

# HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT EASTER?

Easter **commemorates** the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ. It is the most important Christian festival, and the one celebrated with the greatest joy. The date of Easter changes each year, and it always **falls on** Sunday and Monday. Interestingly, not all Easter customs are Christian. Some of them, such as the Easter Bunny, and the name Easter are **pagan in origin**.

## THE EASTER STORY

On Good Friday, Jesus Christ was executed by **crucifixion**. His body was taken down from the cross, and **buried** in a **cave**. The tomb was **guarded** and an **enormous** stone was put over the **entrance**, so that no-one could steal the body. On the following Sunday, some women visited the place and found that the stone had been moved, and that the **tomb** was empty. Many people saw Jesus alive on that day, and for days afterwards. His **disciples** and friends realized that Jesus **had risen from the dead**.

## LENT

Lent is the period of forty days which comes before Easter in the Christian calendar. Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday**. For many Christians Lent is traditionally a period of **fasting** and preparation for Easter. Few people nowadays fast for the whole of Lent, although some still fast on **Ash Wednesday** and **Good Friday**, and many believers do not eat sweets as a form of self-discipline.

## WHY 40 DAYS?

Lent lasts 40 days and 40 is an important number in the Bible: The **flood** which destroyed the earth was **brought about** by 40 days and nights of rain. The Hebrews spent 40 years in the **wilderness** before reaching the **promised land**. **Moses** fasted for 40 days before receiving the **ten commandments** on Mount Sinai. Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness in preparation for his **ministry**.

## PALM SUNDAY

The most **solemn** week of the Christian year, known as **Holy week**, is the week before Easter, when Christians remember the final few days of Christ's life on earth. Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday **commemorates** Christ's triumphant arrival in Jerusalem.



## MAUNDY THURSDAY

Maundy Thursday is the Thursday before Easter. Christians remember it as the day of the **Last Supper**, when Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and **established** the ceremony known as the Eucharist.

The night of Maundy Thursday is the night when Jesus was **betrayed** by Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane.

## GOOD FRIDAY

Good Friday is the Friday before Easter. It commemorates the execution of Jesus by crucifixion.

Good Friday is a day of mourning in church. In some countries there are special Good Friday processions and people take part in The Way of the Cross - a mini-pilgrimage through the events that covered the final hours of Jesus' life on earth.

## THE TRADITIONS OF EASTER

Easter was first celebrated in the second century and in fact, it was originally a pagan festival.

The **ancient** Saxons celebrated the return of spring with a **joyful** festival commemorating their goddess of **offspring** and of spring, Eastre. When the second-century Christian missionaries went to the **tribes** of the north, they tried to **convert** them to Christianity. The missionaries brought new customs and cleverly allowed the local people to continue celebrating their pagan festivals, but to do so in a Christian way.

As it happened, the pagan festival of Eastre took place at the same time of the year as the Christian celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. Over time, the new Christian festival became more popular, but the pagan name was **kept**. Later the name was changed to its modern spelling, Easter.

# EASTER SYMBOLS



## THE CROSS

When Jesus was crucified, the cross became a symbol of **suffering**. Later, it became a symbol of **victory** over death. In AD 325, **Emperor** Constantine decided that the Cross would be the official symbol of Christianity.

## PALMS

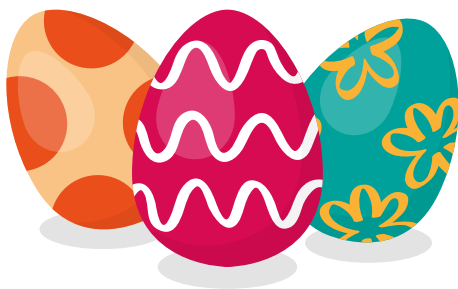
Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday. Why *Palm Sunday*? Well, in Roman times it was a custom to welcome important people by waving palm branches. So, when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, the people of Israel, who were hoping he would save them from oppression and become their new king, welcomed him with palm branches.



## EASTER EGGS

Easter eggs are a very old tradition going back to a time before Christianity. Eggs after all are a symbol of spring and new life.

Exchanging and eating Easter eggs is a popular custom in many countries. In the UK before they were **replaced** by chocolate Easter eggs real eggs were used, in most cases, chicken eggs. The eggs were hard-boiled and **dyed** in various colors and patterns. The traditionally bright colours represented spring and light.



