

Why don't we celebrate Easter on a fixed date like Christmas Day?

Easter is the most ancient and most important festival in the calendar of Christendom. The early Christians celebrated Easter on a fixed date; that is, on the Jewish Passover feast day. However, when non-Jewish people started converting to Christianity, there was a disagreement whether a fixed date should be kept for the Jewish Passover day. The Jewish Christians insisted on this fixed date because Jesus' final days coincided with the Passover and his death fell upon the day of the Passover feast. The Jews, mindful of the linkage between Christ's death and the Passover, insisted that the Resurrection must be commemorated on Passover feast day or Pesach, regardless of the day of the week on which it fell.

On the other hand, the Gentile Christians argued that this holy day (Easter) must be observed on Sunday, since it was on the first day of the week that Jesus rose from the tomb. This debate became one of the first controversies that early Christianity had to deal with. Disagreement between the early Jewish Christians and Gentile followers of Jesus. The debate centered on whether the date for Easter should follow the Jewish calendar or the Julian calendar or the Gregorian calendar. Some Christians believed that the best way to solve the problem was to celebrate Easter on the first day of Passover according to the Jewish calendar while another group held that Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the opening of Passover.

Emperor Constantine, the Roman Emperor who himself converted to Christianity help sort out this rift between the different sides of the Church. He convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. (in modern Turkey). Lunar astronomers were invited to the Nicaea Council to present arguments about the merits of the Julian or Gregorian calendars and the Council ruled that Easter should be observed, as it is now, on the first Sunday after the full moon following the spring equinox. The main argument Constantine had for this decision was that Easter shouldn't be connected with the festival of another faith. It should stand on its own in connection with the natural world. Hence he ordained that Easter should be celebrated on the Sunday after the first New Moon of Spring. This is why Easter remains a movable feast till today.