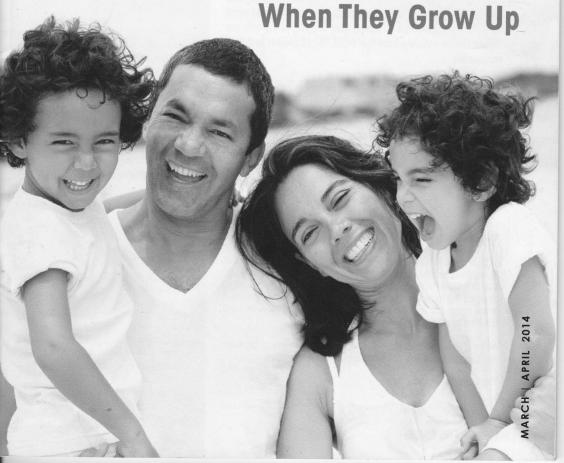
SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Bunnies and Buns – Where Does Easter Come From? God's Contracts



Bunnies and Buns -Where Does Easter Come From?

by Ron du Preez

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It appears though, as noted in a mid-second century sermon attributed to Melito, Bishop of Sardis, that some type of resurrection celebration was already established approximately a century after the resurrection of Jesus. By the early fifth century, when Socrates Scholasticus wrote his Historia Ecclesiastica, Easter was reported to be universally observed, though at different times by the two major branches of Christianity, and despite the fact that neither Jesus nor His

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Theologian and church historian George Reid notes: "Unquestionably the resurrection was of enormous importance to the apostolic church, for it figures prominently in the evangelistic messages from the apostles as recorded in the book of Acts." 2 Yet, "There is no suggestion that the resurrection made a new day holy. In the Bible is to be found only one holy day of the week, the Sabbath, formed as a part of the creation process by God Himself, and never suspended." 3

While recognizing "Easter that commemorates the resurrection of Jesus," Dr. Reid points out that the actual English word "Easter" originates "from the Anglo-Saxon Eostre, the name of the [pagan] goddess of spring."



It was actually only by the eighth century that this name came to be applied to the commemoration of Christ's resurrection. So, how should a Christian plate to such pagan association, and any non-biblical customs connected to Easter?

First, the question about the origin of a custom can be a major distraction, since many modern practices have antecedents in the ancient world, frequently from non-believers. For example, as noted in Scientific American, the 60-second minute and the 60-minute hour, as well as the 360-degree sphere of the globe "owe their divisions to a 4,000-year-old numeric system of the Babylonians." ¹¹ Over time, meanings change. Similarly, for most Christians, Easter's connection with the Anglo-Saxon goddess has been lost; the only remaining Scripture-related significance now associated with Easter is the resurrection of Christ (see John 20).

Second, as author and pastor Martin Weber admonishes: "Let's remember that Christ overcame the world, the flesh and the devil. That victory happened on the cross — which actually had been the ultimate cursed pagan symbol." 12 Indeed, Roman crucifixion was one of the most disgraceful methods of execution. 13 Dr. Weber continues: "Yet He turned that cross into the symbol of our salvation, so that we read in the Bible: 'God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal. 6:14)." Weber then eloquently exclaims: "Amazing grace that triumphs over evil! God exercises His sovereign right of eminent domain, displacing the devil from pagan symbols and holidays and transforming them into memorials of His salvation."

Third, as has been observed, many people show up at church only twice per year: Christmas and Easter. While committed Christians should never compromise the fundamentals of biblical faith, every chance must be capitalized on to share Christ. As the apostle Paul stated: "When I am with the Gentiles . . . I fit in with them as much as I can. In this way, I gain their confidence and bring them to Christ. But I do not discard the law of God; I obey the law of Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:21, NLT). Easter provides one of the best opportunities to thoughtfully share, with the unchurched, the wonderful truths about Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ministry in heaven.

Fourth, remembering that Jesus shared a most vital Bible study with two of His followers on resurrection Sunday (as noted in Luke 24), it would not be inappropriate to have a relevant worship service, in which the practical, existential meaning of the resurrection can be examined, explored, and explained – that the Creator God is still in control of the universe; that He has overcome the devil; and that His followers are guaranteed the power of the Holy Spirit to live victorious lives by God's abundant grace.

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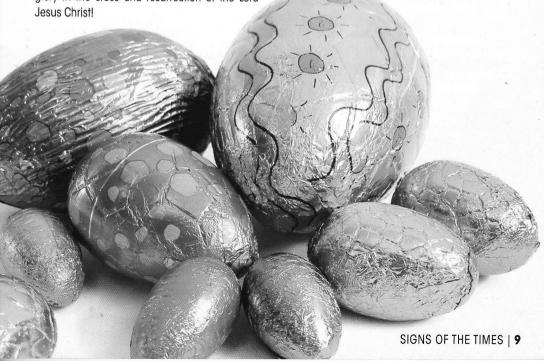
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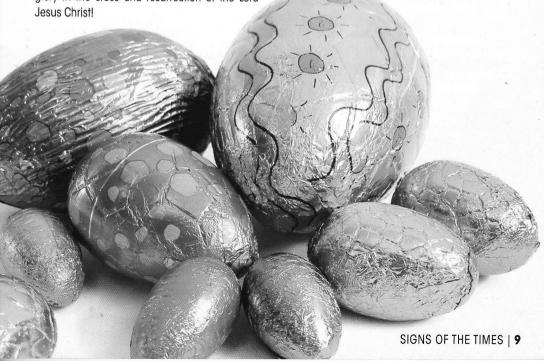
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