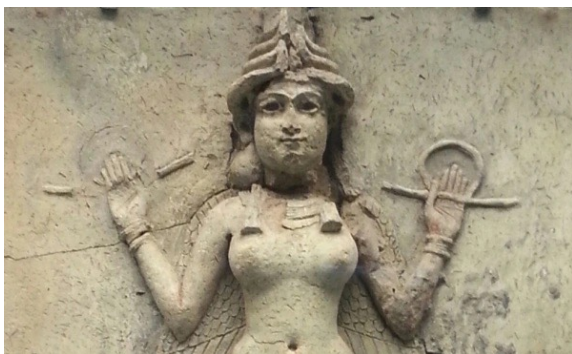
Easter Sunday and all the traditions associated with it.... new clothes for church, coloring Easter eggs, stuffed bunny rabbits, Easter baskets filled with candy, and (of course) our traditional family Easter egg hunt, after a very special dinner! However, it wasn't until many years later (after marriage and in ministry) that I began to question these "fun" holiday traditions. "Why Easter eggs? Why bunny rabbits? Rabbits don't lay eggs!" And what did all of this have to do with Jesus' resurrection? By this time, nothing was making sense! Thus began our studies (my husband's primarily), as we endeavored to discover the truth about Easter traditions.



When Did the Tradition Begin?

Historically, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred in Jerusalem around April, 31 AD. The observation of Easter is said to have started in Europe as a medieval celebration, around 476 AD. The custom involved an "Easter Vigil, the night before called Easter Eve or Holy Saturday". There would be "a walk in procession after mass, following a priest (who held) a crucifix or candle". **In other words, the Easter celebration actually originated with The Catholic Church. For centuries, the early followers of Christ never celebrated the pagan feast of Easter!**

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3



How Did the Word "Easter" Originate?

Most scholars agree that the term Easter is used in reference to an ancient pagan goddess in England, named Eostre, known as the goddess of spring and fertility. (Reference to this goddess can be found

in the writings of a British monk, St. Bede the Venerable.) However, from the beginning, in the Old Testament God spoke to His chosen people, strictly forbidding the worship of other gods... ***"Thou shalt have no other gods before me"***. He also warned them of the consequences of idol worship in Exodus. 20:3- 6. In the New Testament, idolatry is listed as one of the many "works [sins] of the flesh", and it is clearly stated that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-20).

Even the date on which Easter is celebrated has its roots in paganism, and changes from year to year; this occurs because the day chosen is based upon the position of the moon, the sun, and the spring equinox. **Typically, Easter “falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon, occurring on or after the spring equinox”.** The spring equinox occurs in March “when the sun shines directly on the equator, and the length of night and day are nearly equal”. **Some have stated that process of determining the date was a deliberate attempt to link the pagan Easter celebration to the Jewish holy day, Passover.** Biblically speaking, if Christians really want to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it would have to be three days after the Passover (reference Matthew, chapters 26-28 and Luke, chapters 22-24); however, this has not been the traditional custom.



What Did Jesus Think of the Traditions of Men?

In the New Testament book of Mark, we find an account of a situation where Jesus confronted the religious leaders of His day, rebuking them for their traditions. He addressed the Scribes and Pharisees stating, “Full well ye reject the commandments of God, that ye may keep your own tradition”. He further reprimanded them for making the Word of God “of none effect” (ineffective) because of their traditions (Mark 7:9-13).

One question that should be considered is: “Has God’s commandments and standards changed for His church today?” In Malachi 3:6, the Lord declares, “For I am the LORD, I change not.” Will He overlook the idolatrous pagan customs of Easter because religious people say they do them in honor of Him? **In Matthew 15:8-9 Jesus says, “This people draw nigh unto me with their mouths, and honor me with their lips; but their hearts are far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”**

So what does God require of the true believers who are called by His name? In John 4:24, we are told, “they that worship Him, must worship Him in SPIRIT and in TRUTH”. Consequently, there are religious believers worldwide who have chosen not to participate in Easter traditions. These include the Quakers, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Messianic Jews, and some like us, Christians in Covenant according to the Apostle’s doctrines, who strive to closely adhere to the Word of God. Personally, I choose not to participate because Easter traditions are simply too PAGAN! And I do not wish to offend my Lord.

