

Spring: Lent, Easter, Ascension

Source: www.jahresfeste.ch

Lent / Pre-Easter Time (begins on Ash Wednesday, roughly 6 weeks before Easter) preparation process for Easter; Symbols of Easter: lamb, rabbit, egg, Easter tree, ...

Lent, beginning Ash Wednesday (earlier = end of carnival)

Duration 40 days (excluding Sundays) = biblical number

NT: Jesus fasted for 40 days in the desert; it was 40 days from Easter to the Ascension. OT: 40 days of the Flood, 40 years wandering of the people of Israel from Egypt to Canaan; Moses' 40-day encounter with God on Mount Sinai; Elijah's 40-day journey to Mount Horeb; in the story of Jonah the people had 40 days to return; a woman was considered unclean up to 40 days after birth and only after the visit to the temple as ritually clean again (--> Candlemas, Presentation of the Lord). See also: Jonas spent three days in the belly of the whale before he was vomited out safely on dry land --> we celebrate the resurrection from the dead on the third day after the death of Jesus.

History:

In early Christianity during Lent the Catechumen (Introduction to Christian doctrine) took place, which was the preparation for the adult baptism in the night before Easter or early on Easter morning. Child baptisms were only popularized in the Middle Ages. Until 300 AD baptism took place in open waters, after that usually in baptismal fonts. Before Christianity became the official religion under Emperor Constantine in the 4th century, the baptism corresponded to a complete break with the previous life of the baptised, which was accompanied by great danger to body and soul. There was a risk of having one's property confiscated, being dismissed from all public offices, and not rarely persecution and martyrdom. Baptism had a tremendous significance!

Up to the 6th century, exclusion of sinners from the church (for example because of adultery) until Maundy Thursday; from the 10th century onward blessing with the ash cross on the forehead on Ash Wednesday as a reminder of one's own mortality. Symbol of Ash: guilt, repentance, forgiveness, transience, but also fertility (→ fertilizer), healing (→ Spagyric, coal for an upset stomach, diarrhoea, poisoning), purification (→ formerly production of soap from olive oil and ashes) and change (→ being reborn "like a phoenix from the ashes"). AT: Lot had to be cleansed by fire. NT: transformation through fire and suffering, see 1. Corinthians 3, 8-15 and Hebrews 2,10.

Fasting: Used to be mandatory from the church (= abstain from eating meat, eggs and fatty goods); re-centring on the essential (self-awareness).

Themes:

- introspection and examination of one's conscience, sharing in suffering (Passion of Christ)
- anticipation, attune oneself for Spring and Easter (resurrection)
- fasting reminds us of the hunger of the world: Every year roughly 30 millions of people die of hunger, approximately 80'000 per day. 800 millions of people suffer from malnourishment, despite the fact that the global production of food surpasses the overall requirements by 10%.

Customs:

Fastenbrezel*, Fasting Soup**, fish, conscious abstaining of particularly beloved dishes, drinks or a similar luxury (→ donation of savings, cf. "Brot für alle"), but also non material abstinence such as restricted TV, less dogmatism and similar.

*German Pretzel specifically baked for the fasting period

** Soup as replacement for the midday meal

Ritual: burning of charcoal drawings (conflict, grief, pain, guilt, farewell, ...), mixing ashes with earth and growing something new, for example nasturtium seeds.

Painting of the Lenten veil, decorate an Easter candle (attested since 384 AD) with symbols of Easter, decoration of Easter branches or of the Easter tree with three crosses (like a seven armed candelabra with

straightened branches on both sides --> stick into a flower pot, decorate with greenery and hang coloured eggs on it).

Symbols of Easter: → crafts, paint, baking

Lamb (sacrificial animal, symbol for Jesus, Passover lamb, see the Exodus)

Rabbit (fertility, sacrificial lamb, companion of goddesses)

Fish (Symbol of Christ, Greek Ichthys). In the ancient Jewish tradition, the fish was symbolic for the future messiah. For that reason orthodox Jews eat Fish as messianic dish on Friday evening at the beginning of the celebration of Sabbath, which refers to the messianic salvific time, as a taste of paradise.

