

The Easter Bunny and Painted Chicks

Easter time is once again drawing near and we will be taking our children to Easter parades, talking about the Easter Bunny, and looking for Easter eggs (probably produced by those painted chickens which will also be available). As Christians, it is inevitable that some will wonder -- what does the Easter bunny and painted chickens have to do with Easter? Is it possible that "The Enemy" has so deceived us that we depart from the 'true meaning' of Easter in our searching after colored eggs? Some claim that this is pure paganism and want us {Christians} to have nothing to do with it. I suspect that if I yield to them on Easter then soon they will steal Christmas from us and it will not be very long before we will have lost all of our holidays except the Fourth of July. Perhaps we should look at this more carefully before we do anything quite so drastic.

Yes, it is true that pagans have celebrated the 'rites of Spring' for hundreds, perhaps thousands (I, as a scientist can not accept millions) of years. Spring stirs all our hearts with thoughts of fresh air, green growing grass, and the pure joy of a fresh warm wind on our cheeks after the long, cold, winter. Especially, if you live in South Dakota as I do, you do indeed look forward to Spring with great relish. People over much of the world join us in this looking forward to Spring, Christians as well as non-Christians. Because of these emotions, various festivals and rituals have come from a wide variety of cultures. Much of what we see at Easter is exactly this kind of cultural tradition. It is a celebration of new beginnings, of Spring, of new growth in the plant kingdoms. Our hearts are stirred and we are happy because this is an extremely enjoyable time of the year. Some begin to think about new clothes, some to golf, some to Easter parades, while the children emphasize the Easter bunny and the Painted Chicks, and thoroughly enjoy hunting for colored eggs.

What does this have to do with Christianity? Nothing! Nothing at all. It is just an enjoyable cultural activity in which we may feel free to participate. What then DO we Christians emphasize at Easter? Ah, here is a very important point. We Christians have all of the joy that others of our culture enjoy -- and much more besides. We turn our hearts and minds to much more than green grass, growing leaves on the trees, and lilies putting forth their blossoms -- though we do indeed have all of that as well. We have the blessed privilege of turning our hearts, once again, toward that One from whom all of life springs forth. The One who created all things and, even now, holds all things together. It is a special time to dwell on the fabulous, transcendental event whereby Jesus proved beyond any doubt that He is indeed both Christ and Lord. Through His crucifixion we have the hope that we can reckon ourselves also dead to the sin which has enslaved us. By His resurrection, we have great hope in our own resurrection from the dead into a newness of life, new creatures in Him. By His life, we have had the door of life opened to us. The 'world' has many symbols of Spring and new beginnings, but only we Christians have been given the great joy, the great hope, that comes from the deepest most profound meaning behind 'New Beginnings'. We rejoice in a resurrection which we not only recall -- we also participate in 365 days each year.

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