

## Easter or Passover: Which Should Christians Celebrate?

by Steve Barwick

I'm frequently asked, "Why do you celebrate Christ's death and resurrection on Passover instead of Easter?" To which I always reply:

"Because God ordained the feast of the Passover in Exodus 12, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ fulfilled it on the very day of Passover by becoming our Passover Lamb. He did not become our Easter bunny. Easter is never to be confused with the Passover, nor celebrated by Christians. It's a pagan holiday named essentially after *Ishtar* the pagan goddess of sexual fertility, and subsequent goddesses down through the ages with similar names. It has nothing to do with Christ, nor does it have anything to do with Bible-based Christianity."

Inevitably, however, Easter-keeping Christians will demand that I show them in the Bible where it says not to celebrate Easter. To which I always reply, "Show me in the Bible where it says Christians are to stop celebrating the Passover and instead celebrate in its place the ancient pagan holiday of Easter."

Of course, they cannot show this because nowhere in the Bible does such a command exist. God not only ordained the feast of the Passover, but clearly and unequivocally *commanded* that it be kept "forever." As it's written in Exodus 12:14:

**Exodus 12:14** And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

The word "for ever" in that verse is translated from the Hebrew word *olam* (i.e., Strong's H-5769), which means "the vanishing point" and depicts something so far out into the future its end can never be seen.

Why would God command the feast of Passover be kept "forever"? Because Christ Jesus would eventually give His lifeblood on that cross at Calvary on Passover day, becoming the Passover Lamb, the once-and-for-all-times sacrifice for God's wayward children. And without that redemptive sacrifice, we could not live *eternally*. Passover is thus a "forever" thing. If you abandon it, you essentially (albeit unwittingly) abandon your quest for eternal life through Christ, the Passover Lamb.

Yet Christians cast aside God's command to keep the Passover "forever" without even giving it a second thought, and substitute in its place the ancient pagan holiday of Ishtar.

### Mistranslated in Acts 12

It's important to note that the word "Easter" itself appears *nowhere* in the Bible, with the exception of **Acts 12:4**, where it's mistranslated into English from the Greek word *Pascha*, which quite literally means "the Passover."

In other words, in the original Greek manuscripts from which our modern-day English Bibles are translated, there is no word for “Easter” because it simply does not exist in the Bible texts. It’s a completely un-Biblical concept.

*Pascha* has one meaning, and one meaning only: it means “the Passover.” In fact, the word *Pascha* is used 29 times in the original Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, and in every single case except Acts 12:4 it’s properly translated “Passover” in the English translations.



The ancient Germanic goddess Ostara, or Eastre, depicted by artist Johannes Gehrts (1853-1898) at springtime with leaping rabbits, winged cherubs, storks (a pagan symbol of child birth) and in the fine details at the bottom of the painting, little children out in the grass undergoing a fertility ritual.

The word “Easter” itself is the Old English transliteration of the Babylonian (i.e., Chaldean) name *Ishtar* or *Astarte*, the goddess of love and sexual fertility. In the ancient Germanic language she was called *Ostara*, *Eastre* or *Eostre*, the goddess of springtime and new life. We even get the name of the female sex hormone, *estrogen*, from this goddess. So you can see the profound relationship of the name to sexual fertility and “new life.”

The goddess’s name, by the way, is neither Hebrew nor Greek. And it’s most certainly not Christian. Christ Jesus never taught “Easter,” nor did *any* one of the 12 apostles – ever!

In reality, the Babylonian *Astarte*, or *Ishtar*, or the later ancient pagan Germanic version of this goddess, known as *Ostara*, *Eastre* or *Eostre*, was a pagan goddess known as the “queen of the heavens.”

You can check Jeremiah 7:17-20 to see how God feels about this pagan “queen.” He cursed His own people Judah over their worship practices that centered around this supposed heavenly “queen”. As it’s written:

**Jer 7:17** Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?

**Jer 7:18** The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

**Jer 7:19** Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?

**Jer 7:20** Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

God does not like it in the least when His people – and make no doubt about it, *Christians* are His people today – hank around with false gods the feasts made to them. So go ahead and bake your little cupcakes with colored jelly bean “Ishtar eggs” on them, representing since ancient times the sacrifices made to this goddess of sexual fertility.

Boil some eggs and paint them bright colors and hide them in the tall grass and send the little kiddies out to find them. It’s so fun. Tell them the “Easter bunny” put them there. When your children get old enough to ask you what in the world this has to do with Christ’s excruciating death on the cross and His subsequent resurrection which provided salvation for our sins, just shrug your shoulders and bite your lip.