Rooster (Peter disavows Jesus, until the Rooster crowed three times)

Chicken (lays the Easter eggs)

Egg (fertility, hidden new life, hope of resurrection)

Butterfly (Caterpillar – Cocoon – Butterfly = metaphor of resurrection)

Sun (symbol of the life from God through Christ in me)

Cross (Salvation from Christ), see also section on Good Friday

Easter candle (light of Christ) with symbols of Easter

Easter branches with colourful eggs or feathers (the new life)

Easter tree -"menorah" (tree of life, beginning of creation, wholeness, temple, Christ as mediator of creation, see John 1,1-5; Hebrews 1,2 and 10; Colossians 1,15-19)

In the Jewish faith the Menorah (7 armed candelabra) refers to the messianic salvific time and the hope for a new temple, which represents the identity of the Jewish people, in which the messiah will be born. The seven armed candelabra is the official emblem of the state of Israel to this day. → When everything has found their way back to God, the messianic goal of salvation is reached and the "Temple of God" rebuilt. Seven is the number of the primeval totality and seems to correspond to a nature given order. The bible talks of the seven lights around the throne of God (Christ and six main angels), cf. Sunday and the six weekdays, white and six colours, Do and six other notes within an octave, seven dwarfs, seven heads of dragons ect. in fairy tales, 1 President of the Confederation and six members of the Federal Council in the Swiss government and others.

Beginning of Spring

21. March: Spring Festival / Winteraustreiben (Festival Celebrated on Laetare Sunday, a ritual casting out of winter and death. Celebrated in parts of central Europe.)

Beginning of Spring, Pre-spring-time, 21.3.

Spring:

Allegory for the new life/ the new beginning on several levels: with every breath, every new morning, internal and external beginning, chapters of life, life ...step by step towards the eternal spring.

Themes:

Victory of light over the darkness (equinox), spring awakening, delight / amazement in the new life (→ everything is reborn, transformed, continues); passage Pisces-Aries.

Customs:

Spring celebration with 'Winteraustreiben'*, experience of nature (depending on the geographical location first signs of snowdrops, lady's-nightcaps, primroses ect.), the figure of mother earth or the spring dwarf tell stories of the flower children, who will soon spring from the earth, Kasperletheater** (Kasperle has to retrieve the golden egg from king Easter Bunny and pass through various perils), baking spring or Easter animals or the wheel of the sun, observe the Easter moon → date of Easter: first Sunday after the first full moon of spring; for that reason Easter is a moveable feast, that can take place between March 22 and April 25.

Decorate the Easter tree with eggs, feathers or butterflies, bake Easter cake, craft Easter candles and other symbolic images of Easter, write Easter letters.

*Festival Celebrated on Laetare Sunday, a ritual casting out of winter and death. Celebrated in parts of central Europe.

** hand puppet theatre in the Germanic regions

Gabriel – Annunciation

25. March, Archangel Gabriel announces to Mary the conception of Jesus

Gabriel – 25. March

Until 1967 feast day on 25. March, today also on 29. September

Name of Gabriel: God is my strength

Gabriel is the big messenger angel, herald, Christmas angel. He brings messages, visions, dreams and helps with their interpretation (Daniel 8,16; 9,21).

Christmas story: Annunciation (Mary, Elisabeth, Zachary), dreams (of Joseph and the three wise men)

In the Jewish tradition he is regarded as one of the three men / angels next to Abraham. Gabriel is the patron saint of postmen and all conveyors of messages.

Gabriel can be interpreted as the representative of the holy ghost of truth, which hold patronage over all kinds of divine proclamations. In art, Gabriel is sometimes depicted alongside a dove (see Pentecost, Holy Ghost / holy ghosts).

Symbols: lily, quill, scroll, trumpet; but also empty bowls which can be filled.

Motive: to be inspired by heavenly messages, receive the divine (like Mary) and carry it into the world through hands, eyes, words and deeds.

