Religious Celebrations

Contents

Celebrations 4
What are religious celebrations? 6
Christmas, Christianity 8
Easter, Christianity 10
Day of the Dead, Christianity 12
Passover, Judaism 14
Hanukkah, Judaism 16
Eid al-Adha, Islam 18
Eid al-Fitr, Islam 20
Buddha Day, Buddhism 22
Diwali, Hinduism 26
Holi, Hinduism 28
Try this! 30

Glossary 31
Index 32

When a word is printed in **bold**, click on it to find its meaning.
Birthdays are special events that many people celebrate.

New Year’s Eve is celebrated all around the world with fireworks.

Celebrations are events that are held on special occasions. Some are events from the past that are still celebrated. Others celebrate important times in our lives, or activities such as music.

Some celebrations involve only a few people. Others involve whole cities or countries. Large celebrations take place across the world.
What are religious celebrations?

Religious celebrations are times when important religious events are remembered. Some religious celebrations are held on the same day every year.

Some religious celebrations have changed over time. Other celebrations are new. However, most religious celebrations are hundreds of years old.

Followers of Islam pray in a place called a mosque during religious celebrations.

Many Buddhist celebrations have been passed down from many years ago.
Christmas is celebrated by Christians around the world. It celebrates the birth of Jesus. This was on 25 December, which is known as Christmas Day.

Christmas is a favourite celebration for many children. On Christmas Day people are given presents. This is because three wise men gave presents to the baby Jesus.

Many Christians go to special church services on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

People receive presents from their family and friends at Christmas.
Easter is a Christian celebration. It celebrates the **rebirth** of Jesus after his death on the cross. The date of Easter changes each year, but it is always around March or April.

At Easter, children are given chocolate Easter eggs. The eggs represent new life. Many Christians attend church during Easter.
Day of the Dead, Christianity

The Day of the Dead is a Latin American festival. It takes place on 1 and 2 November each year. Christians remember friends and family who have died.

A Day of the Dead tradition is making altars, which are decorated with flowers. The favourite food and drink of the dead person are also put on the altars.

Christians visit the graves of loved ones during the festival.

Sugar skulls represent death and rebirth and are placed on altars during the festival.
Passover, Judaism

Passover is a Jewish festival held in March or April. It celebrates the saving of the Jewish people from slavery many years ago.

Special meals are eaten during Passover. Houses are cleaned and forbidden foods such as cakes and cereal are removed. Families also search their homes for any crumbs.

Jewish people gather together to pray and eat during Passover.

Passover has strict rules about which foods can be eaten.
Hanukkah, Judaism

Hanukkah (say ha-nook-kah) is a Jewish celebration that lasts for eight days in November or December. Candles are lit to remember a great victory by the Jewish people.

Candles are lit in a special candleholder called a menorah.

Hanukkah is a popular celebration for children. Schools are closed and special foods are eaten. Children play with dreidels, and many receive presents.

The words on the dreidels help children to remember the Hanukkah story.
Many Muslims go to mosques to pray during Eid al-Adha.

Sheep are killed and the meat is given to family, friends and poor people. Children are given presents and they eat special foods.
Eid al-Fitr, Islam

Eid al-Fitr (say eed-al-fitter) is a Muslim celebration held at the end of Ramadan. Ramadan is a month when people fast from sunrise to sunset. Eid al-Fitr is held in September or October. People celebrate the end of Ramadan with a large feast. They also decorate their homes. Eid al-Fitr is a time to forgive people for any wrong things they have done.

Muslims wear special clothes and wave flowers to celebrate the end of Ramadan.

Eid al-Fitr is celebrated with a feast of special foods.
Buddha Day, Buddhism

Buddha Day, which is also known as Wesak (or Vesak), is an important Buddhist celebration. People remember the birth and death of Buddha.

Buddha Day is celebrated on the first full moon in May. Buddhists gather at temples to pray and sing. They also make offerings of flowers, candles and incense.

Buddhists make offerings to Buddha to thank him for his teachings.
On Buddha Day, Buddhists try not to kill any living thing. They also set birds and animals free. This is to show the importance of freedom for all animals.

People only eat **vegetarian food** on Buddha Day. Homes are cleaned and decorated, and special lanterns are made.
Diwali, Hinduism

Diwali is a Hindu festival held in October or November. It is also known as the Festival of Lights. Lighting candles and setting off fireworks are part of the celebrations.

Diwali lasts for five days and is celebrated around the world. During Diwali many people wear new clothes. They also share snacks and sweets with each other.

Lighting candles is an important part of celebrating Diwali.

Colourful paper lanterns are part of the Diwali festival.
Holi, Hinduism

Holi is a Hindu festival held in spring. It is also called the Festival of Colours. This is because people throw coloured paint, powder and water at each other.

Many Hindus wear white clothes when throwing paint and water during Holi.

Holi celebrates spring and a very old Hindu legend. Large bonfires are lit and food is roasted on the fires. There is also singing and dancing.

During Holi, bonfires are lit to drive away bad spirits.
Try this!

Try this quiz

Find the answers to these questions in the book. (You can check your answers on page 32.)

1. Which religion celebrates Hanukkah?
2. Where is the Day of the Dead celebrated?
3. When is Eid al-Fitr celebrated?
4. What are released on Buddha Day?
5. What do people throw at each other during Holi?

Try this activity

Next time you celebrate a special occasion with your friends or family, ask yourself:

- Why are you celebrating?
- How long have people been celebrating this event?
- Are there other places in the world where people celebrate the event?
altars | special tables where offerings are made
---|---
dreidels | four-sided tops or toys
fast | a time when food is not eaten
incense | scented wood that smells nice when it burns
Latin American | from the countries and cultures of Central and South America and the Caribbean Islands
legend | a story from long ago
mosque | special building where Muslims go to worship
Muslim | a follower of the religion Islam
offerings | gifts to a god
pilgrimage | a religious journey to a special place
rebirth | coming back to life
temples | special buildings used for religious reasons
tradition | an activity or belief handed down from older people to younger people
vegetarian food | food that contains no meat
Index

b
Buddha 22, 23, 25
Buddha Day 22–25
Buddhism 7, 22–25

c
Christianity 8–13
Christmas 8–9
church 8, 11

d
Day of the Dead 12–13
Diwali 26–27

e
Easter 10–11
Eid al-Adha 18–19
Eid al-Fitr 20–21

f
Festival of Colours 28–29
Festival of Lights 26–27

h
Hanukkah 16–17
Hinduism 26–29
Holi 28–29

i
Islam 6, 18–21

j
Jesus 8, 9, 10
Judaism 14–17

l
Latin America 12–13

m
mosque 6, 19

p
Passover 14–15

r
Ramadan 20–21

t
temples 23

w
Wesak 22–25

Answers to the quiz on page 30
1 Judaism
2 Latin America
3 At the end of Ramadan, in September or October
4 Birds and animals
5 Coloured paint, powder and water