

## Separating Fact from philosophy Series 7:

### Easter

**Matthew 12:40** "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be **three days** and three nights in the heart of the earth".

**Matthew 20:28** "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a **ransom** for many".

**Matthew 26:2** "Ye know that after two days is *the feast of the* **passover**, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified".

**Mark 15:39** "And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and **gave up the ghost**, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God".

**Luke 23:46** "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he **gave up the ghost**".

**1 Corinthians 5:7** "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our **passover** is sacrificed for us"

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When we think about Easter, the commercial industry immediately makes us think of the Easter egg and the Easter bunny. For Christians it is celebrating the resurrection of Christ Jesus after he died for us on the cross at Calvary, spent three days in the heart of the Earth and was risen again on Easter Sunday.

Easter is celebrated in conjunction with the Spring (Vernal) equinox, the first Sunday after the full moon on or after the 21st March. Making it anywhere between the 22nd March and the 25th April. In Pagan and Wiccan traditions the festival is celebrating the rejoining of the Mother Goddess and her lover-consort-son, who spent the winter months in death.

The word "Easter" originated with the names of an ancient Goddess and God. Easter is comparable to Eostre (Eastre). Who was the Great Mother Goddess of the Saxon people in Northern Europe. Similarly, the "Teutonic dawn goddess of fertility [was] known variously as Ostare, Ostara, Ostern, Eostra, Eostre, Eostur, Eastra, Eastur, Austron and Ausos." Her name was derived from the ancient word for spring: "eastre." Similar Goddesses were known by other names in ancient cultures around the Mediterranean, and were celebrated in the springtime. Some were:

- Aphrodite from ancient Cyprus
- Ashtoreth from ancient Israel
- Astarte from ancient Greece
- Demeter from Mycenae
- Hathor from ancient Egypt
- Ishtar from Assyria
- Kali, from India
- Ostara from Norse/Germanic origin
- Ix Chal from Aztec and Mayan origin

The Persian god of time, Zurvan, who was said to be a hermaphroditic being, existing eternally, but wanted a son. To make this happen, he sacrificed for 1000 years with no result, and doubt crept in. Out of that doubt was born the evil god called Angra Mainyu (Ahriman). Zurvan's sacrifices had actually been successful and the good god called Ahuramazda (later Ormuzd) was subsequently born. Zurvan gave dominion of the world to his first-born son, Angra Mainyu. When Zurvan realised his mistake, he then gave dominion to Ahuramazda. The twin gods Ahuramazda and Angra Mainyu are locked in an ongoing struggle, a dualistic struggle of conflicting principles. This struggle will endure throughout finite time, which will last for 12,000 symbolic years. At the end, Ahuramazda is fated to destroy the evil creation of Angra Mainyu. Another translation of Zurvan Akarana is "duration in a circle." The circle symbolises that which is without beginning or end, and the unknown. Zurvan Akarana is thus equivalent to the Qabalistic Ain Soph Aur.



(Above) A reproduction of the Pagan Wheel of the Year Excavated in Morocco, showing the 8 Sabbats, solstice and equinox festivals.

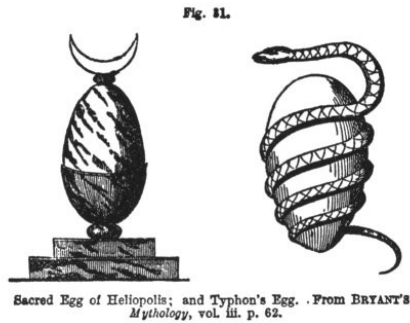
Many modern Wiccans and Pagans celebrate Ostara as a time of renewal and rebirth. Celebrating the new life that surrounds you in nature. Observing all the new things beginning around, plants, flowers, insects, birds. They meditate upon the ever-moving Wheel of the Year, and celebrate the change of seasons.