Customs: bake sweet waffles, craft scrolls, model a bowl as symbol of openness and readiness to receive (→ the bowl can be filled for example with small angel cards)

Palm Sunday

Triumphal entry into Jerusalem

Palm Sunday was immediately preceded by the **resurrection of Lazarus**. This tale presents an allegorical preview of the resurrection of Easter: The deceased does not have to remain in the grave (in the Jewish tradition the metaphor for Sheol, the underworld).

Entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey (symbol of humility); crowd cheers for him with palm branches (symbol for king, victory, peace); he rides over laid out clothes like a king over a carpet. Beginning of the Holy Week with the Passion of Christ.

Customs

Bind palm branches and decorate them, processions, passion plays, passion concerts, daffodils combined with mimosa and palm branches as table decorations, hyacinth (= fragrance of Easter); sow Easter greens (e.g. cress, wheat): decorate the Easter tree with eggs, feathers or butterflies, bake Easter cake, craft Easter candle and other Easter symbols.

Present the stages of the Holy Week: create passable ways of the cross, draw images about the subject, create scenes with biblical figures. In some catholic regions palm branches / bouquets are put up at home, collected in the next year and burned in preparation for the approaching Ash Wednesday. In some traditions the last person to rise on the day is titled "Palmesel" (palm donkey)

Monday

Cleansing of the Temple: Jesus chases the merchants from the temple.

Tuesday

Debate about taxes with the scribes

Wednesday

Unction of Jesus in Bethany

Unction in Bethany: in the case of Mark the evangelist, anointment of Jesus' head by an unknown woman, in the case of John the evangelist, anointment of the feet by Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus. In the early Christendom the anointing lady was equated with Mary Magdalene. In her visions, the stigmatist Anna Katharina Emmerich similarly saw both women as one person.

Maundy (Holy) Thursday

Foot washing, Last Supper and the arrest of Jesus

Washing of the Feet

Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, as a sign that the master does not outrank the servant and how we should serve each other in humility.

Last Supper

Blessing of bread and wine, institution of the new covenant

Bread (cf. unleavened bread / Mazza at Passover due to the hasty departure during the Exodus): Symbol for Christ's body, who said about himself: I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." John 6,51

Wine (cf. four cups of wine at Passover): symbol of the blood of Jesus, who said about himself:

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine dresser. [...] Abide in Me, and I in you." John 15,1-8.

Significance:

New covenant = liberation from 'death', the 'separation from God' respectively and the binding to the realm of the dead, since everybody has to die bodily after all (see also Easter Saturday!).

In the person of Jesus the expectation of the "covenant to the people", "light to the Gentiles", "Messenger of the covenant", and the promise of the "new covenant" have been fulfilled. (Isaiah 42,6-7, Malachi 3,1, Jeremiah 31,31-34).

Jesus asked of his friends to eat bread and wine in memory of him. 7

Gardens of Gethsemane

While his disciples sleep, Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane, alone and full of fear; subsequent betrayal through Judas and arrest by the officials of the high priests; later Peter's denial ("I say to you that today, *even* this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.")

Themes:

affection / role model, farewell, preservation of the memory, fear, being forsaken, treachery

Customs:

Gründonnerstag-soup or spinach tart with green spring herbs (cf. Maror during the Jewish Passover meal, reminiscent of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt); oriental communion with flat bread and trimmings; mutual washing of hands or feet and possibly massages with nard oil (cf. unction in Bethany); silence of the church bells until Easter morning (sometimes Easter night), opening of the tabernacle, removal / moving to the vestry of the Host, empty stoup (everything is returned in the Easter night, as symbol of the new beginning / resurrection).

Earlier: The excluded sinners (the crying) were readmitted into the community. Similarly in some traditions

the day was also known as "Antlasstag", on which non monetary taxes had to be paid, e.g. eggs from the time of Lent, during which egg dishes were forbidden.

Cf. Egg at the Passover meal = symbol for the sacrifice given during the pilgrimage festival, but also for the new life after the Exodus.

In contrast to 2. Moses 12,17f, the Passover lamb was not slaughtered in private homes but in the temple. Only the Passover meal was celebrated at home, as Jesus did with his disciples.

Good Friday

Condemnation, Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus

Good Friday (cf. Karfreitag, 'kar'= lamentation, sorrow)

Trial by the Sanhedrin, followed by the Roman governor Pilate, as well as Herod.

