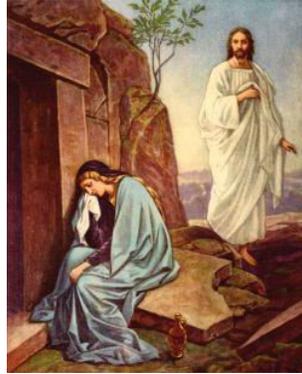


Ask Pastor

He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Halleluia!



Just a little while ago, I was asked a question about Easter. The question was simply: “Why does the date change every year?” So, after answering this question for the individual who asked me, I thought it might prove beneficial for everyone for me to give that answer and publish it. Over the years, I’ve been asked similar questions:

Why is it called “Easter”? Why does the date change every year? How did we get the traditions that we have in our celebration of Easter?

So here are the answers:

The name “Easter” originated from an ancient cult who venerated the goddess of Spring and fertility. Her name was Eostre. She was the “Great Mother Goddess” of the Saxon people of northern Europe. The fact that Christians use this term to refer to the Resurrection of our Lord is ironic in that the word literally refers to the season of Spring and the new life given to us through Jesus’ resurrection.

The date of this highest celebration of the Christian Church is a moveable one because of what Holy Scripture tells us:

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus’ disciples asked Him, ‘Where do you want us to go and make preparations for You to eat the Passover?’” (Mark 14:12).

Because we KNOW that the Resurrection of our Lord occurred around the festival of Passover, the Christian Church wanted to keep it that way. So, on the right is the complicated formula for celebrating Easter in the United States:

Our American traditions around the celebration mainly were adapted

Easter falls on:

*The first Sunday ...
After the first full moon ...
After the vernal equinox
(when Spring starts).*

*March 22 is the earliest
possible date of Easter.*

*April 25 is the latest
possible date of Easter*

2008 – March 23

2011 – April 24

from pagan observances. It was a common practice for early Christians to take something worldly and make it into something Christian. Here are a few examples gleaned from Encarta:

Easter Eggs

The egg was an important symbol in the mythologies of many early civilizations, including those of India and Egypt. It was commonly believed that the universe developed from a great egg and that the halves of its shell corresponded to Heaven and Earth. The egg was also connected with the springtime fertility rituals of many pre-Christian and Indo-European peoples, and both the Egyptians and the Persians made a practice of coloring eggs in the spring. In Christianity the egg is a symbol of resurrection, representing the emergence of Christ from his tomb to everlasting life.



Easter Rabbit

Children are often told that Easter eggs are brought by the Easter bunny. The rabbit has become as traditional at Easter time as the Easter egg. Like the egg, the hare or rabbit was a symbol of fertility and new life in ancient times. How the rabbit came to be associated with Easter and Easter eggs is unclear, but it may have been intended to symbolize the fertile life that the risen Christ would send his followers. In any case, the Easter rabbit has had a long history in European folklore.



Paschal Lamb

*One of the most common Christian symbols, especially associated with Easter, is the lamb. It is often depicted with a banner that bears a cross, and it is known as the *Agnus Dei*, meaning “lamb of God” in Latin. The origin of the symbol is related directly to the Jewish Passover. In ancient times the Jews sacrificed a lamb in the course of the festival. The early Christians, most of whom were Hebrews, associated the sacrifice of the lamb with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. They connected the joyous Passover festival, which commemorates the liberation of the Hebrews from their years of bondage in Egypt, with the liberation from death represented by the resurrection.*



The popularity of lamb as an Easter food is undoubtedly related to its importance as a symbol. During the Middle Ages roast lamb became the traditional main course of the pope’s Easter dinner, and it is still customarily served on Easter Sunday in many European countries.

Easter Clothes

A popular Easter custom in the United States has been to wear new clothes on Easter Sunday. In New York City many people display their new outfits as they stroll along Fifth Avenue in an Easter parade. Parades take place on a smaller scale in many other communities. Few Easter paraders realize that the custom originated within the church hundreds of years ago, when those who were baptized on Holy Saturday were given new white robes to wear. Other members of the congregation, recalling their earlier participation in the ceremony of baptism, also put on new garments in memory of the occasion.



And it is with all of this that we use to aid us in focusing on the Resurrection of our Lord. The highest festival in the Christian Church has developed over many, many years a kind of pomp and circumstance that aids the believer in always knowing, proclaiming and celebrating our forgiveness and salvation that Jesus won for us. Because He lives, we live forever!

He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Hallelujah!

Would you like to continue this question and answer format for my article in the newsletter each month? If so, write out your question and submit it to me. I will answer all questions in the new Ask Pastor article each month. This article depends upon your questions! Please feel free to ask me anything that you think might be helpful and useful for all to know. You can e-mail me your questions at the1revma@gmail.com or drop them off at the church.

Your Fellow Servant in Christ,

Pastor Awe SDG