Why? Because there’s absolutely *no* connection between the two. One is part of the reality of Christianity. The other is part of ancient pagan fertility rituals connected directly to a false goddess whose worship was despised by our heavenly Father.

You see, rabbits and eggs have always been ancient symbols of *sexual proclivity* (i.e., “quick like a bunny”) and *sexual fertility*, respectively.

According to Francis X. Weiser, *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs*, p. 233, “The origin of the Easter egg is based on the fertility lore of the Indo-European races. . . The egg to them was a *symbol of spring*. . . In Christian times the egg had bestowed upon it a religious interpretation, becoming a symbol of the rock tomb out of which Christ emerged to the new life of His resurrection.”

Clearly, this is an example of how pagan symbols and customs have become “Christianized” over the centuries in order to make the church more palatable to pagan peoples.

James Bonwich, in his book *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, writes that the egg as a symbol of new life goes all of the way back to pagan Egypt. He writes, “Eggs were hung up in the Egyptian temples. Bunsen calls attention to the mundane egg, the emblem of generative life, proceeding from the mouth of the great god of Egypt. The mystic egg of Babylon, hatching the Venus Ishtar, fell from heaven to the Euphrates. Dyed eggs were sacred Easter offerings in Egypt, as they are still in China and Europe. Easter, or spring, was the season of birth, terrestrial and celestial.”

According to author Francis Weiser, writing in his book, the *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs*, “The Easter bunny had its origin in pre-Christian fertility lore. . . The Easter bunny has *never* had religious symbolism bestowed on its festive usage. . . However, the bunny has acquired a cherished role in the celebration of Easter as the legendary producer of Easter eggs for children in many countries” (p. 236).

Even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1991 ed., Vol. 4, p. 333) agrees, stating, “The hare, the symbol of fertility in ancient Egypt, a symbol that was kept later in Europe. . . Its place has been taken by the Easter rabbit.”

The great historian, Will Durant, in his respected work, *Story of Civilization*, pp. 235, 244-245, writes, “Ishtar [Astarte to the Greeks, Ashtoreth to the Jews], interests us not only as analogue of the Egyptian Isis and prototype of the Grecian Aphrodite and the Roman Venus, but as the formal beneficiary of one of the strangest of Babylonian customs...known to us chiefly from a famous page in Herodotus: Every native woman is obliged, once in her life, to sit in the temple of Venus [Easter], and have intercourse with some stranger.”

Alexander Hislop, in his book *The Two Babylons*, (pp. 103, 307-308) writes, “What means the term Easter itself? It is not a Christian name. It bears its Chaldean origin on its very forehead. *Easter* is nothing else than *Astarte*, one of the titles of Beltis, the *queen of heaven*...”

Even the *Microsoft Encarta Multimedia Encyclopedia* gets it right, stating, “Ishtar was the Great Mother, the goddess of fertility and the QUEEN OF HEAVEN.”

In chapter 17 of the book of Revelation we learn of another “Great Mother” goddess connected to sexuality and lust – but this time, *spiritual* rather than physical lust -- who is loathed by our heavenly Father and is referred to by Him as “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” because she’s the very opposite of Christianity yet seeks to absorb and thus debauch Christianity. As it’s written:

**Rev 17:4** And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

**Rev 17:5** And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

**Rev 17:6** And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

Clearly, the ancient goddess Ishtar and her many subsequent iterations down through the ages (Astarte, Ashtoreth, Ostara, Eostre, etc.) is the forerunner of “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth” which rises to worldwide prominence in the final days of this flesh earth age as the enemy of Christ and His Christian saints.

### **Did the Ancient Church Father’s Celebrate Easter?**

Did the ancient church fathers celebrate Easter? Nope. They did not. Here’s what the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (11th edit., Vol. 8, p. 828) has to say about it:

“There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

...The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed.

Thus the Passover, with a new conception added to it, of Christ as the true Paschal Lamb...continued to be observed.”

Again, Jesus Christ became our *eternal* Passover Lamb, the perfect sacrifice given by God for our sins. He did not become our Easter bunny. As it’s written in Revelation chapter 21, in the eternal age it’s the Lamb who provides the great light that illuminates the city New Jerusalem and its saved peoples:

**Rev 21:23** And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

That’s the Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ, beloved. Walk in His light and not the “light” of the ancient pagan mystery religions.

Here is the definition of the word Easter from the respected Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words:

**EASTER** (Greek *Pascha*) – mistranslated “Easter” in Acts 12:4, denotes the Passover. The phrase “after the Passover” signifies after the festival was at an end. **The term Easter is not of Christian origin. It is another form of Astarte, one of the titles of the Chaldean goddess, the queen of heaven.**

The festival of Pash held by Christians in post-apostolic times was a continuation of the Jewish feast...From this Pasch the pagan festival of Easter was quite distinct and was introduced into the apostate western religion as part of the attempt to adapt Pagan festivals to Christianity.