Conviction (Pilate and the crowd), ridicule, flagellation, crown of thorns (king)

Crucifixion (alternatively only practised on slaves and serious offenders), death on the ninth hour / 15.00, sky darkens, earth quake, tearing of the temple curtains

Entombment in a hurry before the beginning of Sabbath; in the case of Matthew vigilance of the grave by soldiers

Theme: suffering of injustice, ridicule, suffering, forsaken by God yet devotion to God until death

Customs: Attends mass and Passion concerts, walk ways of the cross, visit places of suffering, look for stones with crosses on them; decorate crosses with flowers, craft crosses from sticks by binding them together, carving them, model them, wrap them in wool, decorate with pearls or otherwise; bake bread in the shape of a cross, butter lamb on a bed of moss surrounded by a crown of thorns, abstain from meat (→ this is the reason why many restaurants offer fish on Fridays); colour / paint Easter eggs

Meditate on the **Cross:** It is the symbol of the salvation through Christ; the cross combines everything (heaven-earth / God-humans, but also the four cardinal directions / people on the whole world); we are to take on 'our' cross / suffering, or to lean on the cross and take strength from it (and the model of Jesus). For crafts ideas see above under customs.

Ritual: Imprint sorrowful experiences into a stone and lay to the cross, then put a salvific symbol or image with a candle next to it and light the candle; also works with thorns and roses.

Popular beliefs: Good Friday eggs don't go bad, have magical powers and are used for purposes of healing and protection, similarly Good Friday grass. During the night of Good Friday the largest amounts of ghosts and poor souls are supposed to be wandering, but also beloved deceased get into contact with the living.

Easter Saturday

Harrowing of Hell, Salvation

Easter Saturday

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14,6

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." John 8,12

"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Matthew 11,27

Externally: **Peace of the grave:** low point for the followers of Jesus (seemingly everything lost)

On the spiritual realm: **Harrowing of Hell / the realm of Death / the underworld / Hades / the pit**

There the **fight with Lucifer** and the victory over the adversary forces took place. This was followed by the trial announced by Christ. Subsequently the **liberation / salvation** and the **ascent / resurrection** of deceased since Adam, and the fallen angels willing to return. They were all bound to the realm of the dead, more specifically the Sheol. This region was a limbo situated before Gehenna / hell for the deceased BEFORE the salvation by Christ (see OT e.g. Psalms 49,15 and 8 or Isaiah 5,14).

The harrowing of Hell and fallen angels see 1. Peter 3,19 and 22,1. Peter 4,6 as well as Revelation 12,7-10, Hebrews 2,14-15; Ephesians 2,1-7; Colossians 2,13-15; 2. Peter 2,4; Judas 1,6; Ephesians 4,8-9 (however this is sometimes wrongly translated, 'lower parts of the earth' refers to the underworld to which Jesus descended and from which he lead the 'captive')

→ **"Inheritance in heaven"** (cf. e.g. Galatians 4,1-7 and 1. Peter 1,4): Peace between heaven and earth; Jesus builds a bridge, opens heaven's gates, new balance of power between good and evil (= prophecy of the old testament came true). Heaven's gates are open once more, the path to the return to heaven is open to ALL that choose to walk it (→ no eternal damnation).

In the early Christian church, this is not only one of, but **the** central theme! Jerusalemer Bibellexikon (Hänssler Verlag, Hrsg. Kurt Hennig: "Diese im apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnis verankerte Heilstat Gottes ('hinabgestiegen in das Reich des Todes') bildet die unverzichtbare Klammer zwischen der Eschatologie des NT und des AT." (This salvific deed of God (the Harrowing of Hell), anchored in the apostolic profession of faith, presents the indispensable connection between the eschatology of the NT and the OT.) Historian of dogmatic theology Adolf von Harnack writes about the Descensus: "Was heute in den Kirchen eine vertrocknete Reliquie ist, [...] war nicht nur ein, sondern nahezu das Hauptstück der Verkündigung vom Erlöser." (What remains as a dry relic in modern churches [...] was not only one, but nearly the main element of the proclamation of the saviour.)

