

Is Easter inspired by the pagan celebrations?

Is today's Easter of pagan origin? Where did Easter get its name? The Hebrew name Pesach is in English Passover. It refers to the Jewish celebration of the release of the Jews from slavery in Egypt and the journey escorted by God to the Promised Land. The New Testament's name in Greek is Pascha. These names are not yet related to resurrection in any way. When Jesus and the Apostles celebrated Pesach, Jesus gave the apostles an order to remember his death as a proclaimer of the New Covenant. In some languages, in the name of Easter, there is also a word referring to the resurrection. Easter (William Tyndale 1534 'Ester') is commonly used in English and in German there are many versions, such as Martin Luther's das Ostern and das osterfest, der Pascha, das Pesach. Initially, in 1530, Tyndale used the word to describe how the angel of the Lord passed (i.e. pass over) by the Jewish houses identified by the sheep's blood painted on the doorposts.

Passover is guaranteed a Jewish celebration and also a Christian celebration by order of Jesus at the Last Supper. There is nothing pagan in it! But note that, over time, pagan feast practices – eggs, Easter Bunnies, Easter fires, Easter witches, etc. – were included in the celebrations. The celebration was named Easter, which can well originate from the goddess of Anglo-Saxon Eostre, (also called Estre, Estara, Ostar) and in Babylonia Astarte or Ishtar, Ashtoreth, Venus. It is therefore important to know how the greatest Judeo-Christian celebration became, by its name and its content, anything but a 'Passover' or a commemoration of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Exo 12:3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On

the tenth day of this month, they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household;

6 and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at evening.

7 They shall take some of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they shall eat it.

8 They shall eat the flesh in that night, roasted with fire, and unleavened bread. They shall eat it with bitter herbs.

In addition to the Passover lamb Jews also eat unleavened bread and bitter herbs seven days according to the commandment given by God. 12:18 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.

Jesus was crucified and died in the late afternoon of Nisan 14th at the same time as the Jews slaughtered thousands of Easter lambs in the temple. The Jews rushed to get Jesus off the cross and with him the two crucified robbers before the sunset, as it was the day of preparation, and they should not remain there for the weekly Sabbath and the high sabbath and the first day of the unleavened bread feast.

Jesus and the disciples followed with the Jewish community instructions given by Moses concerning observances of the Passover feast. However, our Lord Jesus gave instructions for future memorial events, saying:

1 Cor 11:23 ... the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread. 24 When he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "Take, eat. This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in memory of me." 25 In the same way, he also took the cup, after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new**

covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink, in memory of me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Each time we enjoy a cup, we do it as a memorial of the Lord Jesus and for the **New Covenant** in the blood of Jesus, proclaiming the death of the Lord. No more for commemoration of leaving Egypt, but because of the New covenant.

The supper which Jesus and the disciples had was not the actual Pass over supper, but just a usual dinner one day before the actual pass over.

What does belong to modern Easter?

In many European and American family’s Easter celebrations include Easter bunnies, eggs, grass, candy, even Easter witches.

Easter egg has its roots in paganism, when the arrival of spring was celebrated and the eggs symbolize it. Rabbit, in turn, is a pagan symbol of fertility. Easter bonfires are also of pagan origin in which the spring was shown to overcome the winter. Of course, it would be good to know at what period of time such practices were rooted in the Catholic Church and other churches as well, but finding that is difficult.

Easter bunnies. Rabbits have been regarded as a symbol of fertility in many cultures. Today, the main task of the Easter Bunny seems to be to bring candy and hide them during the night for the children to search for in the morning. A fun play like this means pushing the real message of Easter behind. Especially in the churches of the East, eggs are painted with the most beautiful colors symbolizing the resurrection of Christ. Their original pagan symbolism was the spring awakening after the winter. The original Christian purpose, however, remains easily in the shadow of the

paganism.

Fasting ahead of the Passover/Easter was also one of the Church practices. The duration of fasting was 40 days, though few followed such long fasts. Many were content with a day or a few days of fasting. Those fasting longer had an example of Christ's 40 days fasting in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13) during which Satan tempted Jesus to bow and worship before him. Satan has a clever way to use Bible-based doctrines, but Satan falsifies them to support his own purposes. Fasting is an important part of the Old Testament, sometimes even mandatory. The New Testament tells how, for example, the Pharisees fasted conspicuously. In Mat 9:14 we read from a more liberal attitude to fasting:

1 Cor 10:31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything to the glory of God.

1 Tim 4:3 They will try to stop people from marrying and from eating certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For **everything God created is good**, and nothing should be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving,

The Old Testament instructed Jews giving over 600 orders of eating, celebration, Sabbath observance and various aspects of life. The New covenant declared in the New Testament is not so pedantic. The Ten Commandments remain in force, but Jesus summed up the instructions for the double command of love. Then the content of Passover changed; Christians no longer remember the emancipation of Israel's from Egyptian slavery and their walking in the wilderness to the promised land. Christ said plainly, "He did the same with the cup after the supper, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. As often as you drink from it, keep doing this in memory of me."** (1 Cor 11:25) "

A New name for Easter?

Since Christ in the above manner gave the old Jewish celebration a new content, should the name of the Easter celebration be changed into a more Christian one? "Pass over" refers to escaping and, in this case, getting away from Egyptian slavery. I've seen that to the case to replace the old name "The Day of Resurrection" is presented. In fact, I would name it "**The Commemoration of Christ's Resurrection**". It contains the important word resurrection that includes the fact that Christ died and then resurrected. The resurrection is, in my opinion, at the center of everything as is the case with the Greek Orthodox Catholics when celebrating Easter/Passover. The suggested name also includes a "memorial"; Christ urged the congregation to celebrate in his memory.

However, the most important thing is not the name but the content. For children, I could accept eggs and Bunnies, but adults should focus on remembering the resurrection of Jesus and the coming Kingdom of Jesus.