

REFLECTIONS



Easter!



*It's Really Not About
Bunnies, Chicks and Eggs!*



*He is
Risen
as He
Said!*

*River Road
Baptist Church
4-12-09*



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While searching for a piece of clip art to use for this week's Reflections, I was amazed to find that when I called for Easter art, all but 3 frames were bunnies, chicks, eggs, and candy. My search was rescued when I called for pieces related to the resurrection, though the number of frames was significantly smaller. It seems that the event that we label Easter which we celebrate as the Resurrection Sunday has been hijacked by farm animals. Eggs, bunnies and other trappings of the holiday called Easter seem to come from many traditions if you search for the information regarding them. Some will tell you that eggs are representative of rebirth and are a Christian tradition while others will condemn their use since they are of pagan religious origins. For us, the celebration is because of the Resurrection of Jesus and, of course, we don't need "fertility symbols" as part of that celebration. His sacrifice and victory speak for themselves.

Luke's gospel records the angel's declaration confirming His own prophetic statement that He would be raised from the dead. *And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. (Luke 24:5)* The resurrection signaled the final defeat of sin, death and the grave. Jesus had placed Himself in the place of sinful men, had taken their sin upon Himself, endured the Father's rejection and then rose to complete the defeat of the enemy. No bunnies, chicks or chocolate eggs evident here.

The date of Easter has been traditionally set based on events related to springtime, the phase of the moon, and not set as an anniversary of the actual date of Jesus' death, His burial, or His resurrection. The Council of Nicea, under Constantine, used the first Sunday after the ecclesiastical full moon to set the date for the Church to celebrate the resurrection on Easter.

The Easter bunny itself is a fertility symbol of Anglo-Saxon rituals related to their worship of the goddess Eastre. The Easter egg also had its roots in springtime celebrations that predate the Christian holiday. Neither are related in any way to the real reason for our own celebration. We, as Christians, have always looked at

this holiday as the Sunday we set aside to remember and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Still, even today, the bunnies, eggs, and chicks are the focus of many families and are considered a legitimate part of Easter along with, or in place of, the religious holiday ceremonies.

Perhaps we, as disciples of Christ, should reconsider how we spend that particular day and the various ways we celebrate the Easter holiday. One alternative to the traditional Easter egg hunt is to hide portions of scripture, miniature people, and other kinds of props that when found are brought together and the children are asked to tell the story represented by these little treasures. The best story to tell? The account of the Savior's Resurrection! It then becomes a great opportunity to share the reason for the Easter celebration as part of the family's spiritual conversation.

In a manner similar to His birth, the angels announced that He is Risen! The followers of Jesus, His 11 remaining disciples, and the host of heaven rejoiced in His victory over sin and even death. In the book of Revelation we see John's vision of last things in which Jesus was the only one worthy to receive the glory of God and the authority to usher in the events of those times by opening the seals on the scroll defining God's judgement on His enemies. *...And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;¹² Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. (Rev 5:14 KJV)*

Clearly no eggs, chicks, or bunnies in this scene in heaven. He alone was declared worthy for such honor and glory. Jesus, as in Christmas so in Easter, is the only reason for celebration. He has purchased our redemption by His own sacrifice. He was ridiculed, beaten, and pierced for our sin, and became the lamb without spot, the atonement sacrifice for all sin and for all time. But the power of His victory is truly seen in His resurrection from the dead. No other religious "tradition" includes a Savior who has defeated hell, death and the grave. He is risen indeed! The greatest gift of all is that by His death and resurrection, we can inherit eternal life in the risen Savior. Happy Resurrection Sunday! Let's celebrate the lamb, not bunnies, chicks or eggs.

Pastor Doug.