

# Easter - The Spring Equinox is the Real Reason for the Season

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## I. The origin of Easter

### 1. The name

#### A. The name Easter comes from the word Eostre (pronounced ee-stra or o-stra).

- i. Easter: "Baeda *Temp. Rat.* xv. derives the word from Eostre, the name of a goddess whose festival was celebrated at the vernal equinox; her name shows that she was originally the dawn-goddess." (Etymology of Easter, Oxford English Dictionary)
- ii. "The English name Easter is of uncertain origin; Bede in the 8th century derived it from that of the Anglo-Saxon SPRING GODDESS EOSTRE." (caps mine - CEW) (*Easter*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 7, p.865)
- iii. "Our name Easter comes from Eostre, an ancient Anglo-Saxon goddess, originally of the dawn. In pagan times an annual spring festival was held in her honor." (*Easter*, Compton's Encyclopedia, 1978)
- iv. "According to the Venerable Bede, the name Easter derived from the pagan spring festival of the Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre." (Academic American Encyclopedia, 1982)
- v. "Eostre or Ostara is the namesake of the festival of Easter. Eostre is attested solely by Bede in his 8th-century work *The Reckoning of Time*, where Bede states that during Eosturmonað (the equivalent of April), pagan Anglo-Saxons had held feasts in Eostre's honor, but that this tradition had died out by his time, replaced by the Christian Paschal month, a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus." (*Eostre*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)

2. Easter is Eostre which is the female goddess of spring and the counterpart to Baal; she is otherwise known as Ishtar, Astarte, Ashtoreth, Aphrodite, Venus, and the Queen of Heaven.

#### A. Ishtar

- i. "Ishtar (Sumerian Inanna), the great goddess of the Sumerian-Akkadian pantheon, IN NAME AND ATTRIBUTES IDENTICAL WITH ASTARTE. The meaning of her name is uncertain: a plural form of it, *ishtarti*, denotes "goddesses." Written ideographically in Sumerian, it is read Inanna, which may derive from Nin-anna, "Lady of Heaven." The Akkadian form Ishtar, first written syllabically about 2000 B.C., may derive from *Esh-tar*. How the early Semites in Sumer-Akkad thought of Ishtar is not clear, but Hammurabi, like the earlier Sumerian ruler Gudea, styles her "lady of battles." As such in Babylonia and Assyria she is represented on a lion, with a weapon in her hand. Ishtar is also the goddess of love. A lover of mortals, whom she exalts, she delights in bodily love, including prostitution (which was part of her cult, as Herodotus records). AS IDENTIFIED WITH VENUS, the morning star, she is represented or accompanied by a star with 6, 8, or 16 rays within a circle.

"The morning is child of the night and of its god Sin, the moon. Inanna-Ishtar is, accordingly, daughter of Sin; she is also sister of Shamash, the sun-god,

and forms with these deities the secondary cosmic triad." (caps mine - CEW) (*Ishtar*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 12, p.661)

- ii. "The cult of Ishtar was universal in the ancient near east. She was the universal goddess par excellence, whom kings, native and foreign, delighted to honour in capitals and major cities at all periods of Assyro-Babylonian history." (*Ishtar*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 12, p.661)
- iii. "Ishtar is the East Semitic Akkadian, Assyrian and Babylonian goddess of fertility, love, war, and sex. She is the counterpart to the Sumerian Inanna, and is the cognate for the Northwest Semitic Aramean goddess Astarte." (*Ishtar*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)
- iv. "Like Ishtar, the Greek Aphrodite and the Aramean Northwestern Semitic Astarte were love goddesses." (*Ishtar*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)

## B. Astarte

- i. "Astarte, the great goddess of the Semitic pantheon, and the chief deity of Sidon. The inscription of the Phoenician king of Sidon, Eshmunazar, records the building or restoration of a temple to Eshmun, the Baal of Sidon, and to "Astarte of the name of Baal." Tabnit, son and successor of Eshmunazar, was priest of Astarte. In Jerusalem, Solomon built for her a high place which king Josiah "defiled" (I Kings xi, 5; II Kings xxiii, 13). Figurines, plaques and reliefs found at many places in Palestine show that her cult as goddess of fertility and reproduction was widespread. Some of her images show foreign influence; those with a lotus flower in the hands and two long ringlets adorning the head point toward Egypt.

