

# What About Easter?

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**I REMEMBER AS A TEENAGER, SOME FRIENDS** took the time to explain the events of Holy Week. The holiday that I had previously celebrated out of habit became very clear and new for me. I realized that Jesus' death and resurrection were not just events that happened long ago, demonstrating his love for the world. They were also his way of specifically making a provision for me personally to have a relationship with God. I celebrate my own spiritual awakening during Holy Week, because it is the season when I personally came to a faith in Jesus.

Easter is a significant holiday on the Christian calendar. It is actually not a single holiday, but the culmination of a series of events that are commemorated during this season. The following definitions and timeline will help you understand the events and symbols that are often used during the Easter season.

To read the historical accounts of this segment of Jesus' life, see the following sections of the Bible:

- ★ [Matthew 21:1-11](#) and [Matthew 26-28](#)
- ★ [Mark 11](#) and [Mark 14-16](#)
- ★ [Luke 19:28-44](#) and [Luke 22-24](#)
- ★ [John 12:12-19](#) and [John 18-20](#)

## Series of Events

Each of these events is mentioned in the Bible, but different Christian denominations may emphasize one aspect of the events of the week or use slightly different words for the events. Some churches will call this Holy Week, Passion Week or Easter week.

## Palm Sunday or Triumphal Entry

Palm Sunday is celebrated on the Sunday before Easter. Jesus entered Jerusalem prior to the important Jewish celebration of Passover. As he entered Jerusalem on a donkey (or colt), there were crowds of people who honored Jesus by spreading cloaks on the road or waving branches. They called out "Hosanna" which meant "Save" and was an exclamation of praise. Many churches have processions on this Sunday that include waving of palm branches.



## Passover

This is a Jewish celebration reminding them of God's protection during the plagues in Egypt. During the plague of the firstborn, the Hebrew people had been instructed by God to kill a lamb and put the blood on their door to mark their faith. God passed over the Hebrew homes that were so marked and spared their children (Exodus 12:1-30). In the Christian faith, sometimes Jesus is referred to as the "Lamb of God" which is a reference to the Passover lamb. John the Baptist used this name for Jesus in John 1:29. Jewish Passover occurs during Easter week.

## The Last Supper or Maundy Thursday

This is Thursday before Easter. The Last Supper is actually the Passover meal that Jesus and his disciples shared in honor of the Jewish holiday. Before the meal, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, an action that a servant typically would have done, but Jesus symbolized his service by washing their feet. After the meal, Jesus shared special parting words with his disciples, as he served bread and wine. Christian churches remember this event with Communion.

Often churches will have a special service called "Maundy Thursday." The word "Maundy" is derived from the Latin word for "command." Jesus commanded his disciples to continue to serve each other.

Later on Thursday night, Jesus went out to pray. He was arrested and faced both religious and secular leaders on Thursday night and Friday morning.

## Good Friday

Jesus was killed on Friday. The method of killing was called "Crucifixion" and was common during the Roman occupation of Palestine. The person being killed was hung on pieces of wood and left to die. It certainly does not seem "Good," but Christians believe that the crucifixion of Jesus was the way that he took on all the sin of the world, leading to our ability to have a relationship with God. So even if the action did not seem "Good," the outcome of Good Friday certainly is good, in making provision for the forgiveness of our sins.

## Easter Sunday or Resurrection Sunday

Jesus was put in a tomb with a large rock over the entrance after he died on the cross on Friday. Because Friday at sundown was the start of the Jewish Sabbath, his followers did not have time to complete the burial ritual which involved embalming spices. The Jewish Sabbath continued through Saturday, but early on the Sunday morning after Jesus' death, some of the women who followed him went to his tomb with spices. They found that the large rock had been removed and his body was gone. At first they thought someone had stolen his body, even though there was a Roman guard, but then they saw angels who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead, and they also saw Jesus himself.

## Easter Season Symbols

- ★ **The cross** is a symbol that reminds us of Jesus' death on the cross on our behalf.
- ★ **A lamb** reminds us of the Passover celebration; Jesus' death is a parallel to the death of the lamb in the Passover ceremony.



- ★ **An egg** is often used as a symbol of new life that people can have through relationship with God made possible by Jesus' death on the cross.

- ★ **The rabbit** is a secular (not religious) symbol of the season. The Saxons in Northern Europe had a festival called "Eastre" during the spring equinox celebrating the goddess of spring. Her symbol was the rabbit which is also a symbol of fertility.

## Your Own Journey

As we remember the specific events of Jesus' journey through Holy Week, there are actually physical places that he visited and a physical journey that took place. However, you can participate in a spiritual journey as you follow the events of the week.

## Some Questions to Consider

Take the time to think about these questions and talk them over with your MOPS Discussion Group Leader, or other MOPS leader.

- ★ What aspects of the Easter story are new to you?
- ★ How do you personally celebrate Easter?
- ★ Where are you on your own spiritual journey?
- ★ How do you respond to Jesus' provision for you to have a relationship with God?

## Additional Resources

Available through the MOPShop at [www.MOPShop.org](http://www.MOPShop.org) or 888-545-4040.

- ★ *The Mom's Devotional Bible*
- ★ *The Case for Easter* by Lee Strobel
- ★ *The Gift of Hope for Moms*
- ★ *Bible Basics 101*
- ★ *The Passion of the Christ* DVD, movie not available through the MOPShop.

