

# Christmas

This article is about the Christian and cultural festival. For other uses, see [Easter \(disambiguation\)](#).

**Easter**<sup>[nb 1]</sup> (Old English usually *Ēastrun*, *-on*, or *-an*; also *Ēastru*, *-o*; and *Ēostre*),<sup>[1]</sup> also called **Pasch** (derived, through Latin: *Pascha* and Greek Πάσχα *Paskha*, from Aramaic: ܦܫܚܐ, cognate to Hebrew: פֶּסַח *Pesah*)<sup>[nb 2][2][3][4][5]</sup> or **Resurrection Sunday**,<sup>[6][7]</sup> is a festival and holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, described in the New Testament as having occurred on the third day of his burial after his crucifixion by Romans at Calvary c. 30 AD.<sup>[8][9]</sup> It is the culmination of the Passion of Christ, preceded by Lent (or Great Lent), a forty-day period of fasting, prayer, and penance.

The week before Easter is called **Holy Week**, and it contains the days of the Easter Triduum, including Maundy Thursday, commemorating the Maundy and Last Supper,<sup>[10][11]</sup> as well as Good Friday, commemorating the crucifixion and death of Jesus.<sup>[12]</sup> In western Christianity, Eastertide, the Easter Season, begins on Easter Sunday and lasts seven weeks, ending with the coming of the fiftieth day, Pentecost Sunday. In Orthodoxy, the season of Pascha begins on Pascha and ends with the coming of the fortieth day, the Feast of the Ascension.

Easter and the holidays that are related to it are *moveable feasts* in that they do not fall on a fixed date in the Gregorian or Julian calendars which follow only the cycle of the sun; rather, its date is determined on a lunisolar calendar similar to the Hebrew calendar. The First Council of Nicaea (325) established two rules, independence of the Jewish calendar and worldwide uniformity, which were the only rules for Easter explicitly laid down by the council. No details for the computation were specified; these were worked out in practice, a process that took centuries and generated a number of **controversies**. It has come to be the first Sunday after the **full moon** that occurs on or soonest after 21 March,<sup>[13]</sup> but calculations vary in **East and West**. Details of this complicated computation are found below in the section **Date**.

Easter is linked to the Jewish Passover by much of its symbolism, as well as by its position in the calendar. In many languages, the words for “Easter” and “Passover” are identical or very similar.<sup>[14]</sup> Easter customs vary across the Christian world, and include sunrise services, exclaiming the Paschal greeting, clipping the church,<sup>[15]</sup> and decorating Easter eggs, a symbol of the empty tomb.<sup>[16][17][18]</sup> The Easter lily, a symbol

of the resurrection,<sup>[19][20]</sup> traditionally decorates the chancel area of churches on this day and for the rest of Eastertide.<sup>[21]</sup> Additional customs that have become associated with Easter and are observed by both Christians and some non-Christians include egg hunting, the Easter Bunny, and Easter parades.<sup>[22][23][24]</sup> There are also various traditional Easter foods that vary regionally.

## 1 Etymology

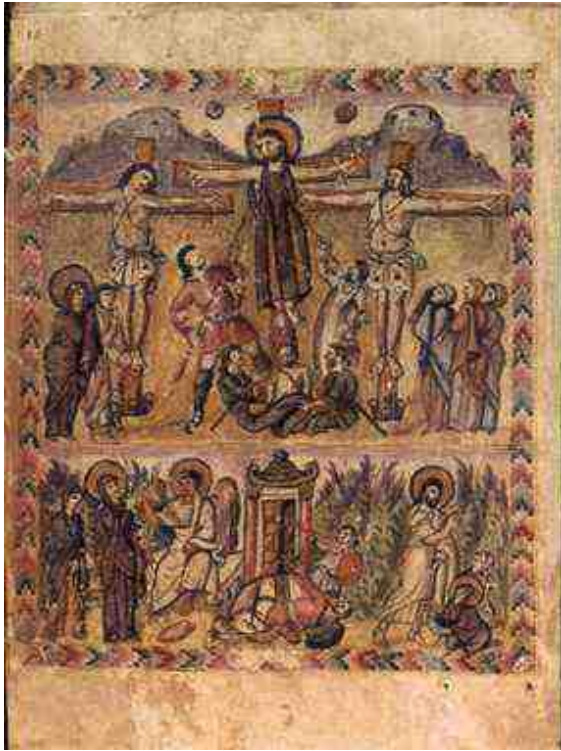
Main article: [Names of Easter](#)

The modern English term *Easter*, cognate with modern German *Ostern*, developed from an Old English word that usually appears in the form *Ēastrun*, *-on*, or *-an*; but also as *Ēastru*, *-o*; and *Ēastre* or *Ēostre*.<sup>[nb 3]</sup> The most widely accepted theory of the origin of the term is that it is derived from the name of a goddess mentioned by the 7th to 8th-century English monk Bede, who wrote that *Ēosturmōnaþ* (Old English 'Month of Ēostre', translated in Bede's time as “Paschal month”) was an English month, corresponding to April, which he says “was once called after a goddess of theirs named Ēostre, in whose honour feasts were celebrated in that month”.<sup>[25]</sup>

In Greek and Latin, the Christian celebration was and is called Πάσχα, *Pascha*, a word derived from Aramaic ܦܫܚܐ, cognate to Hebrew פֶּסַח (*Pesach*). The word originally denoted the Jewish festival, known in English as **Passover**, commemorating the story of the **Exodus**.<sup>[26][27]</sup> Already in the 50s of the 1st century, Paul, writing from Ephesus to the Christians in Corinth,<sup>[28]</sup> applied the term to Christ, and it is unlikely that the Ephesian and Corinthian Christians were the first to hear Exodus 12 interpreted as speaking about the death of Jesus, not just about the Jewish Passover ritual.<sup>[29]</sup> In most of the non-English speaking world, the feast is known by names derived from Greek and Latin *Pascha*.<sup>[3][30]</sup> Pascha is also a name by which Jesus himself is remembered in the Orthodox Church, especially in connection with his resurrection and with the season of its celebration.<sup>[31]</sup>

## 2 Theological significance

The New Testament states that the resurrection of Jesus, which Easter celebrates, is a foundation of the Christian faith.<sup>[32]</sup> The resurrection established Jesus as the pow-



One of the earliest known depictions of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (Rabbula Gospel illuminated manuscript, 6th century)

erful Son of God<sup>[33]</sup> and is cited as proof that God will judge the world in righteousness.<sup>[34][35]</sup> For those who trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, "death is swallowed up in victory."<sup>[36]</sup> Any person who chooses to follow Jesus receives "a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."<sup>[37]</sup> Through faith in the working of God those who follow Jesus are spiritually resurrected with him so that they may walk in a new way of life and receive eternal salvation.<sup>[35][38][39]</sup>

Easter is linked to the Passover and Exodus from Egypt recorded in the Old Testament through the Last Supper, sufferings and crucifixion of Jesus that preceded the resurrection.<sup>[30]</sup> According to the New Testament, Jesus gave the Passover meal a new meaning, as in the upper room during the Last Supper he prepared himself and his disciples for his death.<sup>[30]</sup> He identified the matzah and cup of wine as his body soon to be sacrificed and his blood soon to be shed. Paul states, "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed";<sup>[40]</sup> this refers to the Passover requirement to have no yeast in the house and to the allegory of Jesus as the Paschal lamb.<sup>[41]</sup>

One interpretation of the Gospel of John is that Jesus, as the Passover lamb, was crucified at roughly the same time as the Passover lambs were being slain in the temple, on the afternoon of Nisan 14.<sup>[42]</sup> The scriptural instructions specify that the lamb is to be slain "between

the two evenings", that is, at twilight. By the Roman period, however, the sacrifices were performed in the mid-afternoon. Josephus, *Jewish War* 6.10.1/423 ("They sacrifice from the ninth to the eleventh hour"). Philo, *Special Laws* 2.27/145 ("Many myriads of victims from noon till eventide are offered by the whole people").