"Astarte was worshiped in Cyprus, in Sicily, in Sardinia and at Carthage. She became identified with the Egyptian deities Isis and Hathor. By the Greco-Roman world she was assimilated to Aphrodite and Artemis, Diana and Juno. Her identification with Aphrodite/Venus suggests that she was equated with the planet Venus by the Syrians just as Ishtar (*q.v.*) was by the Babylonians. Under Egyptian influence she became the moon. This she cannot have been originally because to the Semites the moon was a male deity; the Phoenicians spread the cult of the moon as a goddess." (*Astarte*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 2, p.633)

- ii. "The Moabites, neighbors of the Israelites, worshiped Ashtar-Chemosh. This compound name may indicate that Astarte was the spouse of the Moabite Baal;" (*Astarte*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 2, p.633)
- iii. "Astarte was connected with fertility, sexuality, and war. Her symbols were the lion, the horse, the sphinx, the dove, and a star within a circle indicating the planet Venus. Pictorial representations often show her naked. She has been known as the deified evening star." (*Astarte*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)

## C. Aphrodite

- i. Aphrodite *n.* - The Grecian Venus. (OED)
- ii. "Aphrodite, best known as the Greek goddess of sexual love and beauty, identified by the Romans with Venus (*q.v.*)." (*Aphrodite*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 2, p.110)

#### D. Venus

- i. Venus - I. 1. a. *Mythol.* The ancient Roman goddess of beauty and love (esp. sensual love), or the corresponding Greek goddess Aphrodite.
- ii. "Venus is the Roman goddess whose functions encompassed love, beauty, sex, fertility, prosperity and desire. In Roman mythology, she was the mother of the Roman people through her son, Aeneas, who survived the fall of Troy and fled to Italy. Julius Caesar claimed her as his ancestor. Venus was central to many religious festivals, and was revered in Roman religion under numerous cult titles." (*Venus*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)

#### E. Ashtoreth

- i. Ashtoreth is another name for Astarte and Ishtar (see above).
- ii. Solomon went after Ashtoreth (Astarte/Ishtar) when his pagan wives led him into idolatry (**1Ki 11:4-5**).
- iii. Those who worship Ashtoreth/Astarte/Ishtar/Eostre have forsaken God (**1Ki 11:33**).

#### F. The Queen of Heaven

- i. "Queen of Heaven was a title given to a number of ancient sky goddesses in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, in particular Anat, Isis, Innana, Astarte, Hera and possibly Asherah (by the prophet Jeremiah). Elsewhere, Nordic Frigg also bore this title. In Greco-Roman times Hera, and her Roman aspect Juno bore this title. Forms and content of worship varied. In modern times, the title Queen of Heaven is used by Catholics and Orthodox Christians for Mary." (*Queen of Heaven (antiquity)*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)
- ii. "Inanna was the Sumerian Goddess of love and war. Despite her association with mating and fertility of humans and animals, Inanna was not a mother goddess, and is rarely associated with childbirth. Inanna was also associated with rain and storms and with the planet Venus. Queen of Heaven is a title used for goddesses central to many religions of antiquity. Inanna's name is commonly derived from Nin-anna "Queen of Heaven" (from Sumerian NIN "lady", AN "sky"), although the cuneiform sign for her name is not historically a ligature of the two." (*Queen of Heaven (antiquity)*, *Inanna*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)
- iii. "In Sumer Inanna was hailed as "Queen of Heaven" in the 3rd millennium BC. In Akkad to the north, she was worshipped later as Ishtar." (*Queen of Heaven (antiquity)*, *Inanna*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)
- iv. "The goddess, the Queen of Heaven, whose worship Jeremiah so vehemently opposed, may have been possibly Astarte. Astarte is the name of a goddess as known from Northwestern Semitic regions, cognate in name, origin and functions with the goddess Ishtar in Mesopotamian texts. Another transliteration is  $\text{\textcircled{A}}$ Ashtart; other names for the goddess include Hebrew ?? ??? (transliterated Ashtoreth)" (*Queen of Heaven (antiquity)*, *Astarte*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)
- v. "Astarte was connected with fertility, sexuality, and war. Her symbols were the lion, the horse, the sphinx, the dove, and a star within a circle indicating the planet Venus. Pictorial representations often show her naked. Astarte was

accepted by the Greeks under the name of Aphrodite. The island of Cyprus, one of Astarte's greatest faith centers, supplied the name Cypris as Aphrodite's most common byname. Asherah was worshipped in ancient Israel as the consort of El and in Judah as the consort of Yahweh and Queen of Heaven (the Hebrews baked small cakes for her festival):" (*Queen of Heaven (antiquity), Astarte*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)

- vi. "Queen of Heaven is a title given to the Blessed Virgin Mary by Christians mainly of the Roman Catholic Church, and also, to some extent, in Anglicanism and Eastern Orthodoxy, to whom the title is a consequence of the First Council of Ephesus in the fifth century, in which the Virgin Mary was proclaimed "theotokos", a title rendered in Latin as Mater Dei, in English "Mother of God"." (*Queen of Heaven*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)
- vii. Israel was condemned by God for worshiping the Queen of Heaven (Istar/Astarte/Ashtoreth/Inanna) (**Jer 7:17-20**).
  - a. They baked her cakes (**Jer 7:18**).
  - b. There is nothing new under the sun: idolatrous "Christians" still bake cakes (hot cross buns) for the Queen of Heaven for Easter.
  - c. "In many historically Christian countries, plain buns made without dairy products (forbidden in Lent until Palm Sunday) are traditionally eaten hot or toasted during Lent, beginning with the evening of Shrove Tuesday (the evening before Ash Wednesday) to midday Good Friday." (*Hot cross bun*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)