What Vine’s Expository Dictionary is saying is that the word translated “Easter” in Acts 12:4 should have been properly translated “Passover.” But after the apostles were no longer around, The celebration of Easter was eventually *substituted* by the early Roman church for the proper feast of Passover.

Why did this un-Biblical substitution take place?

It was chiefly because the ancient holiday of Easter was a very popular pagan springtime celebration of sexual fertility and new birth. Though it was named after *Ishtar*, the pagan goddess of sexual fertility (and subsequent iterations of this goddess, including the Germanic goddess Ostara, or Eastre), the early church apparently felt that by moving the celebration of Christ our Passover to the popular pagan holiday of Easter, they could gain more converts to the church.

Thus Easter became one of many “traditions of man” which began taking the place of the *true* feast days (such as the Passover) ordained and *commanded* by God in Exodus chapter 12 and Leviticus chapters 23 through 25. In New Testament times, it was one of the original acts of substituting the vain traditions of man for God’s specific commands.

Easter/Astarte/ Ishtar/ Ostara/ Eastre, are basically the same as the Old Testament “Ashtoreth,” (6253 in your Strong’s Concordance i.e., “the Phoenician goddess of love and increase”). This is why the bunny rabbit was chosen as the symbol of this holiday. The bunny is both the ancient and modern symbol of sexual proclivity (just ask Hugh Hefner of *Playboy* magazine fame), and has been for centuries.

In short, the English word “Easter” in Acts 12:4 is a purposeful mistranslation of the Greek word *Pascha*. It should have been translated “Passover” just as it is all 28 other times it appears in the original Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.

The end result of its being mistranslated as *Easter* has been to lead all of Christianity into unwittingly celebrating the holiday of a pagan sex goddess, rather than celebrating the actual Passover feast day specifically set aside by God to worship Christ as the Passover Lamb who died for our sins.

During the time of the early church, Ishtar worship was one of the chief pagan rivals to Christianity. And because unwitting Christians do not know their Father’s Word, and do not understand Christ’s great redemptive act in relation to the Old Testament Passover, Ishtar (in the form of Easter) is still *today* Christianity’s great rival and substitute, pushing the Holy Passover aside.

Here is the definition of the word Passover from Vine’s Expository Dictionary:

**PASSOVER** (Greek *Pascha*) – the Greek spelling of the Aramaic word for the Passover, **from the Hebrew *pasach*, to pass over, to spare, a feast instituted by God** in commemoration of the expiatory [i.e., sin purging – ED] sacrifice of Christ.

The word signifies (1) **the Passover Feast**, e.g., Matt. 26:2; John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:39; 19:14; Acts 12:4; Heb. 11:28; (2) by metonymy, (a) **the Paschal Supper**, Matt. 26:18-19; Mark 14:16; Luke 22:8-13; (b) **the Paschal lamb**, e.g. Mark 14:12 (cp. Ex. 12:21); Luke 22:7; (c) **Christ Himself**, I Cor. 5:7

In short, Vine’s correctly explains that Passover (i.e., *Pascha*) is the feast day ordained by God for the celebration of Christ’s great sacrifice through which our sins are purged upon repentance. According to Exodus 12:6, the Passover is to be celebrated each year, starting 14 days after the beginning of the Hebrew new year, which on modern calendars is 14 days after the spring equinox.

Some 1500 years after that first lamb was sacrificed for the sins of the People by Moses and the children of Israel before their exodus from Egypt, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was willingly crucified on the Passover (John 19:14-18), offering Himself up once and for all times (Heb. 10:10) as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. He thus became our once-and-for-all-times Passover sacrifice.

As St. Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 5:7, “*For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*”

Christ Jesus is our Passover Lamb. He's not our Easter bunny. We should not degrade Christ's great day in which He provided us the victory over sin (and the gift of eternal life), by associating it in any way, shape or form with the abomination of pagan Ishtar (Easter).

The Seed of God, Jesus the Christ, is found in all of the Bible-based Holy Days. Those Holy Days were shadows of the body to come. The Holy Days picture the plan of redemption for us from God. And they're to be kept forever. They are not to be substituted for carnal "holy days."

In Matthew 15:6-9, Jesus told the Pharisees, "Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your *tradition...in vain do they worship Me*, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

St. Mark's parallel account in Mark 7:9 adds an important element: "Full well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep *your own tradition*."

These verses have clear application to those who reject the Passover that they may keep pagan Easter instead.

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