This interpretation, however, is inconsistent with the chronology in the Synoptic Gospels. It assumes that text literally translated "the preparation of the passover" in John 19:14 refers to Nisan 14 (Preparation Day for the Passover) and not necessarily to Yom Shishi (Friday, Preparation Day for the Passover week Sabbath)<sup>[43]</sup> and that the priests' desire to be ritually pure in order to "eat the passover"<sup>[44]</sup> refers to eating the Passover lamb, not to the public offerings made during the days of Unleavened Bread.<sup>[45]</sup>

### 3 In the early Church



The Last Supper celebrated by Jesus and his disciples. The early Christians too would have celebrated this meal to commemorate Jesus' death and subsequent resurrection.

The first Christians, Jewish and Gentile, were certainly aware of the Hebrew calendar.<sup>[nb 4]</sup> Jewish Christians, the first to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, timed the observance in relation to Passover.

Direct evidence for a more fully formed Christian festival of Pascha (Easter) begins to appear in the mid-2nd century. Perhaps the earliest extant primary source referring to Easter is a mid-2nd-century Paschal homily attributed to Melito of Sardis, which characterizes the celebration as a well-established one.<sup>[46]</sup> Evidence for another kind of annual Christian festival, the commemoration of martyrs, begins to appear at about the same time as evidence for the celebration of Easter.<sup>[47]</sup>

While martyrs' days (usually the individual dates of martyrdom) were celebrated on fixed dates in the local solar calendar, the date of Easter was fixed by means of the local Jewish lunisolar calendar. This is consistent with the celebration of Easter having entered Christianity during

its earliest, Jewish period, but does not leave the question free of doubt.<sup>[48]</sup>

The ecclesiastical historian Socrates Scholasticus attributes the observance of Easter by the church to the perpetuation of its custom, “just as many other customs have been established”, stating that neither Jesus nor his Apostles enjoined the keeping of this or any other festival. Although he describes the details of the Easter celebration as deriving from local custom, he insists the feast itself is universally observed.<sup>[49]</sup>

## 4 Date



A stained glass window depicting the *Passover Lamb*, a concept integral to the foundation of Easter.<sup>[30][50]</sup>

Easter and the holidays that are related to it are *moveable feasts*, in that they do not fall on a fixed date in the Gregorian or Julian calendars (both of which follow the cycle of the sun and the seasons). Instead, the date for Easter is determined on a lunisolar calendar similar to the Hebrew calendar. The First Council of Nicaea (325) established two rules, independence of the Jewish calendar and worldwide uniformity, which were the only rules for Easter explicitly laid down by the Council. No details for the computation were specified; these were worked out in practice, a process that took centuries and generated a number of controversies. (See also *Computus* and *Reform of the date of Easter*.) In particular, the Council did not decree that Easter must fall on Sunday. This was already the practice almost everywhere.<sup>[51]</sup>

In *Western Christianity*, using the Gregorian calendar, Easter always falls on a Sunday between 22 March and 25 April inclusive, within about seven days after the astronomical full moon.<sup>[52]</sup> The following day, *Easter Monday*, is a *legal holiday* in many countries with predominantly Christian traditions.

*Eastern Christianity* bases its calculations on the *Julian Calendar*. Because of the 13-day difference between the calendars between 1900 and 2099, 21 March corresponds, during the 21st century, to 3 April in the *Gregorian Calendar*. Easter therefore varies between 4 April and 8 May on the Gregorian calendar (the Julian calendar is no longer used as the civil calendar of the countries where Eastern Christian traditions predominate). Also, because the Julian “full moon” is always several days after the astronomical full moon, the eastern Easter is often later, relative to the visible moon’s phases, than western Easter.

Among the *Oriental Orthodox* some churches have changed from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar and the date for Easter as for other fixed and moveable feasts is the same as in the Western church.<sup>[53]</sup>

### 4.1 Computations

Main article: *Computus*

In 725, Bede succinctly wrote, “The Sunday following the full Moon which falls on or after the equinox will give the lawful Easter.”<sup>[54]</sup> However, this does not precisely reflect the ecclesiastical rules. The full moon referred to (called the *Paschal full moon*) is not an astronomical full moon, but the 14th day of a calendar lunar month. Another difference is that the *astronomical equinox* is a natural astronomical phenomenon, which can fall on 19, 20 or 21 March, while the ecclesiastical date is fixed by convention on 21 March.<sup>[55]</sup>

In applying the ecclesiastical rules, Christian churches use 21 March as the starting point in determining the date of Easter, from which they find the next full moon, etc. The *Eastern Orthodox* and *Oriental Orthodox Churches* continue to use the Julian calendar. Their starting point in determining the date of Orthodox Easter is also 21 March but according to the Julian reckoning, which in the current century corresponds to 3 April in the Gregorian calendar.

In addition, the lunar tables of the Julian calendar are four days (sometimes five days) behind those of the Gregorian calendar. The 14th day of the lunar month according to the Gregorian system is figured as the ninth or tenth day according to the Julian. The result of this combination of solar and lunar discrepancies is divergence in the date of Easter in most years (see table).

Easter is determined on the basis of *lunisolar cycles*. The lunar year consists of 30-day and 29-day lunar months,

generally alternating, with an **embolismic month** added periodically to bring the lunar cycle into line with the solar cycle. In each solar year (1 January to 31 December inclusive), the lunar month beginning with an **ecclesiastical new moon** falling in the 29-day period from 8 March to 5 April inclusive is designated as the paschal lunar month for that year.<sup>[56]</sup>

Easter is the third Sunday in the paschal lunar month, or, in other words, the Sunday after the paschal lunar month's 14th day. The 14th of the paschal lunar month is designated by convention as the **Paschal full moon**, although the 14th of the lunar month may differ from the date of the astronomical full moon by up to two days.<sup>[56]</sup> Since the ecclesiastical new moon falls on a date from 8 March to 5 April inclusive, the paschal full moon (the 14th of that lunar month) must fall on a date from 21 March to 18 April inclusive.

The Gregorian calculation of Easter was based on a method devised by the Calabrian doctor **Aloysius Lilius** (or **Lilio**) for adjusting the **epacts** of the moon,<sup>[57]</sup> and has been adopted by almost all Western Christians and by Western countries which celebrate national holidays at Easter. For the British Empire and colonies, a determination of the date of Easter Sunday using **Golden Numbers** and **Sunday letters** was defined by the **Calendar (New Style) Act 1750** with its **Annexe**. This was designed to match exactly the Gregorian calculation.

## 4.2 Controversies over the date

Main article: [Easter controversy](#)

The precise date of Easter has at times been a matter of contention. By the later 2nd century, it was widely accepted that the celebration of the holiday was a practice of the disciples and an undisputed tradition. The **Quartodeciman controversy**, the first of several **Easter controversies**, arose concerning the date on which the holiday should be celebrated.

The term "Quartodeciman" refers to the practice of celebrating Easter on **Nisan 14** of the **Hebrew calendar**, "the LORD's passover" (**Leviticus 23:5**). According to the church historian **Eusebius**, the **Quartodeciman Polycarp** (bishop of **Smyrna**, by tradition a disciple of **John the Evangelist**) debated the question with **Anicetus** (bishop of **Rome**). The **Roman province of Asia** was **Quartodeciman**, while the **Roman and Alexandrian churches** continued the fast until the Sunday following (the **Sunday of Unleavened Bread**), wishing to associate Easter with Sunday. Neither Polycarp nor Anicetus persuaded the other, but they did not consider the matter **schismatic** either, parting in peace and leaving the question unsettled.

