



Easter Events

Easter is well known to us for chocolate eggs, bunnies and perhaps a parade, but it is also the most important Christian religious festival of the year. Christians believe that Jesus Christ died but then rose again 3 days later at Easter.

Before Easter, Christians enter into the period of Lent which is 40 days long. Traditionally, this was a time of fasting, and so Christians would not indulge in rich or decadent food and drink during this time. The day before Lent begins is called Shrove Tuesday, when historically such food and drink would be used up in preparation for fasting. We now know it as Pancake Day, as pancakes are believed to have come about when eggs, fat and flour that needed to be used up were mixed with milk and tossed in a pan. On Shrove Tuesday, Christians would go to church to be forgiven for their sins (“shriven”), and in Olney it is believed that a woman in 1445 heard the ‘Shriving bell’ at St Peter & St Paul’s Church and realised she was late, so ran with the pancake pan! This was the beginning of the famous Olney pancake race.

Lent is marked by Christians, as their faith believes that Jesus spent 40 days alone in the desert to contemplate what was about to happen to him. They fast as the Bible (the Christian holy book) says that Jesus did not eat or drink during these 40 days. He spent the time alone to gain mental strength for what was to come. When he left the desert, he and his followers, called disciples, travelled to Jerusalem in Israel to celebrate the Jewish festival of Passover. Jesus, and probably everyone he knew, was Jewish. Christians regard Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem as the start of Holy Week, which ends with the celebration of Easter Sunday.

Holy Week Events

- **Palm Sunday** - Jesus and his disciples arrive in Jerusalem. Jesus’ popularity had been growing and many people came out on the streets to greet him, calling him ‘King of the Jews’. To show that he was one of the people, Christians believe that he chose to arrive on a donkey to show his humility. People put palm leaves down in his path, which is why it is called Palm Sunday.

- Some important Jewish leaders were concerned about the popularity of Jesus and his teachings, and persuaded one of Jesus' disciples called Judas to betray Jesus in return for money.
- On the Thursday of Holy Week, now called Maundy Thursday, Jesus and his followers celebrated Passover with a meal. Christians call it 'the last supper'.
- Afterwards, they went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Here, Roman soldiers came and demanded to know which one of them was Jesus. Judas betrayed Jesus as promised, by kissing him on the cheek, thus telling the soldiers his identity. Jesus was arrested.
- Good Friday was the day when Jesus was put on trial and it was decided that he should be killed. The Bible says that he died on the afternoon of Good Friday by being hung on a cross. Romans called this 'crucifixion'.
- His body was laid in a cave, but the Bible tells Christians that he rose again on Easter Sunday.

Did You Know?

- Good Friday is an unusual name for such a sad day for Christians. However, it is believed that it is called this as its events lead to their ultimate celebration of Easter Sunday.
- The Bible says that Jesus began fasting in the desert after his baptism, and before he started his ministry of teaching and healing. This lasted approximately 3 years and wasn't just before Holy Week.

Questions

1. What do Christians call the Thursday of Holy Week?
2. Who was worried about the increasing popularity of Jesus?