The Largely Unknown Events of Holy Week
• Holy Week in the Christian year is the week immediately before Easter.
• The earliest time of marking this entire week with special observances is to be found in the Apostolical Constitutions, dating from the latter half of the 3rd century and 4th century.
• Back then, abstinence from flesh is commanded for all the days, while for the Friday and Sunday an absolute fast is commanded.
• Dionysius Alexandrinus in his canonical epistle (AD 260), refers to the 91 fasting days implying that the observance of them had already become an established usage in his time.
• Of the particular days of the "great week", the earliest to emerge into special prominence was Good Friday. Next came the Sabbatum Magnum ("Great Sabbath", i.e., Holy Saturday or Easter Eve) with its vigil, which in the early church was associated with an expectation that the second advent would occur on an Easter Sunday.
Palm Sunday (Passion Sunday)

- Palm Sunday is a Christian feast that falls on the Sunday before Easter. The feast commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event mentioned in all four Gospels.
- In many Christian churches, Palm Sunday includes a procession of the assembled worshipers carrying palms, representing the palm branches the crowd scattered in front of Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem.

Entry of Christ into Jerusalem (1320) by Pietro Lorenzetti
Palm Sunday (Passion Sunday)

The symbolism is captured in Zechariah 9:9 "The Coming of Zion's King – See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey". It was perceived that Jesus was declaring he was the King of Israel to the anger of the Sanhedrin.

Triumphant entry into Jerusalem, fresco in the Parish Church Zirl, Austria
According to the Gospels, Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem, and the celebrating people there laid down their cloaks in front of him, and also laid down small branches of trees. The people sang part of Psalm 118: 25–26 — *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord* ....

The symbolism of the donkey may refer to the Eastern tradition that it is an animal of peace, versus the horse, which is the animal of war. A king came riding upon a horse when he was bent on war and rode upon a donkey when he wanted to point out he was coming in peace. Jesus' entry to Jerusalem would thus symbolize his entry as the Prince of Peace, not as a war-waging king.

Palm Sunday procession, Moscow, with Tsar Alexei Michaelovich (painting by Vyacheslav Gregorievich Schwarz, 1865)
Palm Sunday

“Flevit super illam” (He wept over it); by Enrique Simonet, 1892.

- In Luke 19:41 as Jesus approaches Jerusalem, he looks at the city and weeps over it, foretelling the suffering that awaits the city.
- In many lands in the ancient Near East, it was customary to cover in some way the path of someone thought worthy of the highest honor. The Bible, 2 Kings 9:13, reports that Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, was treated this way.
- All 4 Gospels report that people gave Jesus this form of honor. However, in the synoptics they are only reported as laying their garments and cut rushes on the street, whereas John specifies fronds of palm. In Jewish tradition, the palm is one of the Four Species carried for Sukkot, as prescribed for rejoicing at Leviticus 23:40. The palms are saved in many churches to be burned the following year as the source of ashes used in Ash Wednesday services.
Maundy Thursday

• It commemorates the Washing of Feet and Last Supper of Jesus Christ with the Apostles
• The date is always between March 19 and April 22.
• Worship is held on the evening of Maundy Thursday, initiating the Easter Triduum, the period which remembers the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ; this period includes Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and ends on the evening of Easter.
• Most scholars agree that the English word Maundy in that name for the day is derived through Middle English and Old French mandé, from the Latin mandatum, the first word of the phrase "Mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos" ("A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you"), the statement by Jesus in the Gospel of John 13:34 by which Jesus explained to the Apostles the significance of his action of washing their feet.
Good Friday

- This day commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his death at Calvary.
- The Crucifixion of Jesus was most likely to have been on a Friday (the day before the Sabbath).
- The estimated year of the Crucifixion is AD 33.
- The term "good" in the context of Good Friday is contested. Some sources claim it is from the senses pious, holy of the word "good", while others contend that it is a corruption of "God Friday.
- According to the accounts in the Gospels, the Temple Guards, guided by Jesus' disciple Judas Iscariot, arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Judas received money (30 pieces of silver) (Matthew 26:14–16) for betraying Jesus and told the guards that whomever he kisses is the one they are to arrest.
Good Friday

- Following his arrest, Jesus was brought to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of the high priest, Caiaphas. There he was interrogated with little result and sent bound to Caiaphas the high priest where the Sanhedrin had assembled.
- Conflicting testimony against Jesus was brought forth by many witnesses, to which Jesus answered nothing. Finally the high priest adjured Jesus to respond under solemn oath, saying, "I adjure you, by the Living God, to tell us, are you the Anointed One, the Son of God?"
- Jesus testified ambiguously, "You have said it, and in time you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Almighty, coming on the clouds of Heaven." The high priest condemned Jesus for blasphemy, and the Sanhedrin concurred with a sentence of death. 