Controversy arose when **Victor**, bishop of **Rome** a generation after **Anicetus**, attempted to excommunicate **Polycrates of Ephesus** and all other bishops of **Asia** for their **Quartodecimanism**. According to **Eusebius**, a number of synods were convened to deal with the controversy,



*A five-part Russian Orthodox icon depicting the Easter story. Eastern Orthodox Christians use a different computation for the date of Easter than the Western churches.*

which he regarded as all ruling in support of Easter on Sunday.<sup>[58]</sup> **Polycrates** (*circa* 190), however, wrote to **Victor** defending the antiquity of **Asian Quartodecimanism**. **Victor's** attempted excommunication was apparently rescinded, and the two sides reconciled upon the intervention of bishop **Irenaeus** and others, who reminded **Victor** of the tolerant precedent of **Anicetus**.

**Quartodecimanism** seems to have lingered into the 4th century, when **Socrates of Constantinople** recorded that some **Quartodecimans** were deprived of their churches by **John Chrysostom**<sup>[59]</sup> and that some were harassed by **Nestorius**.<sup>[60]</sup>

It is not known how long the **Nisan 14** practice continued. But both those who followed the **Nisan 14** custom, and those who set Easter to the following Sunday had in common the custom of consulting their Jewish neighbors to learn when the month of **Nisan** would fall, and setting their festival accordingly. By the later 3rd century, however, some Christians began to express dissatisfaction with the custom of relying on the Jewish community to determine the date of Easter. The chief complaint was that the Jewish communities sometimes erred in setting **Passover** to fall before the **Northern Hemisphere spring equinox**.<sup>[61][62]</sup> The **Sardica paschal table**<sup>[63]</sup> confirms these complaints, for it indicates that the Jews of some eastern Mediterranean city (possibly **Antioch**) fixed **Nisan 14** on dates well before the spring equinox on multiple occasions.<sup>[64]</sup>

Because of this dissatisfaction with reliance on the Jewish

calendar, some Christians began to experiment with independent computations.<sup>[nb 5]</sup> Others, however, believed that the customary practice of consulting Jews should continue, even if the Jewish computations were in error.

### 4.3 First Council of Nicaea (325 AD)

This controversy between those who advocated independent computations, and those who wished to continue the custom of relying on the Jewish calendar, was formally resolved by the **First Council of Nicaea** in 325, which endorsed changing to an independent computation by the Christian community in order to celebrate in common. This effectively required the abandonment of the old custom of consulting the Jewish community in those places where it was still used. Epiphanius of Salamis wrote in the mid-4th century:

... the emperor ... convened a council of 318 bishops ... in the city of Nicaea ... They passed certain ecclesiastical canons at the council besides, and at the same time decreed in regard to the Passover that there must be one unanimous concord on the celebration of God's holy and supremely excellent day. For it was variously observed by people ...<sup>[67]</sup>

That the older custom (called “protopaschite” by historians) did not at once die out, but persisted for a time, is indicated by the existence of canons<sup>[68]</sup> and sermons<sup>[69]</sup> against it.

Dionysius Exiguus, and others following him, maintained that the 318 Bishops assembled at the Nicene Council had specified a particular method of determining the date of Easter; subsequent scholarship has refuted this tradition.<sup>[70]</sup> In any case, in the years following the council, the computational system that was worked out by the church of Alexandria came to be normative. It took a while for the Alexandrian rules to be adopted throughout Christian Europe, however. The 8-year cycle originally employed was replaced by (or by the time of) Augustalis's treatise on the measurement of Easter, after which Rome used his 84-year lunisolar calendar cycle until 457. It then switched to an adaptation by Victorius of the Alexandrian rules.<sup>[71][72]</sup>

Because this Victorian cycle differed from the Alexandrian cycle in the dates of some of the Paschal Full Moons, and because it tried to respect the Roman custom of fixing Easter to the Sunday in the week of the 16th to the 22nd of the lunar month (rather than the 15th to the 21st as at Alexandria), by providing alternative “Latin” and “Greek” dates in some years, occasional differences in the date of Easter as fixed by Alexandrian rules continued.<sup>[71][72]</sup> The Alexandrian rules were adopted in the West following the tables of Dionysius Exiguus in 525. From this time, therefore, all discrepancies

between Alexandria and Rome as to the correct date for Easter cease, as both churches were using identical tables.

Early Christians in Britain and Ireland also used an 84-year cycle. From the 5th century onward this cycle set its equinox to 25 March and fixed Easter to the Sunday falling in the 14th to the 20th of the lunar month inclusive.<sup>[73][74]</sup> This 84-year cycle was replaced by the Alexandrian method in the course of the 7th and 8th centuries. Churches in western continental Europe used a late Roman method until the late 8th century during the reign of Charlemagne, when they finally adopted the Alexandrian method. Since 1582, when the Catholic Church adopted the **Gregorian calendar** while the Eastern Orthodox and most Oriental Orthodox Churches retained the **Julian calendar**, the date on which Easter is celebrated has again differed.

The Greek island of Syros, whose population is divided almost equally between Catholics and Orthodox, is one of the few places where the two Churches share a common date for Easter, with the Catholics accepting the Orthodox date—a practice helping considerably in maintaining good relations between the two communities.<sup>[75]</sup>

### 4.4 Reform of the date

See also: Reform of the date of Easter

In the 20th century, some individuals and institutions



*The congregation lighting their candles from the new flame, just as the priest has retrieved it from the altar—note that the picture is flash-illuminated; all electric lighting is off, and only the oil lamps in front of the Iconostasis remain lit. (St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Adelaide).*

have propounded a fixed date for Easter, the most prominent proposal being the Sunday after the second Saturday in April. Despite having some support, proposals to reform the date have not been implemented.<sup>[76]</sup> An Orthodox congress of Eastern Orthodox bishops, which included representatives mostly from the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Patriarch of Serbia, met in Constantinople in 1923, where the bishops agreed to the **Revised Julian calendar**.<sup>[77]</sup>

The original form of this calendar would have determined

Easter using precise astronomical calculations based on the meridian of Jerusalem.<sup>[78][79]</sup> However, all the Eastern Orthodox countries that subsequently adopted the Revised Julian calendar adopted only that part of the revised calendar that applied to festivals falling on fixed dates in the Julian calendar. The revised Easter computation that had been part of the original 1923 agreement was never permanently implemented in any Orthodox diocese.<sup>[77]</sup>

In the United Kingdom, the *Easter Act 1928* set out legislation to allow the date of Easter to be fixed as the first Sunday after the second Saturday in April (or, in other words, the Sunday in the period from 9 to 15 April). However, the legislation has not been implemented, although it remains on the Statute book and could be implemented subject to approval by the various Christian churches.<sup>[80]</sup>

At a summit in Aleppo, Syria, in 1997, the World Council of Churches (WCC) proposed a reform in the calculation of Easter which would have replaced the present divergent practices of calculating Easter with modern scientific knowledge taking into account actual astronomical instances of the spring equinox and full moon based on the meridian of Jerusalem, while also following the Council of Nicea position of Easter being on the Sunday following the full moon.<sup>[81]</sup> The recommended World Council of Churches changes would have sidestepped the calendar issues and eliminated the difference in date between the Eastern and Western churches. The reform was proposed for implementation starting in 2001, but it was not ultimately adopted by any member body.