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# The Origins of Easter

In one Pagan regard, Cybele (Ashtoreth), the Phrygian fertility goddess, had a consort, Attis (Baal, Oak King, Gilgamesh), who was believed to have been born via a virgin birth. It was believed that Attis died and was resurrected each year during the period March 22nd to March 25th. The Norse/Germanic Ostara is the fertility goddess of life, death and rebirth. Again in the pagan regard, and the celebration of the spring equinox, with the Spring comes new life, new growth and new hope. (After the dark winter months).



(Above) A woodcut found in Ancient Babylon, where 'Easter' has its roots.

The image of a serpent entwined around an egg is found in the symbolism of such widely-flung ancient belief systems as India, Egypt, European Druids, and Gnostics of the Near and Middle East. It is also known as the Orphic Egg. "The ancient symbol of the Orphic Mysteries was the serpent-entwined egg, which signified Cosmos as encircled by the fiery Creative Spirit. The egg also represents the soul of the philosopher; the serpent, the Mysteries. At the time of initiation the shell is broke. and man emerges from the embryonic state of physical existence wherein he had remained through the fetal period of philosophic regeneration." (Manly P. Hall). The Orphic Egg in the Ancient Greek is the cosmic egg from which hatched the primordial hermaphroditic deity Phanes/Protogonus (Zeus, Pan, Metis, Eros, Erikepaios and Bromius) who in turn created the other gods.

The goddess Ashtoreth, for whom Solomon built a high place, is also called Ishtar. Every year the church celebrates a holy day that bears the name of the pagan goddess of fertility whose original was Semiramis, and who is known by a profusion of names throughout the various cultures of the world. Heliopolis is a city of Egypt where Semiramis was known by the name Isis. As mentioned, Semiramis was a moon goddess, and therefore we see an image of the moon atop her sacred egg.

The mystery religions teach that Semiramis was herself immaculately conceived and was lowered from the heavens to the earth in a giant egg. This egg came to rest in the waters of the Euphrates river. Eggs are also symbols of fertility, and as Semiramis was also a fertility goddess the symbol of the egg became thoroughly associated with her worship. Those who knew Semiramis under the name of Ishtar spoke of Ishtar's egg, from which we get our current Easter egg.

Modern symbols of Easter, such as the egg and the bunny, have their origins in paganism. Rabbits were the most potent symbol of fertility with some goddesses being depicted with rabbits. The egg, the start of all life, was often thought to have magical powers.



(Above left) Protogenos (primeval god) of procreation in the Orphic cosmogony (Above right) Ixchel and the Rabbit, North America, 800 A.D. Ixchel is the moon goddess in Maya mythology, often depicted sitting in a moon sign holding a rabbit.

The **Easter Bunny** in legend, brings baskets filled with coloured eggs, candy and toys to the homes of children on the night before Easter. The Easter Bunny will then hide the baskets somewhere in the house for the children to find when they wake up in the morning. There are some ancient lore regarding the goddess of easter, Ishtar (Ashtoreth, Astarte, Eostre, Ostara etc) that she brings in the spring with the flowering of plants and the birth of babies, both animal and human. The rabbit was well known as her sacred animal. One legend tells of her finding a wounded bird and turning it into a hare to save its life in the harsh winter. The transformation was incomplete, however, and the hare retained the ability to lay eggs, which it would decorate and leave as gifts to Eostre (Ostara). This explains how the Easter bunny came to be associated with eggs. It was said that the hare anger the goddess, so she cast him into the skies to remain as the constellation Lepus (The Hare) forever positioned under the feet of the constellation Orion (the Hunter). He was allowed to return to earth once each year, but only to give away his eggs to the children attending the Ostara festivals that were held each spring. The Easter Bunny is very similar to the legends of Santa Claus, they both bring gifts to good children on the night before their respective holiday.

Exerts and images taken from the case studies relating to Easter and other festivals from the book, Empires of the Fallen, by Dale Pywell