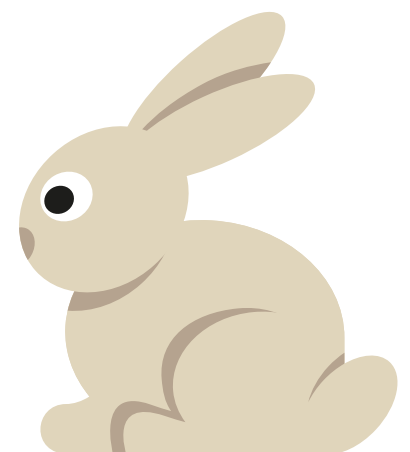
An old traditional game is one in which real eggs are rolled down a hill. The owner of the egg that stays uncracked the longest wins. Even today in the north of England people still carry out the custom of **egg rolling**. Hard boiled eggs are rolled down **slopes** to see whose egg goes furthest.

Nowadays people give each other Easter eggs made of chocolate, usually filled with sweets. British and American children **hunt for** chocolate Easter eggs hidden in the garden by the Easter **Bunny**.

## THE EASTER BUNNY

The Easter Bunny is not a modern **invention**. The symbol started with the **pagan** festival of Eostre. The goddess was **worshipped** by the Anglo-Saxons through her earthly symbol, the rabbit.

The Germans brought the symbol of the Easter rabbit to America. The first **edible** Easter bunnies appeared in Germany during the early 1800s. In the UK children believe that if they are good the "Easter Bunny" will leave (chocolate) eggs for them.



## HOT CROSS BUNS

Hot cross buns, now eaten during the Easter season, were first baked in England to be served on Good Friday. These small, lightly sweet **yeast buns** contain raisins or **currants**. Before baking, a cross is cut in the top of the bun.

