



## Take a closer look at Easter.

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**If** we took a closer look at Easter, what would we find – a chocolate fantasy or important history?

In the 8th Century, the English monk, Bede, spoke of how the name of the pagan goddess 'Eostre' was used for the 'Easter month'. Bede's words have long been seen as proof that Christians simply replaced existing cultural rituals with their own. But the problem is that there isn't much hard evidence for the English Goddess 'Eostre' or her Spring pagan festival. However, there's lots of evidence that Christians throughout Europe, from the medieval period onward, used eggs and rabbits as symbols of new life.

As for the chocolate versions, well Joseph Fry of Bristol made the first chocolate Easter egg in 1873. Ever since then Easter has been very chocolaty and run, almost entirely by the major supermarkets.

If you keep looking closely at Easter though, you'll see that Christians all over the world have something more exciting than a weekend chocolate coma to celebrate. If you look really closely then you'll see that, from the earliest times, Christians wanted an annual celebration at the time of the Jewish feast called 'Passover' (usually in April) because that's when Jesus was executed.

But why would Christians celebrate the execution of a man? Because, paradoxically, Jesus's death means life! Jesus is God's son, sent to earth to point us back to Him... sent to live as an example... sent to offer his life so that our sin might be cancelled.

Yet Christians don't just focus on Jesus's death. The climax of the Easter story comes two days after Good Friday and Jesus's execution. On the third day Jesus was resurrected from death. His tomb, which had been sealed, was now empty. Since then, people everywhere have had reason to hope because, if Jesus can be resurrected, then so can we.

There's an account in the Bible of a man called Paul who was opposed to Christians and Jesus. But Paul became both a believer and a Christian leader. Here's a small part of a letter he wrote to Greek Christians in the city of Corinth.

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures*

So, this Easter – as you spike your blood sugar on the finest cocoa confections, remember why Easter is so sweet. Remember the hope that Jesus has given you and thank him.

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for chocolate. But thank you much more for the gift of Jesus and the new life he brings.

**Bible Verse:** "... Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day..." 1 Corinthians 15:3-4