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# Easter — The Most Important Christian Festival

A Christian festival lesson

## About this lesson

Easter is the most important festival in Christianity — even more important than Christmas, though Christmas may seem bigger because of the cultural celebrations around it. Easter celebrates Jesus's death and resurrection. This lesson tells the story and describes how Christians around the world mark the festival.

## The Easter story

About 2,000 years ago, Jesus had become a famous teacher in the land we now call Israel. Some people loved him; others, especially religious leaders and the Roman authorities, saw him as a threat. The week before Easter (called Holy Week) tells the story. On Palm Sunday, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and crowds welcomed him with palm branches. On Maundy Thursday, Jesus shared his Last Supper with his twelve disciples — bread and wine that became Communion. That night, one of his disciples (Judas) betrayed him. Jesus was arrested, tried, and condemned to death. On Good Friday, Jesus was crucified — nailed to a wooden cross — and died. His body was placed in a tomb sealed with a great stone. On Easter Sunday morning, three women went to the tomb to anoint Jesus's body. They found the stone rolled away — the tomb was empty. An angel told them Jesus had risen from the dead. Christians believe Jesus appeared to his disciples over the next forty days before returning to heaven. The resurrection is the central belief of Christianity — that Jesus defeated death and offers eternal life to those who believe.

## Christians celebrate Easter

Holy Week and Easter Sunday

- Lent — 40 days before Easter, often a time of giving things up or doing extra good deeds



- Palm Sunday — special services, sometimes carrying palm leaves
- Maundy Thursday — remembering Jesus's last supper, sometimes with feet-washing ceremonies
- Good Friday — solemn services, hot cross buns, no work in some traditions
- Holy Saturday — quiet day of waiting
- Easter Sunday — the most joyful day. Special services, songs of celebration.
- Sunrise services at dawn — celebrating the discovery of the empty tomb
- Easter eggs — symbol of new life from the closed tomb that was opened
- Easter lilies and other spring flowers in churches — symbols of resurrection
- Family meals together, often roast lamb
- Saying 'Christ is risen!' / 'He is risen indeed!' as a traditional greeting

## Why Easter matters

Easter sits at the heart of Christianity. Without the resurrection, Christianity would be the story of a wise teacher who was killed — sad but not transformative. With it, Christianity teaches that death is not the end, that suffering can be redeemed, that hope wins. For Christians, Easter is about thanking God for Jesus's sacrifice and rejoicing in the promise of eternal life. The festival also picks up older spring imagery — eggs, new life, light overcoming the dark winter — which is why many Easter traditions feel about renewal and beginnings. Easter falls on a different Sunday each year because it is calculated from the moon — the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox.

## Reflection

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