

Theme 4 – Letter C - Festivals

- Know how Advent and Christmas are celebrated in **Western** churches.
- Know how Advent and Christmas are celebrated in **Eastern** churches.
- Have developed your AO1 skills.



Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding	AO2 – Issues for Analysis and Evaluation
<p>C) Religious identity through diversity in festivals</p> <p>Christmas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The similarities (with reference to the focus on incarnation of Christ) and differences (date of celebration; focus of Advent season; Christmas services) between the Eastern Orthodox and the Western churches' celebration of Christmas. <p>Easter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The similarities (with reference to the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ) and differences (date; liturgical practice at Easter; the diversity within each stream of tradition) between the Eastern Orthodox and the Western churches' celebration of Easter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whether the different emphases and practices mean that Easter is a different celebration in the Eastern Orthodox and Western churches.• The relative importance of Easter and Christmas.

Starter

- On your white-board, list as many activities or traditions relating to Advent and Christmas as you can think of in sixty seconds.
- Now categorise the items in your list as follows:
 - a) Christian in origin
 - b) Religious (but not Christian) / pagan in origin
 - c) Secular in origin
 - d) Have no idea!

60



Advent in the Western church

- Christmas is when Christians celebrate the **birth of Jesus**.
- The period of preparation leading up to Christmas is called **Advent**.
- *Q: In the Western church, how long does Advent last?*
- *A: Approximately 4 weeks.*



Advent in the Western church

- The word 'Advent' comes from the Latin word '**adventus**' which means '**coming**'.
- Watch this video: [What is Advent?](#) Answer the following question:
- *Q: What two events are Christians anticipating during Advent?*
 1. Jesus' 'First Coming' – his birth.
 2. Jesus' 'Second Coming' – when Jesus will return to Earth at the Last Judgment.

Advent in the Western church

Jesus' First Coming

- Using your knowledge of the birth narrative in Matthew's gospel, what Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled at the birth of Jesus?
- Check your answers ...
- **Matthew 1:23** quotes from the prophet **Isaiah**: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14).
- **Matthew 2:6** quotes from the prophet **Micah**: "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel." (Micah 5: 2 and 5)

Advent in the Western church

Jesus' Second Coming

- The technical term for the 'Second Coming' of Jesus is the Greek word '**Parousia**'.
- There are many biblical references prophesying Jesus' return.
- Task: Look up these biblical passages about the Parousia and choose one to summarise.
 - Revelation 1:7
 - Matthew 25:30-32
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17
 - Matthew 22:42-44



Advent in the Western church - Liturgical colours

- Since the 13th century, the colour **purple** can be seen throughout Advent in the Western church.
- One can expect to see purple candles, purple decorations, the priest wearing purple vestments and purple on the altar.
- Purple is the colour of **repentance**, reminding Christians to repent of their sins in preparation for the coming of Jesus.
- Purple also symbolises **royalty** – Jesus was the ‘King of Kings’.
- In some Protestant churches, **blue** is used during Advent – the colour of hope.



Advent in the Western church – The Advent Wreath

- The Advent wreath is made of evergreen leaves and contains four candles around the circle and (usually) one in the middle.
- A candle is lit on each Sunday of Advent.
- The centre candle is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
- Most Advent wreaths use three colours of candles – purple, rose (pink) and white. However, some Protestant churches use blue instead of purple.
- *THINK-PAIR-SHARE: What is the symbolism of the wreath and candles?*



Advent in the Western church - The symbolism of the Advent wreath

- Evergreen = life. The wreath's circular shape = everlasting life in Christ.

Candle 1 = Prophecy candle – Hope

- God spoke to his people through the prophets, offering them hope of a Saviour.
- Christians are reminded to have hope in the promises of God.

Candle 2 = Bethlehem candle – Love

- The focus is on the preparation of Mary and Joseph for the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
- Jesus was born in an ordinary town to an ordinary woman. Likewise, the love of God extends to all people in our seemingly ordinary lives.

Advent in the Western church - The symbolism of the Advent wreath

Candle 3 = Shepherd candle – Joy

- A **rose/pink** coloured candle is lit which represents joy.
- This third Sunday of Advent is called '**Gaudete Sunday**' which is Latin for the word '**rejoice**'.
- Luke's birth narrative tells us that an angel of the Lord visited the shepherds bringing "good news that will cause great **JOY** for all the people."