This remains to this day in the context of the Orthodox Church: Easter icons always portray the **resurrection** as the **ascent from the underworld** (not the empty grave). Excerpt from an orthodox Easter night vigil: "Den Hades hat er entwaffnet [...] den Hades entmachtet, indem er zu ihm hinabstieg [...] . Heute ruft stöhnend der Hades: [...] den Adam hat er auferweckt. Die meiner Herrschaft untertan, sie wurden mir geraubt [...]" (He disarmed the Hades [...], disempowered Hades, by descending to it [...]. Today Hades calls out moaning: [...] for he awakened Adam. Those who were under my rule, they were taken from me [...].)

Origen taught: "Selbst der Teufel, der ja in seinem Sein von Gott gewollt ist, kann nicht immer Teufel bleiben. [...] dass nicht nur alle Menschen, sondern alle Kreaturen [...] bis hin zu den dunklen Dämonen der Erlösung fähig und bedürftig sind." (from Adolf von Harnack, Lehrbuch zur Dogmengeschichte) (Even the devil, in its own way willed by God, cannot always remain devil. [...] that not all men, but all creatures [...] down to the dark demons are capable and in need of redemption.)

Devil and Demons were a spiritual reality to Jesus. He saw them, talked about them, fought them (temptation in the desert), exorcised them and finally defeated them.

Customs: Decorate the Christ-garden (a bowl in the middle, six bowls around it, all with moss, flowers and a candle = symbol of the totality like the seven armed candelabra or the Easter tree --> see description in lent / customs), colour / paint Easter eggs, prepare Easter nests, bake Easter lamb, evening mass. In a Swedish tradition children dressed as Easter witch bring Easter letters and receive candy.

Popular belief: Spring cleaning has to be done by the latest by Easter Saturday or, as they say in some places, "sweep Judas out of the living room". The night of Easter Saturday is supposed to be a good time for rituals of luck, since the evil spirits are listening to Jesus' speech in hell. Wishes spoken during the renewed ringing of the bells are supposed to come true.

EASTER

Resurrection, Women at the empty tomb

Oldest and most important feast of Christianity → without Easter no Christianity!

“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” 1. Corinthians 15,44 = Christian promise of life after death as a spiritual being, of a resurrection into a heavenly world; redemption of the sin of the separation of God and being bound by the realm of the dead

Easter Sunday

Early on Easter morning the women want to embalm Jesus' crops, but they find an **empty grave**, and angels proclaim that Jesus is alive. Jesus shows himself to his disciples as proof of his **resurrection from the realm of the dead** (see Easter Saturday).

The resurrection of Jesus is told in all four Gospels, in the Acts and in Letters (Paul speaks of more than five hundred eye witnesses, who encountered the resurrected, see 1. Corinthians 15,4-8)

The **first weekday / Sunday** became the new **Lord's Day** / new Sabbath in memory of the resurrection of Christ (instead of Saturday, which remains to this day the Sabbath in Judaism). The resurrection is remembered every Sunday, see the Russian word for Sunday “voskresenje” = resurrection → **Sunday = Day of Easter!**

Correspondence Jewish feast of Passover – Easter (both feasts are celebrated at the same time, because the Easter story took place during Passover)

Passover: liberation from the enslavement by the Egyptians → entrance into the promised land (at the end of a long journey!)

Easter: liberation from the bond to the realm of the dead → entrance into heaven (= after a long journey!)

Date of Easter: The first known Easter celebration took place in Rome in the year 150. From the second century onward Easter is known as a feast in Asia Minor. In the western Church it was fixed on the first Sunday after the first full moon in spring in the year 325.

The Jewish feast of Passover takes place on the 14th Nissan (= day of the first full moon of spring).

Name of Easter:

Cardinal direction east (sunrise on the morning of Easter when the women arrived at the grave) or the goddess of spring Ostara (see for example the German "Ostern". French pâques, Italian pasqua, Spanish pascua and Swedisch påsk on the other hand are derived from Passover (= passage, specifically of the angel of death who defeated the first born of Egypt but spared the Israelites).

