

## WHY WAS EASTER SO EARLY THIS YEAR?

April 1 is an early Easter, but 2018 doesn't hold a record for the earliest possible Easter. How the date of Easter is determined:

Easter most generally falls on the first Sunday after the first full Moon occurring on or after the vernal equinox. The 2018 equinox came on March 20, marking an unofficial beginning of spring for the Northern Hemisphere. The first full Moon after the March equinox came on Saturday, March 31. Voila. In 2018, Easter Sunday is the following day, April 1.

**The Council of Nicaea, first ecumenical council of the Christian church – established the date of Easter when it met in Turkey in the year 325 CE. By ecclesiastical rules set centuries ago, there are 35 dates on which Easter can take place. The earliest possible date for Easter is March 22 and the latest date is April 25.**

2018 doesn't hold a record for the earliest possible Easter. The earliest Easter in the 21st century came in the year 2008 (March 23, 2008). Another March 23 Easter won't come again until the year 2160.

The last time Easter fell on March 22 (earliest possible date) was in 1818, and the next time will be in 2285. The most recent time an Easter came in March was March 27, 2016. The century's latest Easter will occur in the year 2038 (April 25, 2038). After that, it will next fall on April 25 in the year 2190.

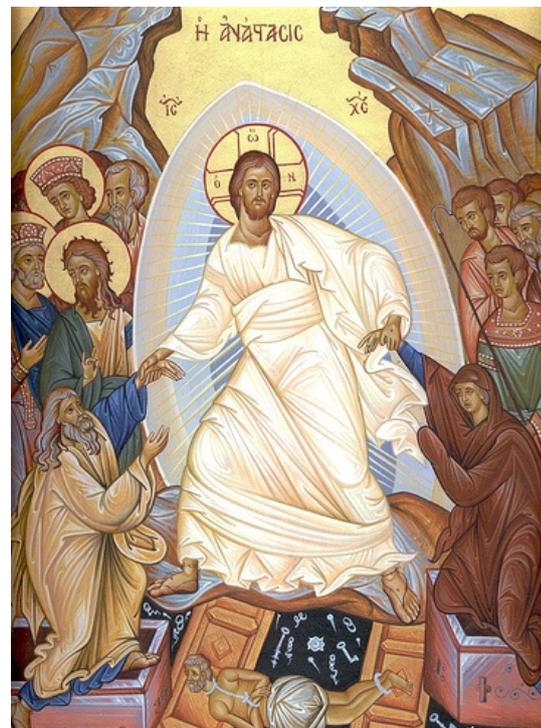
Next year, in 2019, the full Moon will come on March 21, 2019 (after the spring equinox). Yet, the ecclesiastical Easter will fall on April 21, 2019, whereas the astronomical Easter will take place March 24, 2019.

**Easter, also called Pascha (Greek, Latin) or Resurrection Sunday, is a festival and holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, described in the New Testament as having occurred on the third day of his burial after his crucifixion by the Romans at Calvary c. 30 AD.** It is the culmination of the Passion of Jesus, preceded by Lent, a forty-day period of fasting, prayer, and penance.

Most Christians refer to the week before Easter as "Holy Week" - it contains the days of the Easter Triduum, including Maundy Thursday, commemorating the Maundy and Last Supper, as well as Good Friday, commemorating the crucifixion and death of Jesus. In Western Christianity the Easter Season begins on Easter Sunday and lasts seven weeks, ending with the coming of the fiftieth day, Pentecost Sunday. In Eastern Christianity, the season of Pascha begins on Pascha and ends with the coming of the fortieth day, the Feast of the Ascension. Easter is linked to the Jewish Passover by much of its symbolism, as well as by its position in the calendar. Easter customs vary across the Christian world, and include sunrise services, exclaiming the Paschal greeting, clipping the church, and decorating Easter eggs (symbols of the empty tomb). The Easter lily, a symbol of the resurrection, traditionally decorates the chancel area of churches for the rest of Eastertide. AK, with EarthSky Notes



Easter eggs are a popular cultural symbol of Easter.



Icon of the Resurrection, Christ having kicked down the gates of Hades and pulling Adam and Eve out of the tombs.



Nonconformist Protestant Christians prefer to use a simple Christian cross, rather than a crucifix, to emphasize the Resurrection.