### 3. The date

- A. The date of Easter doesn't come from the Bible, but rather resulted from issues that arose concerning the dating of the Passover on the Jewish calendar versus the Roman calendar.
- B. "Easter day in the west is the first Sunday after the full moon which happens upon or next after the vernal equinox; if the full moon occurs on a Sunday, Easter day is the Sunday after. Easter therefore can fall between March 22 and April 25 inclusive." (*Easter*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 7, p.865)
- C. "In the 20th century there has been some discussion in the west of the possibility of a fixed Easter (the first Sunday in April has been suggested in all those schemes of calendar reform which fix the first day of each quarter year on a Sunday). The suggestion has found support among some churchmen and OF COURSE THERE IS NO THEOLOGICAL OBJECTION TO IT; its adoption would depend on agreement being reached among the various churches." (caps mine - CEW) (*Easter*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 7, p.865)

### 4. The pagan customs of Easter

- A. Easter is revival of the ancient celebration of fertility in the spring of the year.
  - i. "Around the Christian observance of Easter as the climax of the liturgical drama of Holy Week and Good Friday folk customs have collected, many of which have been handed down from the ancient ceremonial and symbolism of the pagan spring festival brought into relation with the resurrection theme.

When the medieval miracle plays of northern and central Europe came to an end in the 16th century under the pressure of the Reformation, the way was open for the gradual revival of the calendar customs and folk drama, in spite of Puritan opposition to revels, acting and dancing. Thus, the liturgical portrayal of the death and resurrection of Christ enacted in the ecclesiastical Easter plays gradually found its secular counterpart in the popular survivals of the ancient seasonal ritual connected with the spring equinox." (*Easter*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 7, p.866-867)

#### B. Easter Fires

- i. "The Easter Fire is lit on the top of mountains (Easter mountain, Osterberg) and must be kindled from new fire, drawn from wood by friction (nodfyr); this is a custom of pagan origin in vogue all over Europe, signifying the victory of spring over winter. The bishops issued severe edicts against the sacrilegious Easter fires....but did not succeed in abolishing them everywhere. The Church adopted the observance into the Easter ceremonies, referring it to the fiery column in the desert and to the Resurrection of Christ..." (*Easter*, Catholic Encyclopedia)

#### C. Bunny rabbits

- i. "The hare, the symbol of fertility in ancient Egypt, a symbolism which it kept in Europe, is not found in North America and its place is taken by the Easter rabbit, the symbol of fertility and periodicity both human and lunar, accredited with laying eggs in nests prepared for it at Easter, or with hiding them away for children to find. But it was not until the latter part of the 19th century, especially during the Civil War, that Easter customs were observed in the U.S., except in a few states, such as Louisiana and Virginia, not dominated by the Puritan element. Then those who had died in war were commemorated in the churches which decorated with flowers on Easter day. This brought the festival into prominence and gradually some of the folk customs were revived, notably under Irish influence." (*Easter*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 7, p.867)
- ii. "The rabbit is a pagan symbol and has always been an emblem of fertility." (The Catholic Encyclopedia)

#### D. Colored eggs

- i. "These took a variety of forms in which Easter eggs, formerly forbidden to be eaten during Lent, have been very prominent as symbols of new life and resurrection." (*Easter*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 7, p.867)
- ii. "Because the use of eggs was forbidden during Lent, they were brought to the table of Easter Day, colored red to symbolize the Easter joy....The custom may have its origin in paganism, for a great many pagan customs celebrating the return of spring gravitated to Easter." (Catholic Encyclopedia)
- iii. "Eggs, in general, were a traditional symbol of fertility, and rebirth. In Christianity, for the celebration of Eastertide, Easter eggs symbolize the empty tomb of Jesus: though an egg appears to be like the stone of a tomb, a bird hatches from it with life; similarly, the Easter egg, for Christians, is a

reminder that Jesus rose from the grave, and that those who believe will also experience eternal life." (*Easter egg*, [Wikipedia](#), 2015)

- iv. The old question must again be asked: "Just what do colored eggs and bunny rabbits have to do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ?"