Leitmotif: Search for meaning, “Seek and you shall find.”

Customs: Collect Easter water from a source, brook, river, lake or fountain (in the church renewal of baptism with holy water → initially baptisms took place during the Easter night, see section on Lent), Easter mass with Easter fire and candle(s) (bring light into the darkness), Easter laughing (the priest has to make the congregation laugh), Easter candle (referenced since 384 AD), communal Easter breakfast, looking for Easter eggs / nests, kick eggs, egg-and-spoon race, meat from the Easter lamb, baked Easter lamb, Easter chicks or doves, Easter cake, Easter stroll (in German also called Emmausgang as a remnant of the disciples who were joined by the resurrected on their journey to Emmaus).

Theological Notes on Easter

What did Jesus save humanity from? From the sin of the fall from God (War of the Angels, original sin), in which we humans participated (at that time as spiritual beings) in the primeval time; respectively from the resulting distance from God and bond to Lucifer's realm of the dead; therefore NOT from everyday sins, for

which each is responsible themselves. "What is sowed has to be harvested"! Cf. questionable catholic dogma: If Christ had saved us from all sin, even future one, why would the idea of eternal damnation of sinners coexist? This alone is a contradiction. Apart from this, in various bible passages it is written that God would not forsake us for eternity (Lamentations 3,31) and ALL men would be saved (1. Timothy 2,4), and that there would be ONE herd and ONE shepherd (John 10,16, cf. Romans 11,25). The big early Christian teacher and Church Father Origen similarly taught about a "restoration of all things" and considered all creatures worthy of salvation – even the devil as responsible for all evil.

Resurrection where to? → from the underworld back into heaven cf. "The way of life winds upward for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below." (Proverbs 15,24)

However, what does this path of resurrection look like? Is there a possibility of a reincarnation with the chance of redemption and continued evolution?

The answer to this question cannot be excluding, in the sense of an either-or (resurrection OR reincarnation), but could be formulated as an open question: resurrections THANKS TO reincarnation?

Cf. Bible: Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be released in heaven. → Where, therefore, can it be loosed / solved: on earth. However, there has to be an opportunity given to this end, if, as Paul says "everyone (!) shall be saved". In view of our individuality, free will, as well as significantly different living conditions, this cannot be achieved from one moment to the other or even forced, but takes time.

Note: It should be taken in consideration – whether you believe in reincarnation or not – that the idea of a repeated existence on earth is not a new idea or imported from the East, but has been embedded in the Jewish and Christian traditions since the beginning. Famous examples from the bible: The humans speculated openly which prophet had been reborn in Jesus (see Matthew 16,13f). Jesus himself describes John the Baptist as a reborn Elijah. Even the questions of the disciples about the sins of a previous life to the blind born prove the circulation of that idea.

Therefore, Origen and other Church Fathers have discussed the possibility of several existences of earth on several occasions, and in some cases spoken in favour of it (e.g. Clement of Alexandria). The belief in repeated existences on earth never became official doctrine, however to the initiated it has been passed down as an old tradition, and to this day common in numerous Christian circles. For example, according to a study, in Brazil 80% of the Catholics believe in reincarnation.

In the view of a continuous retrogression toward a once lost heavenly home, the idea of a judgement at the end of all days does not make sense.

Last Judgement

Already in the **Old Testament** speaks of this big 'day of the Lord', on the one hand as interference of Yahweh on behalf of Israel, but also on the other hand as the day of the judgement of Israel and all its sins at the end of time of the old world.

The main aspect of the **eschatology of Jesus** is the sermon about the end of this new beginning / about the heavenly kingdom and the looming judgement. See for example Matthew 25,31 f. → Concerning the translation of the term 'everlasting' see note 1)

On this Jesus:

"For I have come down from heaven, [...] that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day [which shall soon take place!]. " John 6,38 f

"For judgement I have come into this world" (John 9,39) " He has given Him authority to execute judgement 2) also [...] the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God [...]. For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves [i.e. the ones who have been born before the salvific deed of Christ, who fell to the underworld / Hebrew Sheol 3), will hear His voice and come forth [...], those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.", John. 5,27f and the following purgation through suffering of 'fire', Hebrews 2,10 and 1. Corinthians 3,8-15. Cf. Notes 1) and 2).

