

Eastertide 2009

This year Easter Day is on April 12th, the Ascension is on May 21st, and Pentecost May 31st. The Apostles' Creed says, "On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father." Acts gives the impression that the Ascension may have occurred "forty days" after the Resurrection. From the tomb Jesus Christ, "the King of Glory," proceeded to his eternal throne where he reigns as King of the Kingdom of God. Traditional thought places the kingly crown on his head, replacing the crown of thorns, at this time. It is also a crown of his victory over death. Hence the crown of the King makes an appropriate symbol for this whole period.

The depicting of the risen Christ may be made more explicit by one or more of these attributes: a white or golden garment, the banner of the Resurrection appropriate from his rising until his Ascension), the five wounds, or a radiance around him. A crucifix on which Christ is shown clad in Eucharistic vestments represents the Reigning Christ or Christ the King.

The entire season from Easter to Pentecost was once observed as one continuous festival. Later, in the fourth century, the season was separated into the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Pentecost.

The early church called Easter *Pascha*, a word derived from the Hebrew for Passover. The name Easter comes from the Anglo-Saxon spring goddess, Eostre, whose festival coincided with the spring equinox.

Easter Day is the most important day of the church year. "Christ is risen! Alleluia!" The resurrection is the keystone in the arch of Christianity. Without it, everything else crumbles. Christians moved their day of worship from the last day of the week to the first so that each Sunday is a "little Easter." Sundays are never fast days, even during Lent.

Ascension Day falls near the close of this season. As determined from scripture, it is the fortieth day after Easter, always a Thursday.

By accident or by design, symbols for Easter tend to use as their forms things which are pleasant in themselves aside from symbolic content. Light, flowers, and birds all have their place along with tokens of victory and kingly estate. Many of the symbols for Easter carry the meaning, not only of the resurrection of Christ, but also of the Christian's ultimate resurrection and eternal life. The color for the Easter season is white.