## 4.5 Table of the dates of Easter

The WCC presented comparative data of the relationships:

- Notes: 1. Astronomical Easter is the first Sunday after the Astronomical full moon, referred to the meridian of Jerusalem.  
2. Passover commences at sunset preceding the date indicated.

# 5 Position in the church year

Further information: *Liturgical year*

## 5.1 Western Christianity

In Western Christianity, Easter is preceded by Lent, a period of fasting and penitence in preparation for Easter, which begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts forty days (not counting Sundays). The week before Easter, known as Holy Week, is very special in the Christian tradition. The Sunday before Easter is Palm Sunday, with the Wednesday before Easter being known as Spy Wednesday. The last three days before Easter are Maundy Thurs-

day, Good Friday and Holy Saturday (sometimes referred to as Silent Saturday).

Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday respectively commemorate Jesus' entry in Jerusalem, the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday are sometimes referred to as the *Easter Triduum* (Latin for "Three Days"). Many churches begin celebrating Easter late in the evening of Holy Saturday at a service called the *Easter Vigil*. In some countries, Easter lasts two days, with the second called "Easter Monday".

The week beginning with Easter Sunday is called *Easter Week* or the *Octave of Easter*, and each day is prefaced with "Easter", e.g. Easter Monday, Easter Tuesday, etc. *Easter Saturday* is therefore the Saturday *after* Easter Sunday. The day before Easter is properly called Holy Saturday. *Easter tide*, or *Paschaltide*, the season of Easter, begins on Easter Sunday and lasts until the day of Pentecost, seven weeks later.

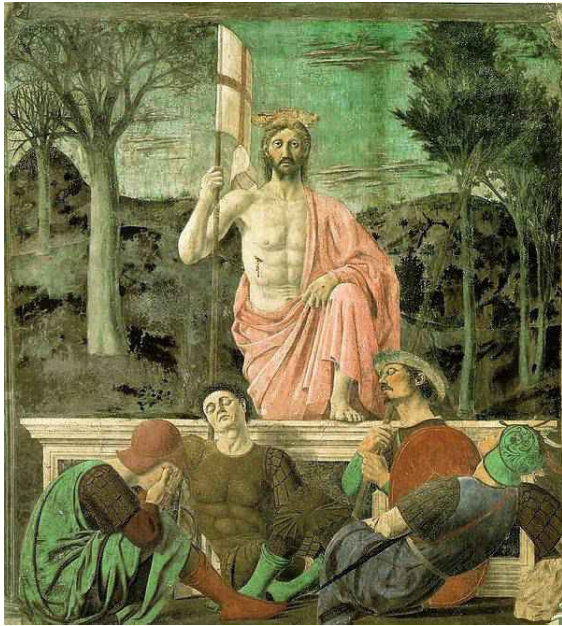
## 5.2 Eastern Christianity

In Eastern Christianity, the spiritual preparation for Easter begins with *Great Lent*, which starts on *Clean Monday* and lasts for 40 continuous days (including Sundays). The last week of Great Lent (following the fifth Sunday of Great Lent) is called *Palm Week*, and ends with *Lazarus Saturday*. The *Vespers* which begins *Lazarus Saturday* officially brings Great Lent to a close, although the fast continues through the following week. After *Lazarus Saturday* comes *Palm Sunday*, *Holy Week*, and finally Easter itself, and the fast is broken immediately after the *Paschal Divine Liturgy*.

The *Paschal Vigil* begins with the *Midnight Office*, which is the last service of the *Lenten Triodion* and is timed so that it ends a little before midnight on *Holy Saturday* night. At the stroke of midnight the *Paschal* celebration itself begins, consisting of *Paschal Matins*, *Paschal Hours*, and *Paschal Divine Liturgy*.<sup>[82]</sup> Placing the *Paschal Divine Liturgy* at midnight guarantees that no *Divine Liturgy* will come earlier in the morning, ensuring its place as the pre-eminent "Feast of Feasts" in the liturgical year.

The liturgical season from Easter to the Sunday of All Saints (the Sunday after Pentecost) is known as the *Pentecostarion* (the "fifty days"). The week which begins on Easter Sunday is called *Bright Week*, during which there is no fasting, even on Wednesday and Friday. The *Afterfeast* of Easter lasts 39 days, with its *Apodosis* (leave-taking) on the day before *Ascension*. *Pentecost Sunday* is the fiftieth day from Easter (counted inclusively).<sup>[83]</sup>

## 6 Religious observance



*Depiction of The Resurrection of Jesus Christ, by Piero della Francesca.*

### 6.1 Western Christianity

The Easter festival is kept in many different ways among Western Christians. The traditional, liturgical observance of Easter, as practised among Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and some Anglicans begins on the night of Holy Saturday with the Easter Vigil. This, the most important liturgy of the year, begins in total darkness with the blessing of the Easter fire, the lighting of the large Paschal candle (symbolic of the Risen Christ) and the chanting of the Exultet or Easter Proclamation attributed to Saint Ambrose of Milan.

After this service of light, a number of readings from the Old Testament are read. These tell the stories of creation, the sacrifice of Isaac, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the foretold coming of the Messiah. This part of the service climaxes with the singing of the Gloria and the Alleluia and the proclamation of the Gospel of the resurrection. At this time, the lights are brought up and the church bells are rung, according to local custom. A sermon may be preached after the gospel.

The focus then moves from the lectern to the font. Anciently, Easter was considered the ideal time for converts to receive baptism, and this practice continues within Roman Catholicism and the Anglican Communion. Whether there are baptisms at this point or not, it is traditional for the congregation to renew the vows of their baptismal faith. This act is often sealed by the sprinkling of the congregation with holy water from the font. The Catholic sacrament of Confirmation is also celebrated at

the Vigil.



*Holy Week procession in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.*

The Easter Vigil concludes with the celebration of the Eucharist (known in some traditions as Holy Communion). Certain variations in the Easter Vigil exist: Some churches read the Old Testament lessons before the procession of the Paschal candle, and then read the gospel immediately after the Exsultet.



*Sunrise service in Rockland, Maine, United States.*

Some churches prefer to keep this vigil very early on the Sunday morning instead of the Saturday night to reflect the gospel account of the women coming to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week. These services are known as the Sunrise service and often occur in outdoor setting such as the church cemetery, yard, or a nearby park.

The first recorded “Sunrise Service” took place in 1732 among the Single Brethren in the Moravian congregation at Herrnhut, Saxony, in what is now Germany. Following an all-night vigil they went before dawn to the town graveyard, God’s Acre, on the hill above the town, to celebrate the Resurrection among the graves of the departed. This service was repeated the following year by the whole congregation and subsequently spread with the Moravian Missionaries around the world, including Old Salem in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Additional celebrations are usually offered on Easter Sunday itself. Typically these services follow the usual order of Sunday services in a congregation, but also typically

incorporate more highly festive elements. The music of the service, in particular, often displays a highly festive tone; the incorporation of brass instruments (trumpets, etc.) to supplement a congregation's usual instrumentation is common. Often a congregation's worship space is decorated with special banners and flowers (such as Easter lilies).

In predominantly Roman Catholic Philippines, the morning of Easter (known in the national language as "Pasko ng Muling Pagkabuhay" or the Pasch of the Resurrection) is marked with joyous celebration, the first being the dawn "Salubong", wherein large statues of Jesus and Mary are brought together to meet, imagining the first reunion of Jesus and his mother Mary after Jesus' Resurrection. This is followed by the joyous Easter Mass.