# QUIZ TIME

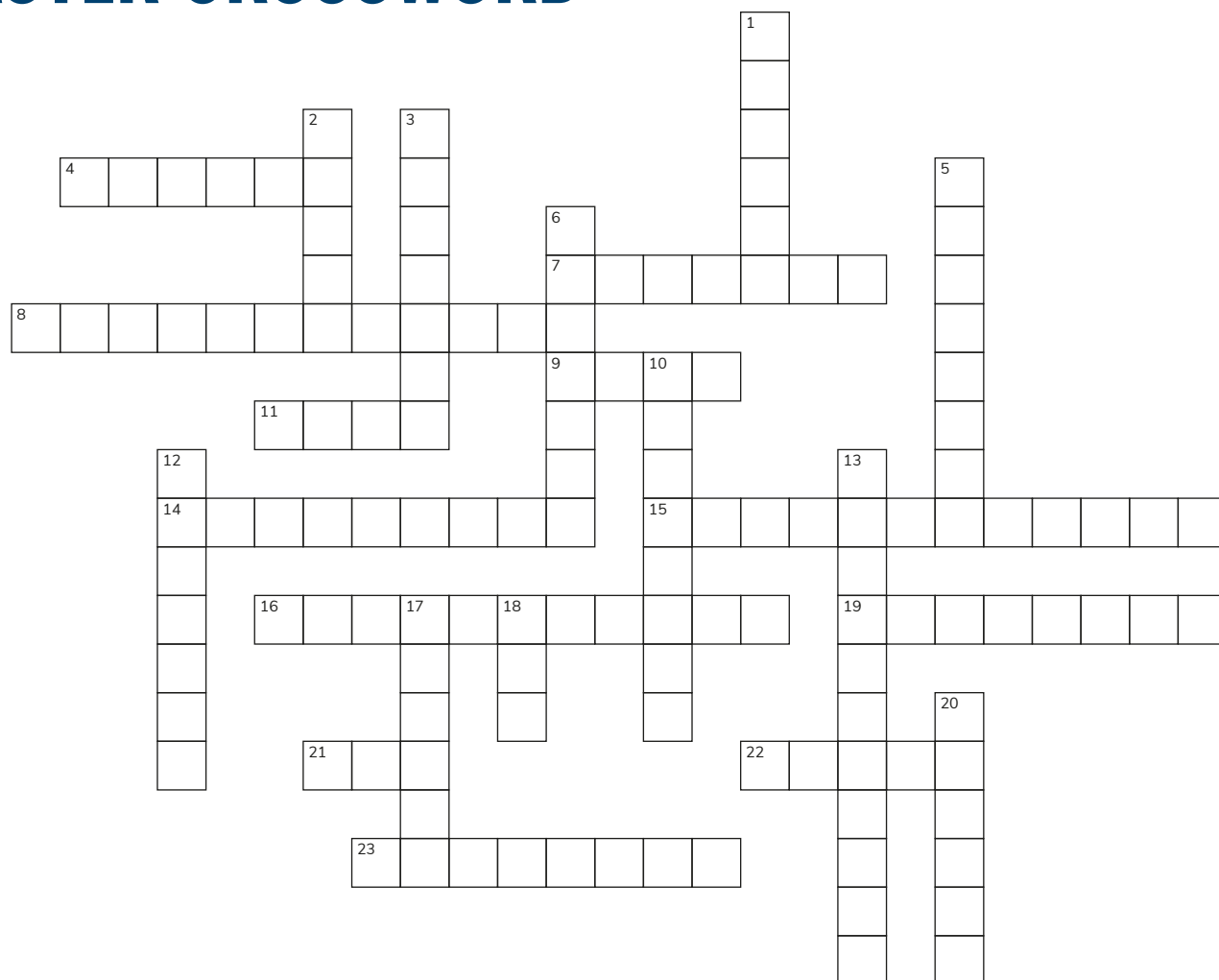


Read the questions and choose the correct answer!

1. **EASTER is celebrated on ...**
  - a. 4-5 April
  - b. the second weekend of spring
  - c. different dates but it always falls on a Sunday and Monday
2. **The name 'Easter' comes from ...**
  - a. the word 'east'
  - b. the name of a pagan goddess
  - c. a Latin word for 'spring'
3. **Jesus was executed by ...**
  - a. hanging
  - b. crucifixion
  - c. crossing
4. **The 12 apostles were also called ...**
  - a. disciples
  - b. students
  - c. priests
5. **The period before Easter is called ...**
  - a. The Great Fast
  - b. Holy Time
  - c. Lent
6. **The period of waiting and preparation for Easter lasts ... days**
  - a. 40
  - b. 45
  - c. 50
7. **The rules that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai are called ...**
  - a. the ten commands
  - b. the ten commandments
  - c. the ten laws
8. **The week before Easter which begins on Palm Sunday is called ...**
  - a. Holy Week
  - b. Great Week
  - c. Easter Week
9. **The idea to celebrate Easter was born in the ... century.**
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup>
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - c. 10<sup>th</sup>
10. **Eastre was a pagan goddess of ...**
  - a. the Sun
  - b. the Moon
  - c. spring and offspring
11. **In AD 325 Emperor ... decided that the Cross would be the official symbol of Christianity.**
  - a. Caesar
  - b. Constantine
  - c. Theodosius
12. **The Friday before Easter when people remember the death of Jesus is called...**
  - a. Good Friday
  - b. Great Friday
  - c. Holy Friday
13. **The Thursday before Easter is called ...**
  - a. Good Thursday
  - b. Great Thursday
  - c. Maundy Thursday
14. **Thursday before Easter is remembered as the day of the ...**
  - a. Last Supper
  - b. Last Dinner
  - c. Last Meal
15. **The apostle who betrayed Jesus was called ...**
  - a. Judash
  - b. Jude
  - c. Judas
16. **Eggs are a symbol of ..**
  - a. new life and spring
  - b. the goddess Eastre
  - c. Christianity
17. **Children in Britain and the USA ... chocolate eggs hidden in the garden.**
  - a. roll
  - b. hunt for
  - c. run after
18. **The Easter Bunny is not a modern invention and it comes from ... times**
  - a. pagan
  - b. early Christian
  - c. Victorian
19. **Traditional Easter eggs were hard-boiled and ... in various colors and patterns.**
  - a. dyed
  - b. colored
  - c. stained
20. **At the time of his death, Jesus was ... years old.**
  - a. 40
  - b. 33
  - c. 30



# EASTER CROSSWORD



## Down

1. Suitable to be eaten
2. An overflow of a large amount of water over what is normally dry land
3. Change one's religious faith
5. A follower, an apostle
6. Not eating any or some kinds of food or drink
10. The expression of sorrow for someone's death
12. Show reverence and adoration for God or a saint
13. A form of execution in which a person was nailed a cross
17. Formal and dignified
18. The name of the Wednesday before Easter
20. To expose somebody or to danger by treacherously giving information to an enemy.

## Across

4. Full of joy
7. Very old
8. The ten rules given by God to the people of Israel
9. A place, typically underground, for burying the dead.
11. The period of 40 days before Easter
14. A person's children or an animal's young
15. Rising from the dead
16. The first Christian ruler of the Roman Empire
19. Small edible black, red, or white berries found in hot cross buns
21. To change the colour of something
22. A group of people with a common culture, dialect and leader
23. Very big