

## **Jesus Versus The Easter Bunny.**

*Matthew 26: 47 – 28: 20; Mark 14: 43 – 16: 20; Luke 22: 63 – 24: 53; John 18: 1 – 21: 14*

*The Easter Bunny is probably the most well known and popular figure at Easter-time in UK culture today. But what are the origins of The Easter Bunny, and what has The Easter Bunny done for us? Does The Easter Bunny deserve our attention more than Jesus?*

*First slide (1) The Easter Debates - theme music to Panorama. Presented in style of hard-hitting news story, like Panorama or News Night report, very deadpan and serious.*

Reporter 1: There are two figures central to the Easter story. Today we are going to consider the historical background to these two characters, and ask: can we decide who plays the more meaningful role in Easter?

Reporter 2: We give you (2): Jesus versus The Easter Bunny. (slide 2 with this on, and another burst of Panorama theme tune)

Reporter 1: (3) Fact: a man called Jesus lived in first century Palestine. We know this because The Bible and 39 other ancient documents describe his birth, life, death and resurrection, and the impact this had on the people around him. Archaeological discoveries confirm The Bible's historical accuracy.

Reporter 2: (4) Fact: The Easter Bunny appears everywhere throughout the pages of history, in different countries, cultures and historical periods. A thousand years before Jesus was even born, people celebrated and honoured The Easter Bunny.<sup>1</sup>

Reporter 1: (5) Jesus was more than a man. There are 322 prophecies in the Old Testament about the promised Messiah or Christ, and Jesus fulfilled every one of them. In other words, the how and why of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection were all described in The Bible hundreds of years before any of it actually happened. This is because God had it planned from the beginning.

Reporter 2: (6) The Easter Bunny's origins go back to the days of Noah, of Noah and the Ark fame. (7) Noah's great-grandson, Nimrod, was a cruel, tyrannical leader, who was fully immersed in the weird and creepy occult. His wife was just as bad. She declared Nimrod a Sun-God, told the people her son was the saviour promised by God, and that all of them were to be worshipped.

Reporter 1: (8) Jesus, the Son of God, came to bring people back into a relationship with God by taking the punishment for everything people do wrong, so that all their sins are paid for, justice is done, and God can accept the people now cleansed from sin into his perfect and sin-free heaven.

Reporter 2: (9) It is from the history and traditions of Nimrod and his wife that all the various pagan goddesses of fertility and new life originate. In different countries and cultures this goddess has different names, but historical evidence traces them back to being essentially the same one. (10) The Easter Bunny is her representative, a symbol of the fertility goddess.

Reporter 1: (11) It is unhelpful that the anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus is commonly known as "Easter", a name derived from a pagan goddess. A more appropriate name might be the "Christian Passover". Many other modern languages derive their name for Easter from the Latin "pascha", in turn taken from the Hebrew "pesach" or Passover. This acknowledges that the Christian feast is a successor to the Jewish Passover.

Reporter 2: (12) The Babylonian spring goddess Astarte is said to have fallen from heaven in an egg. It was thought that all life came from an egg, and so eggs were a symbol of the re-birth of spring. Hares and rabbits were associated with enviable prolific breeding, and therefore inspired the invention of the goddess with the hare's head, or hare companion, as part of the worship of all things spring-time and fertile.

Reporter 1: (13) God instructed the Jewish people to celebrate Passover to remember their escape from slavery in Egypt about 1200 years before Jesus. At that time God promised: I will get you out of the mess you've made; I will lead you in a life of freedom; I will treat you as my own children; and I will save your soul.

(14) Jesus makes the same promises to us today: I will get you out of the mess you've made; I will lead you in a life of freedom; I will treat you as my own children; and I will save your soul.

Reporter 2: (15) The Easter Bunny is a hare/rabbit spirit who lays eggs in the grass. Fluffy little Easter chicks emerge from the eggs the Easter Bunny lays. (16) This answers once and for all the question, which came first? The chicken or the egg? (17) It was in fact The Easter Bunny.

(18) The Easter tradition of egg rolling is a re-enactment of the work of The Easter Bunny. Eggs are rolled down a hill, or along the grass, and then people go on an Easter egg hunt trying to find them, pretending they are looking for the eggs laid by The Easter Bunny.