"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from

the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." John. 12,31-32. That is to say immediately after his death, not at the end of all time, but now, at the beginning of the new era, which has started with Jesus.

"[...] of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. " John 16,11.

This judgement announced by Jesus apparently took place during the Harrowing of Hell. The "angels and authorities and powers [= demons] having been made subject to Him" as it is written in 1. Peter 3,22 and how it is shown again and again in depictions of the Last Judgement, i.e. the Harrowing of Hell. Cf. Colossians 2,15.

Over time the immediately expected judgement was moved further and further into the future. Through this, the Harrowing of Hell and the Last Judgement were interpreted as two different occasions, often tied to the naive imagination that at the end of time all graves would open, and the deceased that had until this point rested in their graves would bodily rise.

Final thoughts:

In light of the resurrection, a judgement at the end of all times loses its sense. If "the Lord will not cast off forever. " (Lamentations, 3,31), and supposedly "all men [are] to be saved " (1. Timothy 2,4), if there is to be "one herd, one shepherd " (John 10,16, cf. Romans 11,25), at the goal / the end of the divine history of salvation, the blessed return of all creatures will take place, not a judgement with eternal damnation. 1) Such a damnation would put into question God's plan of salvation – a loving God would not leave his creatures to eternal damnation or destruction! See also the opinion of the Church Father Origen, so so called 'apokastasis panton', the restoration of all things to the original order. Therefore, resurrection can be understood as a path, which each soul fallen from God / each human embarks on or shapes out of free will, for you cannot save somebody against his will. The destination of this path is the "inheritance [...] reserved in heaven for you", which await each soul upon ascension, 1. Peter 1,4 und Galatians 4,1-7.

1) **The term everlasting** (→ everlasting fire, everlasting punishment), from the Greek 'aion', meaning an indeterminate amount of time. For example, for the Roman an aeon described a time period of a hundred years. Accordingly it was not a never ending period of time, not eternity! It should be translated with "appropriate amount of time" or "for a long time". Through the misleading translation "everlasting" fear is struck into the hearts of believers through the imagination of an everlasting punishment in hell or even ultimate destruction and puts them in a dependence on the singularly salvific churches.

2) **Before the earthly existence of Christ there was no judgement after earthly death.** According to the OT, independently of the life somebody lead, with very few exceptions (cf. for example the ascension of Elijah) everybody fell to the realm of the dead / Hades. Therefore, at the Last Judgement, Jesus supposedly not only judged the evil powers themselves, but all that had died at that point, who before had been indiscriminately subject to the powers of evil, see Galatians 4,1-7. This means that it was distinguished according to convictions, who was already ready for the ascension to heaven (= resurrection of life) and who still had to be held in the lower spheres for an indeterminate amount of time. The stigmatic seer Anna Katharina Emmerich saw in her visions that the Harrowing of Hell was repeated on Easter each year and souls ready for ascension were freed from the underworld:

"Die Höllenfahrt, die ich sah, ist ein Bild aus einer verflochtenen Zeit, aber das heutige Erlösen ist eine fortdauernde Wahrheit; denn die Höllenfahrt Jesu ist das Pflanzen eines Gnadenbaumes (!) seiner Verdienste für die armen Seelen, und das fortwährende und auch heutige Erlösen der armen Seelen ist das Fruchtragen dieses geistlichen Gartens des Kirchenjahres"

(The Harrowing of Hell that I saw was an image of a time gone by, but the salvation of the present day is an enduring truth; for the Harrowing of Hell is the plantation of a tree of mercy (!) for his merit on behalf of the poor soul, and the continuous and the present day salvation of the poor soul is the fruit of this spiritual garden of the annual cycle.) This enduring salvation and ascension was recognised by many Christian teachers, visionaries and spiritual teachers through the help of mediumistic proclamations to this day, and above all Christ himself. For example in early Christianity by the Church Father Origen among others, in modern days Rudolf Steiner, the catholic priest Johannes Greber, in the form of spiritual messages from the GLZH Zürich, as well as many more.