#### E. Sunrise services

- i. "The custom of a sunrise service on Easter Sunday can be traced to ancient spring festivals that celebrated the rising sun." (The New Book of Knowledge, 1978)
- ii. "The origin of the sunrise service is not known, but it would appear to be rooted in the Gospel narratives describing the resurrection of Christ...Mingled with this biblical warrant is an association with the spring of the year and the idea of the new birth symbolized in nature's renewal of itself out of the death of winter. Thus the service is held out-of-doors in some scenic spot, a hilltop, a park or lakeshore. The service begins at sunrise, symbolizing the end of night (death) and the revival of hope in the hearts of the congregation." (*Easter*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 7, p.866)
- iii. "This death and resurrection theme recurs in the sword dances which were also of frequent occurrence among the traditional ritual dances at this season. The widespread belief that the sun danced for joy on Easter morning at dawn led to the custom of going to the hills at sunrise to see and take part in this event, a practice that was still prevalent in the British Isles in the 19th century." (*Easter*, Encyclopedia Britannica, 1968 Ed., Vol. 7, p.867)
- iv. The real origin of the sunrise service long predates the resurrection of Christ (**Eze 8:15-16**).

#### II. If Easter is pagan, why then does the KJV use the word "Easter" in Act 12:4?

1. Easter - 2. The Jewish passover. 1611 Bible Acts xii. 4 Intending after Easter to bring him fourth.
2. Easter is used in **Act 12:4** to refer to the Passover which happened in the days of unleavened bread (**Act 12:3 c/w Mar 14:1**).

#### III. Mingling paganism into God's religion is forbidden in scripture.

1. God foresaw men's propensity to worship Him like the heathen and prohibited it in the law of Moses (**Deu 12:29-32**).
  - A. God specifically forbade Israel from serving Him like the nations whom they conquered served their gods (**Deu 12:30**).
  - B. They were to worship Him exactly how He commanded them and they were not to add to it or take from it (**Deu 12:32**).
  - C. God elsewhere forbids adding to His word (**Pro 30:6; Rev 22:18-19**).
  - D. We are to do *all things whatsoever* Jesus commanded us (**Mat 28:20**).
    - i. If we do all things Jesus commands, we can't leave anything out.
    - ii. If we do whatsoever he commands, we can't add anything extra.
  - E. We are to keep the ordinances as delivered (**1Co 11:2**).
2. God doesn't want His people to learn the way of the heathen (**Jer 10:2-4**).

- A. What does this sound like to you? A Christmas tree?
- B. God says to be not dismayed at the signs of heaven: like seeing the sun cross the equator on the vernal equinox, marking the beginning of spring and new life.
- 3. Not learning the way of the heathen is a NT precept too.
  - A. We are not to be yoked with unbelievers, nor their idolatrous religions (**2Co 6:14-18**).
  - B. The things that the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God (**1Co 10:20-21**).
  - C. You can't have it both ways; you're either going to worship devils or God.
- 4. God will severely judge those who mix elements of His religion with heathen religion and sin (**Dan 5:1-6 c/w Dan 5:22-31**).
- 5. Do-it-yourself religion is not pleasing to God (**1Ki 12:28-33**).
- 6. God warns us against the celebration of holydays (**Col 2:14-17; Gal 4:8-10**).
- 7. Things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God (**Luk 16:15**).
- 8. We are supposed to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness, not incorporate them into God's religion (**Eph 5:11**).
- 9. We are hypocrites if we condemn the idolatrous practices of other religions and at the same time incorporate them into our own (**Rom 2:1; Rom 2:21-22**).

IV. The Easter tradition makes the word of God of none effect (Mar 7:9,13).

- 1. The Easter fable says the entombment of Christ lasted a day and a half (Friday evening - Sunday morning).
  - A. But Jesus was in the grave for three days and three nights (**Mat 12:40**).
  - B. Jesus was already resurrected *before* sunrise on the first day of the week (Sunday) (**Joh 20:1**).
  - C. Given these two facts, Jesus was therefore crucified on Wednesday afternoon, put in the grave before sundown that day, and was raised from the dead sometime after sundown on Saturday evening, but not after midnight that night.
    - i. Wednesday night - Night 1 (Jesus was put into the tomb before sundown)
    - ii. Thursday - Day 1
    - iii. Thursday night - Night 2
    - iv. Friday - Day 2
    - v. Friday night - Night 3
    - vi. Saturday - Day 3 (Jesus rose from the dead after sundown)
  - D. One cannot fit three days and three nights between Friday evening and Sunday morning no matter how bad his math is.
- 2. The scripture tells us exactly how to remember the death and resurrection of Christ, and it's not by celebrating some Catholic pagan hybrid holiday.
  - A. It is to be done by eating the Lord's Supper (communion) (**1Co 11:23-26**).
  - B. The ordinances are to be kept as delivered (**1Co 11:2**).
  - C. When God tells us how to do something, to do it any other way is adding to or subtracting from His word, which God forbids (**Deu 4:2; Rev 22:18-19**).