Hot cross buns are traditionally toasted and eaten on Good Friday in Britain and Australia[51]
Good Friday

- Peter, waiting in the courtyard, also denied Jesus three times to bystanders while the interrogations were proceeding just as Jesus had predicted.
- In the morning, the whole assembly brought Jesus to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate under charges of subverting the nation, opposing taxes to Caesar, and making himself a king.
- Pilate authorized the Jewish leaders to judge Jesus according to their own law and execute sentencing; however, the Jewish leaders replied that they were not allowed by the Romans to carry out a sentence of death.
- Pilate questioned Jesus and told the assembly that there was no basis for sentencing. Upon learning that Jesus was from Galilee, Pilate referred the case to the ruler of Galilee, King Herod, who was in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. Herod questioned Jesus but received no answer; Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.
Good Friday

- Pilate told the assembly that neither he nor Herod found guilt in Jesus; Pilate resolved to have Jesus whipped and released.
- Under the guidance of the chief priests, the crowd asked for Barabbas, who had been imprisoned for committing murder during an insurrection. Pilate asked what they would have him do with Jesus, and they demanded, "Crucify him"
- Pilate's wife had seen Jesus in a dream earlier that day, and she forewarned Pilate to "have nothing to do with this righteous man".
- Pilate had Jesus flogged and then brought him out to the crowd to release him. The chief priests informed Pilate of a new charge, demanding Jesus be sentenced to death "because he claimed to be God's son." This possibility filled Pilate with fear, and he brought Jesus back inside the palace and demanded to know from where he came.
Good Friday

• Coming before the crowd one last time, Pilate declared Jesus innocent and washed his own hands in water to show he has no part in this condemnation. Nevertheless, Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified in order to forestall a riot and ultimately to keep his job.

• The sentence written was "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." Jesus carried his cross to the site of execution (assisted by Simon of Cyrene), called the place of the Skull, or "Golgotha" in Hebrew and in Latin "Calvary". There he was crucified along with two criminals.

• Jesus agonized on the cross for six hours. During his last 3 hours on the cross, from noon to 3 pm, darkness fell over the whole land. With a loud cry, Jesus gave up his spirit. There was an earthquake, tombs broke open, and the curtain in the Temple was torn from top to bottom. The centurion on guard at the site of crucifixion declared, "Truly this was God's Son!"
Good Friday

• Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin and secret follower of Jesus, who had not consented to his condemnation, goes to Pilate to request the body of Jesus.

• Another secret follower of Jesus and member of the Sanhedrin named Nicodemus brought about a hundred pound weight mixture of spices and helped wrap the body of Christ.

• Pilate asks confirmation from the centurion whether Jesus is dead. A soldier pierced the side of Jesus with a lance causing blood and water to flow out, and the centurion informs Pilate that Jesus is dead.

• Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body, wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and placed it in his own new tomb that had been carved in the rock in a garden near the site of crucifixion. Nicodemus also brought 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes, and placed them in the linen with the body, in keeping with Jewish burial customs. They rolled a large rock over the entrance of the tomb. Then they returned home and rested, because Shabbat had begun at sunset.
Holy Saturday

- It is the day before Easter and the last day of Holy Week in which Christians prepare for Easter. It commemorates the day that Jesus Christ's body lay in the tomb.
- The Harrowing of Hell (Latin: *Descensus Christi ad Inferos*, "the descent of Christ into hell") is the Old English and Middle English term for the triumphant descent of Christ into Hell (or Hades) between the time of his Crucifixion and his Resurrection when he announced salvation to all of the righteous who had died since the beginning of the world (excluding the damned). He proclaimed to Satan his victory over death and sin.
- The descent into hell is referenced in the Apostles' Creed and the Athanasian Creed which state that Jesus Christ "descended into Hell". The main reference is 1 Peter 3:19–20 where Jesus is preaching to "the imprisoned spirits".