3) In the biblical world view the **Hades, the Underworld or the Realm of the Dead** was the realm of the devil – in or upon earth – with his fallen angels and the deceased people. The Jewish tradition distinguishes

between two different areas: The Hebrew *sche'ol* designated the limbo and the place of waiting for the people that had died before the arrival of Christ, in particular believers of the Old Covenant, who after Adam waited for the final salvations. The Hebrew *Gehenna* designated hell in the sense of absolute distance from God and the home of the prince of darkness. People of antiquity, i.e. Jews from the time of the OT, but Greeks Egyptians ect. as well, were convinced that they would enter into the realm of the dead or the underworld, the Hades, after their death. Examples: Saul has the necromancer summon Samuel from the underworld. Saul questioned the Lord because he was afraid of an attack by the Philistines. However the Lord did not answer, neither through dreams nor the divine oracle (Urim and Thummim), nor through the prophets (mediums). Therefore he searched for a woman who had the power over dead spirits (!), despite earlier having the land cleansed from seers and necromancers, because the questioning and interactions with the underworld / the dead / idols was in opposition to the questioning of the divine world. The necromancer told him: "I see a ghost rise from the earth." And the ghost of the deceased Samuel told him, that Saul alongside his sons would be with him by the morrow (in the underworld).

"Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them; the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; And their beauty shall be consumed in the grave far from their dwelling. None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of their souls is costly.", Psalms 49,14 and 8.

In the course of the centuries, but in particular towards the dawn of the new age, the belief and the promise of a future resurrection spread, which was then realized in the person of Christ.

"The way of life winds upwards for the wise, that he may turn away from hell below." Proverbs, 15,24.

After Easter

Jesus shows himself to his disciples.

After Easter = 40 days to Ascension

First of all the disorientation, fear and insecurity among his followers, then many appearances of Jesus after his resurrection:

Women at the grave, disciples, disciples of Emmaus, disbeliever Thomas (he touches Jesus' wounds), at the lake Tiberias (Jesus enables the catching of fish and passes on the leadership over his 'sheep' to Peter) and 500 more eye witnesses (Paul talks of more than 500 eye witnesses that have met the resurrected, see 1. Corinthians 15,4-8).

Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven and predicts the descent from heaven of the Holy Ghost.

Nature: magnificent array of blossoms, different shades of green, morning and evening concerts by birds

Symbol: butterflies (caterpillar - pupa - butterfly = metaphor of the resurrection for body - grave - soul)

Motive: trust, comfort, hope for a life after death → 'blossoming' in every way

Ascension

Jesus ascends to heaven.

Ascension = the 40th day after Easter (independent feast after 370)

Jesus walks out of Jerusalem with his disciples, blesses his friend and disappears in a cloud (dissolving of the visually materialised body); taking up again of his heavenly office as Lord and King on heaven and earth. Two angels explain to the disciples that he shall return in the same way.

→ Disciples wait in Jerusalem for the promised Spirit of Truth = 10 passing days and mental preparation for Pentecost. Ideal time to meditate on the 10 Commandments and get to know them as sensible rules for life, upon which basis the divine working is built. Pentecost corresponds to the Jewish Shavuot, which is celebrated in memory of the first barley harvest and the divine revelation of the 10 Commandments.

Symbols: clouds (carries the water of life to the whole world) and butterflies (metaphor: caterpillar = body; pupa = death / grave / transformation; butterfly = soul)

Motive: blessing, joy, expectation, thankfulness (cf. merry month of May)

Customs: Rogation Days, nowadays Confirmations, walks around the fields with prayer for fertility and protection, processions or a stroll to pick wild flowers, cloud gazing (what stories do they tell?), watch / breed / craft / draw butterflies, songs, poems, stories, craft images of heaven and the sky (talking about the difference between heaven and sky).

Other Spring customs: So called 'Maiburschen' (youths of May) play tricks in the night leading to 1. May (= Walpurgis night, goes back to pre-Christian traditions), put up Maypoles and dance around it, vote for the May queen, drink May punch, Mother's Day, in catholic regions May-services in memory of Mary.