In Polish culture, the *Rezurekcja* (Resurrection Procession) is the joyous Easter morning Mass at daybreak when church bells ring out and explosions resound to commemorate Christ rising from the dead. Before the Mass begins at dawn, a festive procession with the Blessed Sacrament carried beneath a canopy encircles the church. As church bells ring out, handbells are vigorously shaken by altar boys, the air is filled with incense and the faithful raise their voices heavenward in a triumphant rendering of age-old Easter hymns. After the Blessed Sacrament is carried around the church and Adoration is complete, the Easter Mass begins. Another Polish Easter tradition is *Święconka*, the blessing of Easter baskets by the parish priest on Holy Saturday. This custom is celebrated not only in Poland, but also in the United States by Polish-Americans.

## 6.2 Eastern Christianity

Easter is the fundamental and most important festival of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches:

This is the Expected and Holy Day,  
the One among the Sabbaths,  
the Sovereign and Lady of days,  
Feast of feasts, Celebration of celebrations,  
on which we praise Christ for all eternity!

Every other religious festival in their calendar, including Christmas, is secondary in importance to the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is reflected in rich Paschal customs in the cultures of countries that have traditionally had an Orthodox Christian majority. Eastern Catholics have similar emphasis in their calendars, and many of their liturgical customs are very similar.

This is not to say that Christmas and other elements of the Christian liturgical calendar are ignored. Instead, these



*17th century Russian icon of the Resurrection*



*Boris Kustodiev's Pascha Greetings (1912) shows traditional Russian khristosovanie (exchanging a triple kiss), with such foods as red eggs, kulich and paskha in the background.*

events are all seen as necessary but *preliminary* to, and illuminated by, the full climax of the Resurrection, in which all that has come before reaches fulfillment and fruition. They shine only in the light of the Resurrection. Easter is the primary act that fulfills the purpose of



Christ's ministry on earth—to defeat death by dying and to purify and exalt humanity by voluntarily assuming and overcoming human frailty. This is succinctly summarized by the *Paschal troparion*, sung repeatedly for forty days, through the *Apodosis* of Easter, which is the day before Ascension:

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν,  
θανάτῳ θάνατον πατήσας,  
καὶ τοῖς ἐν τοῖς μνήμασι  
ζωὴν χαρισάμενος.

Christ is risen from the dead,  
Trampling down death by death,  
And upon those in the tombs  
Bestowing life!

Preparation for Easter begins with the season of *Great Lent*. In addition to fasting, almsgiving, and prayer, Orthodox Christians cut down on all entertainment and non-essential worldly activities, gradually eliminating them until *Great and Holy Friday*, the most austere day of the year. On the evening of *Great and Holy Saturday*, the *Midnight Office* commences an hour or two before midnight (see *paschal vigil*).



Religious Procession in Kursk Province, a controversial painting by Ilya Repin (1880–83), cynically depicting a *Bright Week* outdoor procession.

At its completion all light in the church building is extinguished, and all wait in darkness and silence for the stroke of midnight. Then, a new flame is struck in the altar, or the priest lights his candle from the *perpetual lamp* kept burning there, and he then lights candles held by deacons or other assistants, who then go to light candles held by the congregation (this practice has its origin in the reception of the *Holy Fire* at the *Church of the Holy Sepulchre* in Jerusalem). Then the priest and congregation go in a procession around the temple, holding lit candles, chanting:

By Thy Resurrection O Christ our savior,  
the angels in Heaven sing, enable us who are  
on Earth, to glorify thee in purity of heart.

This procession reenacts the journey of the *Myrrhbearers* to the Tomb of Jesus “very early in the morning”.<sup>[84]</sup> After circling around the temple once or three times, the procession halts in front of the closed doors. In the Greek practice the priest reads a selection from the *Gospel Book*.<sup>[85]</sup> Then, in all traditions, the priest makes the sign of the cross with the censer in front of the closed doors (which represent the sealed tomb).



Traditional Paschal Outdoor Procession during Bright Week by Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church.

He and the people chant the *Paschal Troparion*, and all of the bells and semantra are sounded. Then all re-enter the temple and *paschal matins* begins immediately, followed by the *paschal hours* and then the *paschal divine liturgy*. The *Paschal Homily* of St. John Chrysostom is read at matins.

After the dismissal of the liturgy, the priest may bless *paschal eggs* and baskets brought by the faithful containing those foods which have been forbidden during the *Great Fast*. Immediately after the Liturgy it is customary for the congregation to share a meal, essentially an *agápē* dinner (albeit at 2:00 am or later).

In Greece the traditional meal is *mageiritsa*, a hearty stew of chopped lamb liver and wild greens seasoned with egg-and-lemon sauce. Traditionally, *easter eggs*, hard-boiled eggs dyed bright red to symbolize the spilt *Blood of Christ* and the promise of eternal life, are cracked together to celebrate the opening of the *Tomb of Christ*.

The next morning, *Easter Sunday proper*, there is no *Divine Liturgy*, since the liturgy for that day has already been celebrated. Instead, in the afternoon "*Agápē Vespers*" is sung. In this service, it has become customary during the last few centuries for the priest and members of the congregation to read a portion of the *Gospel of John* in as many languages as they can manage, to show the universality of the Resurrection.

For the remainder of the week, known as "*Bright Week*", fasting (other than before holy communion is suppressed, and the customary *Paschal greeting* is: “Christ is risen!”,

to which the response is: "Truly he is risen!" This may also be done in many different languages. The services during Bright Week are nearly identical to those on Easter itself, except that they do not take place at midnight, but at their normal times during the day. The outdoor procession during Bright Week takes place either after paschal matins or the paschal divine liturgy.

## 7 Non-observing Christian groups



*Nonconformist Protestant Christians prefer to use a simple Christian cross, rather than a crucifix, to emphasize the Resurrection.*

Along with the celebration of Christmas and Advent, many Lenten and Easter traditions were altered or even abandoned altogether by various offshoots of the Protestant Reformation, as they were deemed "pagan" or "Popish" (and therefore tainted) by many of the Reformation's Puritan movements.<sup>[86]</sup> However, some of the major Reformation Churches and movements (Lutheran, Methodist and Anglican for example), chose to retain a large proportion of the observances of the established Church Year along with many of its associated traditions. In Lutheran Churches, for example, not only were the days of Holy Week observed, but also Christmas, Easter and Pentecost were observed with three-day festivals (the day itself and the two following).

Other Protestant groups took a different attitude, with most Anabaptists, Quakers, Congregationalists and Presbyterian Puritans regarding such festivals as an abomination.<sup>[87]</sup> The Puritan rejection of Easter traditions was (and is) based partly upon their interpretation of 2 Corinthians 6:14–16 and partly upon a more general belief that, if a religious practice or celebration is

not actually written in the Christian Bible, then that practice/celebration must be a later development and cannot be considered an authentic part of Christian practice or belief—so at best simply unnecessary, at worst actually sinful.

Groups such as the Restored Church of God reject the celebration of Easter, seeing it as originating in a pagan spring festival taken over by the "Roman" Catholic Church.<sup>[88]</sup>

Jehovah's Witnesses maintain a similar view, observing a yearly commemorative service of the Last Supper and the subsequent execution of Christ on the evening of Nisan 14 (as they calculate the dates derived from the lunar Hebrew Calendar). It is commonly referred to by many Witnesses as simply "The Memorial".<sup>[89]</sup> Jehovah's Witnesses believe that such verses as Luke 22:19–20 and Cor 11:26 constitute a commandment to remember the death of Christ though not the resurrection,<sup>[89]</sup> and they do so on a yearly basis just as Passover is celebrated annually by the Jews.