The icon of Holy and Great Saturday, portraying the Harrowing of Hades
Easter Sunday

- Easter Sunday is the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his crucifixion at Calvary as described in the New Testament.
- Easter is a moveable feast, meaning it is not fixed in relation to the calendar. The First Council of Nicaea (325) established the date of Easter as the first Sunday after the full moon following the March equinox. The date of Easter therefore varies from March 22 to April 25.
- The modern English term Easter, cognate with modern German Ostern, developed from the Old English word Ėastre or Ŗostre. This is generally held to have originally referred to the name of an Anglo-Saxon goddess, Ėostre, a form of the widely attested Indo-European dawn goddess.

Easter Sunday

• In both Greek and Latin, the 2nd-century Christian celebration was called **Pascha**, derived, through Aramaic, from the Hebrew term Pesach (מסח), known in English as Passover, the Jewish festival commemorating the story of the Exodus.

• In most of the non-English speaking world, the feast today is known by the name Pascha and words derived from it.

• The New Testament teaches that the resurrection of Jesus, which Easter celebrates, is a foundation of the Christian faith.

• The resurrection established Jesus as the powerful Son of God and is cited as proof that God will judge the world in righteousness. God has given Christians "*a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*".

![The Resurrection (centre view) - Fresco Palazzi Pontifici, Vatican](image)
Easter Sunday

- Direct evidence for the Easter festival begins to appear in the mid-2nd century. Perhaps the earliest extant primary source referencing Easter is a mid-2nd-century Paschal homily attributed to Melito of Sardis, which characterizes the celebration as a well-established one.
- Some churches prefer to keep this vigil very early on the Sunday morning instead of the Saturday night, particularly churches, to reflect the gospel account of the women coming to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week. These services are known as the Sunrise service and often occur in outdoor setting such as the church cemetery, yard, or a nearby park.

Easter Sunday, by Giovanni Bellini
Easter Customs

The oldest tradition is to use dyed and painted chicken eggs, but a modern custom is to substitute chocolate eggs, or plastic eggs filled with confectionery such as jelly beans. Eggs, in general, were a traditional symbol of fertility, and rebirth.
Easter Customs

In Germany, eggs decorate trees and bushes as Easter egg trees.
Easter Customs

The Easter bunny first arrived in America in the 1700s with German immigrants who settled in Pennsylvania and transported their tradition of an egg-laying hare called “Osterhase” or “Oschter Haws.”

Their children made nests in which this creature could lay its colored eggs. Eventually, the custom spread across the U.S. and the fabled rabbit’s Easter morning deliveries expanded to include chocolate and other types of candy and gifts, while decorated baskets replaced nests.

Additionally, children often left out carrots for the bunny in case he got hungry from all his hopping.
Easter Customs

The butter lamb is a traditional addition to the Easter Meal for many Polish Catholics. Butter is shaped into a lamb either by hand or in a lamb-shaped mold.
Some families have a traditional Sunday roast, often of either roast lamb or ham.

Easter breads such as Simnel cake, a fruit cake with eleven marzipan balls representing the eleven faithful apostles, or nut breads such as potica are traditionally served.
Points of Interest

• There are at least 12 different appearances of Christ in the resurrection accounts, beginning with Mary and ending with Paul. They were physical, tangible experiences with Christ eating, speaking and allowing himself to be touched.

• Jesus' resurrected body was different from his physical body. It was no longer subject to the same laws of nature. He could transcend locked doors, and yet he could still be touched and he could eat.

• Before Jesus ascended into heaven he gave the Great Commission, telling his followers to go and make disciples of all nations.

• The stone was not rolled away from the tomb so Jesus could get out. He was able to walk through walls (John 20:19) in his resurrected body. The stone was rolled away so that everyone could see that he was risen.
Seven Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead

The Resurrection Proof #1: The Empty Tomb of Jesus

The empty tomb may be the strongest proof Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

Two major theories have been advanced by unbelievers: someone stole Jesus' body or the women and disciples went to the wrong tomb.

