

Worship on the Web



CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS

Season of Easter

Easter is the season in which Christians remember the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is the most important festival in the Christian year

The meaning of Easter

On Good Friday, Christians remember the day Jesus was arrested, put on trial and executed by crucifixion. (John 18:1 to 19:42).

The New Testament gospel accounts of what happened next vary slightly but all conclude that Jesus was no longer in the tomb on the following Sunday, and had risen from the dead.

Mark and Luke say Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James went to the grave with some women in order to embalm his body and found that the stone had been moved, and angel(s) standing nearby saying that his body was no longer in the grave and that he had been raised from the dead (Luke 24:1 to 24:12; Mark 16:1 to 16:8). John adds that Simon Peter on hearing the women's report ran to the tomb to see for himself (John 20:1 to 20:10).

Matthew and John both say that Jesus himself was first seen that day by Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:1 to 28:10; John 20:11 to 20:18), and for days afterwards by his disciples and many other people (Luke 24:13 to 24:53; John 20:19 to 21:14).



Origins of Easter

Easter has its origins in the Jewish festival of Passover or Pasch. The gospel accounts of the last days of Jesus took place during this important Jewish festival and his last meal with the disciples was a Passover meal (Matthew 26:26 to 26:29). The Passover celebrates the ancient Israelites' escape, or exodus, from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:1 to 12:39), an event central to the Jewish faith and belief that they are the chosen people of God.

Jesus used the symbolism of Passover to speak of a new exodus, one in which he himself plays the central role. Once and for all time taking the place of the passover lamb, by sacrificing himself on the cross, making the way open for all to receive forgiveness from God and freedom from the slavery of sin.

Rooted in ancient tradition, Easter is primarily a Christian festival. However, customs such as painting eggs in bright colours, and gifts of chocolate eggs have long since lost any religious significance.

The eggs were traditionally rolled down a grassy slope to symbolise the rolling away of the stone from the entrance to Jesus' tomb on Easter Sunday and this is still practised in some churches.