Members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), as part of their historic *testimony against times and seasons*, do not celebrate or observe Easter or any other Christian holidays, believing instead that "every day is the Lord's day",<sup>[90]</sup> and that elevation of one day above others suggests that it is acceptable to do un-Christian acts on other days.<sup>[91]</sup> During the 17th and 18th centuries, Quakers were persecuted for this non-observance of Holy Days.<sup>[92]</sup>

Some Christian groups feel that Easter is something to be regarded with great joy: not marking the day itself, but remembering and rejoicing in the event it commemorates—the miracle of Christ's resurrection. In this spirit, these Christians teach that each day and all Sabbaths should be kept holy, in Christ's teachings. Hebrew-Christian, Sacred Name, and Armstrong movement churches (such as the Living Church of God) usually reject Easter in favor of Nisan 14 observance and celebration of the Christian Passover. This is especially true of Christian groups that celebrate the New Moons or annual High Sabbaths in addition to seventh-day Sabbath. They support this textually with reference to the letter to the Colossians: "Let no one ... pass judgment on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to a festival or new moon or sabbath. These are shadows of things to come; the reality belongs to Christ." (Col. 2:16–17, NAB)

## 8 Easter celebrations around the world

Main article: Easter customs

In countries where Christianity is a state religion, or where the country has large Christian population, Easter is often a public holiday. As Easter is always a Sunday,



An Easter postcard depicting the Easter Bunny.

many countries in the world also have Easter Monday as a public holiday. Some retail stores, shopping malls, and restaurants are closed on Easter Sunday. Good Friday, which occurs two days before Easter Sunday, is also a public holiday in many countries, as well as in 12 U.S. states. Even in states where Good Friday is not a holiday, many financial institutions, stock markets, and public schools are closed. Few banks that are normally open on regular Sundays are closed on Easter.

In the **Nordic countries** Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday are public holidays,<sup>[93]</sup> and Good Friday and Easter Monday are bank holidays.<sup>[94]</sup> In Denmark, Iceland and Norway also Maundy Thursday is a public holiday. It is a holiday for most workers except some shopping malls which keep open for a half-day. Many businesses give their employees almost a week off, called Easter break.<sup>[95]</sup> Schools are closed between Easter Sunday and Easter Monday. According to a 2014 poll, 6 of 10 Norwegians make a travel during Easter, often to a cottage; 3 of 10 said their typical Easter included skiing.<sup>[96]</sup>

In the **Netherlands** both Easter Sunday and Easter Monday are national holidays. Like first and second Christmas Day, they are *both* considered Sundays, which results in a first and a second Easter Sunday, after which the week continues to a Tuesday.<sup>[97]</sup> Even though Good Friday is an official national holiday, it is not a mandatory day off for commercial companies.

In **Commonwealth nations** Easter Day is rarely a public holiday, as is the case for celebrations which fall on a Sunday. In the **United Kingdom** both Good Friday and Easter Monday are bank holidays.<sup>[98]</sup> However, in Canada Easter Sunday is a public holiday, along with Easter Monday. In the Canadian province of Quebec, either Good Friday or Easter Monday are statutory holidays (although most companies give both). In some countries Good Friday is a public holiday as well.

In **Australia**, because of its location in the southern hemisphere, Easter takes place in autumn. Hence, Australian Easter is associated with harvest time, rather than with the coming of spring as in the northern hemisphere. The religious aspect of Easter remains the same.<sup>[99]</sup> Good Friday

and Easter Monday are public holidays across all states and territories. “Easter Saturday” (the Saturday before Easter Sunday) is a public holiday in every state except Tasmania and Western Australia, while Easter Sunday itself is a public holiday only in New South Wales. Easter Tuesday is additionally a conditional public holiday in Tasmania, varying between award, and was also a public holiday in Victoria until 1994.<sup>[100]</sup>



Easter eggs are a popular cultural symbol of Easter.

In the United States, because Easter falls on a Sunday, which is already a non-working day for federal and state employees, it has not been designated as a federal or state holiday. Easter parades are held in many American cities, involving festive strolling processions,<sup>[101]</sup> with the New York City parade being the best known.

## 8.1 Easter eggs

Main article: [Easter eggs](#)

Easter eggs are specially decorated eggs given out to celebrate the Easter festival. The custom of the Easter egg originated in the early Christian community of Mesopotamia, who stained eggs red in memory of the blood of Christ, shed at his crucifixion.<sup>[102][103]</sup> As such, for Christians, the Easter egg is a symbol of the empty tomb.<sup>[17][18]</sup> The oldest tradition is to use dyed chicken eggs, but a modern custom is to substitute eggs made from chocolate, or plastic eggs filled with candy such as jelly-beans.

The **Easter Bunny** is a popular legendary anthropomorphic Easter gift-giving character analogous to Santa Claus in American culture. Many Americans follow the tradition of coloring hard-boiled eggs and giving baskets of candy. On Easter Monday, the President of the United States holds an annual Easter egg roll on the White House lawn for young children.<sup>[104]</sup> Since the rabbit is a pest in Australia, the Easter Bilby is available as an alternative. Easter eggs are a widely popular symbol of new life in Poland and other Slavic countries' folk traditions. A batik-like decorating process

known as pisanka produces intricate, brilliantly-colored eggs.

The celebrated House of Fabergé workshops created exquisite jewelled eggs for the Russian Imperial Court.

## 9 See also

- Divine Mercy Sunday
- Good Friday
- Easter customs
- Ęostre
- Life of Jesus in the New Testament
- Movable Eastern Christian Observances
- Resurrection of Jesus
- Greek words (wiktionary): Πάσχα (Easter) vs πάσχα (Passover) vs πάσχω (to suffer).

## 10 Footnotes

- [1] Traditional names for the feast in English are “Easter Day”, as in the *Book of Common Prayer*, “Easter Sunday”, used by James Ussher (*The Whole Works of the Most Rev. James Ussher, Volume 4*) and Samuel Pepys (*The Diary of Samuel Pepys, Volume 2*) and plain “Easter”, as in books printed in 1575, 1584, 1586
- [2] In the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Greek word *Pascha* is used for the celebration; in English, the analogous word is Pasch.
- [3] Old English pronunciation: [ˈæːastre, ˈeːostre]
- [4] Acts 2:1; 12:3; 20:6; 27:9, 1 Cor 16:8
- [5] Eusebius reports that Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, proposed an 8-year Easter cycle, and quotes a letter from Anatolius, Bishop of Laodicea, that refers to a 19-year cycle.<sup>[65]</sup> An 8-year cycle has been found inscribed on a statue unearthed in Rome in the 17th century, and since dated to the 3rd century.<sup>[66]</sup>

## 11 References

- [1] K. Brunner, *Altenglische Grammatik*, 3. Aufl., § 278. Anm. 3, cited in *Die Sprache*, vol. 30 (Vienna, 1984), p. 61
- [2] Ferguson, Everett (2009). *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing. p. 351. ISBN 9780802827487. Retrieved 23 April 2014. The practices are usually interpreted in terms of baptism at the pasch (Easter), for which compare Tertullian, but the text does

not specify this season, only that it was done on Sunday, and the instructions may apply to whenever the baptism was to be performed.