The Jews and Romans had no motive to steal the body. Christ's apostles were too cowardly and would have had to overcome the Roman guards. The women who found the tomb empty had earlier watched Jesus being laid away; they knew where the correct tomb was. Even if they had gone to the wrong tomb, the Sanhedrin could have produced the body from the right tomb to stop the resurrection stories.

Jesus' burial cloths were left neatly folded inside, hardly the act of hurrying grave robbers. Angels said Jesus had risen from the dead.
The Resurrection Proof #2: The Holy Women Eyewitnesses

The holy women eyewitnesses are further proof that the Gospels are accurate historical records.

If the accounts had been made up, no ancient author would have used women for witnesses to Christ's resurrection. Women were second class citizens in Bible times; their testimony was not even allowed in court.

Yet the Bible says the risen Christ first appeared to Mary Magdalene and other holy women. Even the apostles did not believe Mary when she told them the tomb was empty. Jesus, who always had special respect for these women, honored them as the first eyewitnesses to his resurrection.

The male Gospel writers had no choice but to report this embarrassing act of God's favor, because that was how it happened.
The Resurrection Proof #3: Jesus' Apostles' New-Found Courage

After the crucifixion, Jesus' apostles hid behind locked doors, terrified they would be executed next. But something changed them from cowards to bold preachers.

Anyone who understands human character knows people do not change that much without some major influence. That influence was seeing their Master, bodily risen from the dead. Christ appeared to them in the locked room, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and on the Mount of Olives. After seeing Jesus alive, Peter and the others left the locked room and preached the risen Christ, unafraid of what would happen to them.

They quit hiding because they knew the truth. They finally understood that Jesus is God incarnate, who saves people from sin.
Seven Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead

The Resurrection Proof #4: Changed Lives of James and Others

Changed lives are yet another proof of the resurrection.

James, the brother of Jesus, was openly skeptical that Jesus was the Messiah. Later James became a courageous leader of the Jerusalem church, even being stoned to death for his faith. Why? The Bible says the risen Christ appeared to him. What a shock to see your own brother, alive again, after you knew he was dead.

James and the apostles were effective missionaries because people could tell these men had touched and seen the risen Christ. With such zealous eyewitnesses, the early church exploded in growth, spreading west from Jerusalem to Rome and beyond. For 2,000 years, encounters with the resurrected Jesus have changed lives.
Seven Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead

The Resurrection Proof #5: Large Crowd of Eyewitnesses

A large crowd of more than 500 eyewitnesses saw the risen Jesus Christ at the same time.

The Apostle Paul records this event in 1 Corinthians 15:6. He states that most of these men and women were still alive when he wrote this letter, about 55 A.D. Undoubtedly they told others about this miracle.

Today, psychologists say it would be impossible for a large crowd of people to have had the same hallucination at once.

Smaller groups also saw the risen Christ, such as the apostles, and Cleopas and his companion. They all saw the same thing, and in the case of the apostles, they touched Jesus and watched him eat food. The hallucination theory is further debunked because after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, sightings of him stopped.
Seven Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead

The Resurrection Proof #6: Conversion of Paul

The conversion of Paul records the most drastically changed life in the Bible.

As Saul of Tarsus, he was an aggressive persecutor of the early church. When the risen Christ appeared to Paul on the Damascus Road, Paul became Christianity's most determined missionary. He endured five floggings, three beatings, three shipwrecks, a stoning, poverty, and years of ridicule. Finally the Roman emperor Nero had Paul beheaded because the apostle refused to deny his faith in Jesus.

What could make a person willingly accept—even welcome—such hardships?

Christians believe the conversion of Paul came about because he encountered Jesus Christ who had risen from the dead.
Seven Proofs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead

The Resurrection Proof #7: They Died for Jesus

Countless people have died for Jesus, absolutely certain that the resurrection of Christ is an historical fact.

Tradition says ten of the original apostles died as martyrs for Christ, as did the Apostle Paul. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of early Christians died in the Roman arena and in prisons for their faith. Down through the centuries, thousands more have died for Jesus because they believed the resurrection is true. Even today, people suffer persecution because they have faith that Christ rose from the dead.

An isolated group may give up their lives for a cult leader, but Christian martyrs have died in many lands, for nearly 2,000 years, believing Jesus conquered death to give them eternal life.