Reporter 1: (19) The Easter tradition of the Passion Play is a re-enactment of the last days of Jesus Christ on this earth. Jesus was crucified after Jewish religious leaders accused him of being a would-be revolutionary who wanted to overturn Roman rule. (20) But Christians believe that God planned for this to happen and that in the spiritual realm the death, and then resurrection, of Jesus, was necessary to deal with sin once and for all, bringing believers back into a relationship with God, free from the barrier of their wrong doing.

Reporter 1 continued: (21) In conclusion, let's look at what Jesus achieved – Jesus set an example, teaching us to forgive, be generous and treat other people well.

Reporter 2: (22) Here's what the Easter Bunny has achieved: The Easter Bunny set an example of how to multiply prolifically.

Reporter 1: (23) Jesus conquered sin and death on the cross.

Reporter 2: (24) The Easter Bunny conquered all attempts to wipe him out and continues to thrive as a representative of the goddess of Spring.

Reporter 1: (25) Jesus provided a way for people to be in a relationship with God free from the burden and barrier of their sins.

Reporter 2: (26) The Easter Bunny provided a way for people to indulge their focus and obsession with, er... lets say, fertility.

Reporter 1: (27) Jesus left us with The Holy Spirit to guide us and encourage and empower us to live God's way.

Reporter 2: (28) The Easter Bunny left us with chocolate eggs and pretend fluffy Easter chicks.

Reporter 1: (29) Jesus promises eternity in heaven for those who believe and follow Him.

Reporter 2: (30) The Easter Bunny promises us nothing.

Reporter 1: (31) So, who is the more meaningful figure in Easter? You decide.

*((32) end slide - another burst of Panorama theme tune)*

For *slides* see *Jesus Versus The Easter Bunny example slides.pdf* or watch the presentation at <http://richmondparkchurch.org.uk/drama-and-dance/drama-dance/216-drama-sketch-videos-page-4> or find it on YouTube under *ChristianDrama*

#### **Sources:**

Christian Answers . net "What is the origin of Easter?" (including Nimrod and Semiramis) at <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t020.html>

and ancient documents and archaeological discoveries: <http://www.christiananswers.net/q-eden/edn-t007.html>

Nimrod and Semiramis: <http://12160.info/profiles/blogs/sssh-it-s-happy-eatern-star-oops-or-is-it-ostredon-t-forget-your> (not a Christian site, contains offensive comments)

Fulfilled Prophecies: [http://www.arfordministry.com/writings/Fulfilled\\_Prophecy.pdf](http://www.arfordministry.com/writings/Fulfilled_Prophecy.pdf)

Origins of Easter – The Goddesses - <http://www.articledestination.com/Article/ORIGINS-OF-EASTER/2193>

History of Easter: <http://easter.fundootimes.com/history-of-easter.html>

Origins of Easter: <http://easter-origins.xanga.com/696428254/item/>

History of Easter and Easter Eggs: <http://www.aphrodite-chocolates.co.uk/easter-eggs-history.htm>

Pascha and Easter: <http://www.iol.ie/~marist/halo/haloeaster.htm>

Passover to Easter: <http://www.hodsons.org/Afeastofseasons/id18.htm>

The Meaning of Easter: <http://www.jesuscentral.com/ji/lands/easter.php>

Easter Customs and History: <http://www.dublinevents.com/easter/customs-facts/>

Easter Bunny: <http://www.phancypages.com/newsletter/ZNewsletter2599.htm>

Footnote 1 - Easter Bunny: <http://www.wyrdology.com/festivals/easter/bunny.html> - although the hare or rabbit companion or symbol of the goddess existed as far back as the origins of spring pagan rites, technically The Easter Bunny we recognise today had its first mention in Germany in the 1500s, in the form of the "Oschter Haw".

Images:

Slide 1 – mosaic of Jesus, entitled "Crucifixion" by Mia Tavonatti at the DeVos Place  
<http://mosaicartsource.wordpress.com/2011/10/03/2673/>

Slide 4 – Eostre and hare/rabbit <http://easter-origins.xanga.com/696428254/item/>

Slide 12 – Eostre/Ostera <http://12160.info/profiles/blogs/ssh-it-s-happy-eatern-star-oops-or-is-it-ostre-don-t-forget-your> (not a Christian site, contains offensive comments)

Slide 23 – Stations of the Cross - <http://www.walthamcrossrc.org.uk/stations.html>

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