- [3] Norman Davies (20 January 1998). *Europe: A History*. HarperCollins. In most European languages Easter is called by some variant of the late Latin word *Pascha*, which in turn derives from the Hebrew *pesach*, *passover*'.
- [4] Lauren Pristas, *Collects of the Roman Missals* (A&C Black 2013 ISBN 978-0-56703384-0), p. 202
- [5] Greenacre, Roger; Haselock, Jeremy (1995). *The Sacrament of Easter*. Gracewing Publishing. p. 16. ISBN 9780802840998. Retrieved 23 April 2014. The Pasch is not a mere commemoration: it is the cross and the empty tomb rendered actual.
- [6] Gamman, Andrew; Bindon, Caroline (2014-02-11). *Stations for Lent and Easter*. Kereru Publishing Limited. p. 7. ISBN 9780473276812. Easter Day, also known as Resurrection Sunday, marks the high point of the Christian year. It is the day that we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
- [7] Boda, Mark J.; Smith, Gordon T. (2006). *Repentance in Christian Theology*. Liturgical Press. p. 316. ISBN 9780814651759. Retrieved 19 April 2014. It should be noted that Orthodox, Catholic, and all Reformed churches in the Middle East celebrate Easter according to the Eastern calendar, calling this holy day “Resurrection Sunday,” not Easter.
- [8] Bernard Trawicky, Ruth Wilhelme Gregory (2000). *Anniversaries and Holidays*. American Library Association. ISBN 9780838906958. Easter is the central celebration of the Christian liturgical year. It is the oldest and most important Christian feast, celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The date of Easter determines the dates of all movable feasts except those of Advent.
- [9] Aveni, Anthony (2004). *The Easter/Passover Season: Connecting Time's Broken Circle*, The Book of the Year: A Brief History of Our Seasonal Holidays. Oxford University Press. pp. 64–78. ISBN 0-19-517154-3.
- [10] Peter C. Bower (2003-01-01). *The Companion to the Book of Common Worship*. Geneva Press. ISBN 9780664502324. Retrieved 11 April 2009. Maundy Thursday (or *le mandé*; Thursday of the *Mandatum*, Latin, commandment). The name is taken from the first few words sung at the ceremony of the washing of the feet, “I give you a new commandment” (John 13:34); also from the commandment of Christ that we should imitate His loving humility in the washing of the feet (John 13:14–17). The term *mandatum* (maundy), therefore, was applied to the rite of foot-washing on this day.
- [11] Gail Ramshaw (2004). *Three Day Feast: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter*. Augsburg Books. ISBN 9781451408164. Retrieved 11 April 2009. In the liturgies of the Three Days, the service for Maundy Thursday includes both, telling the story of Jesus' last supper and enacting the footwashing.

- [12] Leonard Stuart (1909). *New century reference library of the world's most important knowledge: complete, thorough, practical, Volume 3*. Syndicate Pub. Co. Retrieved 11 April 2009. Holy Week, or Passion Week, the week which immediately precedes Easter, and is devoted especially to commemorating the passion of our Lord. The Days more especially solemnized during it are Holy Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday.
- [13] Frequently asked questions about the date of Easter
- [14] Weiser, Francis X. (1958). *Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company. p. 214. ISBN 0-15-138435-5.
- [15] "clipping the church". *Oxford Reference*. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acref/9780198607663.001.0001. Retrieved 30 March 2013.
- [16] Anne Jordan (5 April 2000). *Christianity*. Nelson Thornes. ISBN 9780748753208. Retrieved 7 April 2012. Easter eggs are used as a Christian symbol to represent the empty tomb. The outside of the egg looks dead but inside there is new life, which is going to break out. The Easter egg is a reminder that Jesus will rise from His tomb and bring new life. Orthodox Christians dye boiled eggs red to represent the blood of Christ shed for the sins of the world.
- [17] *The Guardian, Volume 29*. H. Harbaugh. 1878. Retrieved 7 April 2012. Just so, on that first Easter morning, Jesus came to life and walked out of the tomb, and left it, as it were, an empty shell. Just so, too, when the Christian dies, the body is left in the grave, an empty shell, but the soul takes wings and flies away to be with God. Thus you see that though an egg seems to be as dead as a sone, yet it really has life in it; and also it is like Christ's dead body, which was raised to life again. This is the reason we use eggs on Easter. (In olden times they used to color the eggs red, so as to show the kind of death by which Christ died,- a bloody death.)
- [18] Gordon Geddes, Jane Griffiths (22 January 2002). *Christian belief and practice*. Heinemann. ISBN 9780435306915. Retrieved 7 April 2012. Red eggs are given to Orthodox Christians after the Easter Liturgy. They crack their eggs against each other's. The cracking of the eggs symbolizes a wish to break away from the bonds of sin and misery and enter the new life issuing from Christ's resurrection.
- [19] Collins, Cynthia (19 April 2014). "Easter Lily Tradition and History". *The Guardian*. Retrieved 20 April 2014. The Easter Lily is symbolic of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Churches of all denominations, large and small, are filled with floral arrangements of these white flowers with their trumpet-like shape on Easter morning.
- [20] Schell, Stanley (1916). *Easter Celebrations*. Werner & Company. p. 84. We associate the lily with Easter, as pre-eminently the symbol of the Resurrection.
- [21] *Luther League Review: 1936-1937*. Luther League of America. 1936.
- [22] Vicki K. Black (1 July 2004). *The Church Standard, Volume 74*. Church Publishing, Inc. ISBN 9780819225757. Retrieved 7 April 2012. In parts of Europe, the eggs were dyed red and were then cracked together when people exchanged Easter greetings. Many congregations today continue to have Easter egg hunts for the children after the services on Easter Day.
- [23] *The Church Standard, Volume 74*. Walter N. Hering. 1897. Retrieved 7 April 2012. When the custom was carried over into Christian practice the Easter eggs were usually sent to the priests to be blessed and sprinkled with holy water. In later times the coloring and decorating of eggs was introduced, and in a royal roll of the time of Edward I., which is preserved in the Tower of London, there is an entry of 18d. for 400 eggs, to be used for Easter gifts.
- [24] *From Preparation to Passion*. 2010. Retrieved 7 April 2012. So what preparations do most Christians and non-Christians make? Shopping for new clothing often signifies the belief that Spring has arrived, and it is a time of renewal. Preparations for the Easter Egg Hunts and the Easter Ham for the Sunday dinner are high on the list too.
- [25] Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, translated by Faith Wallis (Liverpool University Press 1999 ISBN 978-0-85323693-1), p. 54
- [26] "History of Easter". *The History Channel website*. A&E Television Networks. Retrieved 9 March 2013.
- [27] Karl Gerlach (1998). *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History*. Peeters Publishers. p. XVIII. The second century equivalent of easter and the paschal Triduum was called by both Greek and Latin writers "Pascha (πάσχα)", a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic form of the Hebrew פסחָ; the Passover feast of Ex. 12.
- [28] 1 Corinthians 5:7
- [29] Karl Gerlach (1998). *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History*. Peters Publishers. p. 21. For while it is from Ephesus that Paul writes, "Christ our Pascha has been sacrificed for us," Ephesian Christians were not likely the first to hear that Ex 12 did not speak about the rituals of Pesach, but the death of Jesus of Nazareth.
- [30] Vicki K. Black (1 July 2004). *Welcome to the Church Year: An Introduction to the Seasons of the Episcopal Church*. Church Publishing, Inc. ISBN 9780819219664. Easter is still called by its older Greek name, *Pascha*, which means "Passover", and it is this meaning as the Christian Passover-the celebration of Jesus' triumph over death and entrance into resurrected life-that is the heart of Easter in the church. For the early church, Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the Jewish Passover feast: through Jesus, we have been freed from slavery of sin and granted to the Promised Land of everlasting life.
- [31] Orthros of Holy Pascha, Stichera: "Today the sacred Pascha is revealed to us. The new and holy Pascha, the mystical Pascha. The all-venerable Pascha. The Pascha which is Christ the Redeemer. The spotless Pascha. The great Pascha. The Pascha of the faithful. The Pascha which has opened unto us the gates of Paradise. The Pascha which sanctifies all faithful."

