

THE HISTORY OF EASTER

Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday following the first full moon after March 21. Christians celebrate the time when Jesus Christ rose from the dead after he had been put to death on the cross by the Romans. The Christian churches teach that because of Christ's resurrection, all people who believe in Christ will have everlasting life.

For Jewish people, the observance of the Passover is also a joyous and important holy occasion. It is a family festival commemorating the freeing of the Jews from slavery in Egypt.

Although Easter is nowadays one of the most important religious celebration, it owes its origin to the old Teutonic mythology. The name Easter was originally derived from the word Eostre. Eostre was the ancient Greek goddess of spring. It was believed that every year, Eostre returned to Earth after a long, cold winter and brought along with her the light and warmth of Spring. Thus, ancient Greeks held pagan festivals to welcome Eostre and herald the onset of spring.

The Pagan festivals always coincided with the vernal Equinox on the 21st of March every year. The Greek believed that Eostre must be pleased with celebrations and sacrifices to ensure that she returns year after year. The festivals were feasts that celebrated the booming of new flowers, the chirping of birds, butterflies, and sunshine and in general the feeling of rejuvenation that is inherent of spring.

Eggs have been involved in the celebration of Spring for thousands of years. Coloured eggs were used in Spring celebrations of the ancient Persians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. They made the eggs look as bright and colourful as the earth looks in the spring. Eggs stood for new life; it is still appropriate to use them at Easter in celebration of God's promise of everlasting life.



Answer the questions

1. In what way is the Christian Easter similar to the Pagan's festival?
2. Where does the name Ester come from?
3. What did the spring festival celebrate?
4. Why did the ancient Persans and Egyptians use eggs during their celebrations?