- [32] 1 Corinthians 15:12–20  
Torrey, Reuben Archer (1897). “The Resurrection of Christ”. *Torrey’s New Topical Textbook*. Retrieved 2013-03-31. (interprets primary source references in this section as applying to the Resurrection)  
“The Letter of Paul to the Corinthians”. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved 10 March 2013.
- [33] Romans 1:4
- [34] Acts 17:31
- [35] “Jesus Christ”. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved 11 March 2013.
- [36] Corinthians&verse=15:20-26, 54-57&src=ESV 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 54-57
- [37] 1 Peter 1:3
- [38] Romans 6:1-9
- [39] Peter&verse=1:3-4&src=HCSB 1 Peter 1:3-4
- [40] 1 Corinthians 5:7
- [41] John 1:29, Revelation 5:6, 1 Peter 1:19, 1 Peter 1:2, and the associated notes and Passion Week table in Barker, Kenneth, ed. (2002). *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. p. 1520. ISBN 0-310-92955-5.  
Karl Gerlach (1998). *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History*. Peeters Publishers. pp. 32, 56.
- [42] Exodus 12:6
- [43] Exodus 12:18, John 13:2, John 18:28, John 19:14.  
Barker, Kenneth, ed. (2002). *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. ISBN 0-310-92955-5.
- [44] John 18:28
- [45] Leviticus 23:8
- [46] Melito of Sardis. “Homily on the Pascha”. *Kerux* (Northwest Theological Seminary). Retrieved 28 March 2007.
- [47] Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, and Paul Bradshaw, Eds., *The Study of Liturgy, Revised Edition*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, p. 474.
- [48] Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, and Paul Bradshaw, Eds., *The Study of Liturgy, Revised Edition*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, p. 459: “[Easter] is the only feast of the Christian Year that can plausibly claim to go back to apostolic times ... [It] must derive from a time when Jewish influence was effective ... because it depends on the lunar calendar (every other feast depends on the solar calendar).”
- [49] Socrates, *Church History*, 5.22, in Schaff, Philip (13 July 2005). “The Author’s Views respecting the Celebration of Easter, Baptism, Fasting, Marriage, the Eucharist, and Other Ecclesiastical Rites.”. *Socrates and Sozomenus Ecclesiastical Histories*. Calvin College Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Retrieved 28 March 2007.
- [50] Karl Gerlach (1998). *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History*. Peeters Publishers. p. 21. Long before this controversy, Ex 12 as a story of origins and its ritual expression had been firmly fixed in the Christian imagination. Though before the final decades of the 2nd century only accessible as an exegetical tradition, already in the Pauline letters the Exodus saga is deeply involved with the celebration of bath and meal. Even here, this relationship does not suddenly appear, but represents developments in ritual narrative that must have begun at the very inception of the Christian message. Jesus of Nazareth was crucified during Pesach-Mazzot, an event that a new covenant people of Jews and Gentiles both saw as definitive and defining. Ex 12 is thus one of the few reliable guides for tracing the synergism among ritual, text, and kerygma before the Council of Nicaea.
- [51] Sozomen, Book 7, Chapter 18
- [52] The Date of Easter. Article from United States Naval Observatory (27 March 2007).
- [53] “The Church in Malankara switched entirely to the Gregorian calendar in 1953, following Encyclical No. 620 from Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem I, dt. December 1952.” *Calendars of the Syriac Orthodox Church*. Retrieved 22 April 2009
- [54] *Bede: The reckoning of time*, translated by Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999) chapter 62, p. 148.
- [55] Paragraph 7 of Inter gravissimas ISO.org to “the vernal equinox, which was fixed by the fathers of the [first] Nicene Council at XII calends April [21 March]”. This definition can be traced at least back to chapters 6 & 59 of Bede’s *De temporum ratione* (725).
- [56] Montes, Marcos J. “Calculation of the Ecclesiastical Calendar”. Retrieved 12 January 2008.
- [57] G Moyer (1983), “Aloisius Lilius and the ‘Compendium novae rationis restituendi kalendarium’”, pages 171–188 in G.V. Coyne (ed.).
- [58] Eusebius, *Church History* 5.23.
- [59] Socrates, *Church History*, 6.11, at Schaff, Philip (13 July 2005). “Of Severian and Antiochus: their Disagreement from John.”. *Socrates and Sozomenus Ecclesiastical Histories*. Calvin College Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Retrieved 28 March 2009.
- [60] Socrates, *Church History* 7.29, at Schaff, Philip (13 July 2005). “Nestorius of Antioch promoted to the See of Constantinople. His Persecution of the Heretics.”. *Socrates and Sozomenus Ecclesiastical Histories*. Calvin College Christian Classics Ethereal Librar. Retrieved 28 March 2009.
- [61] Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.32.
- [62] Peter of Alexandria, quoted in the *Chronicon Paschale*. In Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Antenicene Christian Library, Volume 14: The Writings of Methodius, Alexander of Lycopolis, Peter of Alexandria,*

- And Several Fragments*, Edinburgh, 1869, p. 326, at Donaldson, Alexander (1 June 2005). "That Up to the Time of the Destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews Rightly Appointed the Fourteenth Day of the First Lunar Month.". *Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius the Great, Julius Africanus, Anatolius and Minor Writers, Methodius, Arnobius*. Calvin College Christian Classics Ethereal Library. Retrieved 28 March 2009.
- [63] MS Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare LX(58) folios 79v–80v.
- [64] Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar Second Century BCE – Tenth Century CE*, Oxford, 2001, pp. 124–132.
- [65] Eusebius, *Church History*, 7.20, 7.31.
- [66] Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1995.
- [67] Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses*, Heresy 69, 11,1, in Willams, F. (1994). *The Panarion of Epiphianus of Salamis Books II and III*. Leiden: E.J. Brill. p. 331.
- [68] Apostolic Canon 7: "If any bishop, presbyter, or deacon shall celebrate the holy day of Easter before the vernal equinox with the Jews, let him be deposed." *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, Volume 14: The Seven Ecumenical Councils, *Eerdmans, 1956, p. 594*.
- [69] St. John Chrysostom, "Against those who keep the first Passover", in *Saint John Chrysostom: Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, translated by Paul W. Harkins, Washington, D.C., 1979, p. 47ff.
- [70] Mosshammer, Alden A. (2008). *The Easter Computus and the Origins of the Christian Era*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 50–52, 62–65. ISBN 978-0-19-954312-0.
- [71] Mosshammer, Alden A. (2008). *The Easter Computus and the Origins of the Christian Era*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 239–244. ISBN 978-0-19-954312-0.
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  - Roman Catholic View of Easter (from the Catholic Encyclopedia)
  - Easter in Belarus: In Pictures on the official website of the Republic of Belarus
  - Polish Easter Traditions

### Calculating

- A Perpetual Easter and Passover Calculator Julian and Gregorian Easter for any year plus other info
- Almanac—The Christian Year Julian or Gregorian Easter and associated festivals for any year
- Easter Dating Method for calculator
- Dates for Easter 1583–9999
- Orthodox Paschal Calculator Julian Easter and associated festivals in Gregorian calendar 1583–4099
- About the Greek Easter and Greek Easter Calculator Orthodox Paschal calculator with technical discussion and full source code in javascript

## 12 External links

### Liturgical

- 50 Catholic Prayers for Easter
- Liturgical Resources for Easter
- Holy Pascha: The Resurrection of Our Lord (Orthodox icon and synaxarion)

### Traditions



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### 13.1 Text

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