Advent in the Western church - The symbolism of the Advent wreath

Candle 4 = Angel candle – Peace

- Angels feature throughout the birth narratives.
- Annunciation – Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Son of God.
- A host of angels appeared to the shepherds, singing glory to God and “on earth **PEACE** to those on whom his favour rests.”

Advent in the Western church - The symbolism of the Advent wreath

Candle 5 = Christ candle – Light

- During the church service on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day a **white** candle is lit.
- This represents the arrival of Jesus and symbolises that **Jesus is the light of the world**.
- White also reminds Christians that Jesus is without sin – he is **God incarnate**.



Advent in the Western church - The symbolism of the Advent wreath

- Take it in turns to tell your 'elbow buddy' something you have learnt about the Advent wreath. Use the picture below to help if necessary.

ADVENTUS *(Latin)* = COMING *(English)*
ADVENT = Coming of Christ

1st Sunday
(nearest 30th of Nov)



Prophecy
Candle

2nd Sunday



Bethlehem
Candle

3rd Sunday



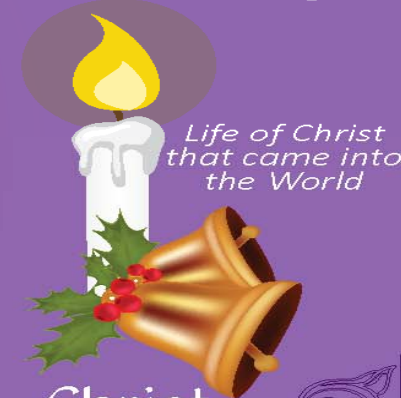
Shepherd's
Candle

4th Sunday



Angel's
Candle

Christmas Eve
or Christmas Day



Christ
Candle

*Life of Christ
that came into
the World*

Advent in the Western church

Advent calendars

- Traditionally used by German Lutherans in the 19th and 20th centuries.
- Biblical verse, poem or prayer behind each door.

Great Advent 'O Antiphons'

- Sung at Evening Prayer from 17th – 23rd December
- Each antiphon refers to an attribute of Jesus mentioned in the Bible.
- [What are the 'O Antiphons'?](#)
- On your whiteboard, write down the seven attributes of Jesus mentioned in each antiphon: [O Antiphons for Advent](#)

Advent in the Western church

Recap:

Watch the following clip about Advent to reinforce your knowledge and understanding of Advent in the Western church:

[Advent in 2 minutes](#)

Christmas in the Western church

Why 25th December?

- Christmas in the Western church is celebrated on **25th December**.
- However, no one knows the date of Jesus' birth.
- Many people argue that Christmas has **pagan origins** and that 25th December was chosen by the early Christians to replace pagan festivals and give them a new meaning.
- There are two main claims that support this idea, but both can be disputed ...



Christmas in the Western church

Why 25th December?

Claim 1: December 25th chosen to replace the festival of **Saturnalia**.

- Saturnalia = an ancient Roman mid-winter festival held in honour of the pagan god, Saturn. It involved feasting and exchanging of gifts.

Why this claim is disputed:

- Saturnalia was from 17th to 23rd December.
- Why would the early church, to direct the attention of Christians away from a pagan celebration, choose a date two days after the festival had already ended and whoever wanted had already participated? It makes no sense.

Christmas in the Western church

Why 25th December?

Claim 2: December 25th chosen to replace the Roman festival of *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti* – **the 'Birthday of the Unconquered Sun'**.

- Emperor Aurelian invented *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti* in 274 AD.
- Christmas didn't enter the world calendar until 354 AD.

Why this claim is disputed:

- Christmas could have preceded Aurelian's festival .
- Until the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, Christians were persecuted and therefore met in catacombs. Evidence from hymns and prayers of the first Christians show that they did celebrate it in secret.
- Scholar **Thomas Talley** argues that Aurelian inaugurated the festival of the Birth of the Unconquered Sun trying to give new life to a dying Roman Empire. It is more likely, he argues, that the Emperor's action was a response to the growing popularity and strength of the Catholic religion, which was celebrating Christ's birth on December 25th, rather than the other way around.

Christmas in the Western church

Why 25th December?

- Watch the following short animation.
- Summarise two theories as to why the Western church chose the 25th December to celebrate Christmas.
- [Journey to December 25](#)

Christmas in the Western church



Carol service



Nativity play




Exchanging gifts

Using the picture clues, can you identify ways in which Christmas is celebrated in the Western church?



Nativity crib



Traditionally 3 Eucharist services:
Midnight Christmas Eve, Christmas morning,
Christmas Day



Christingle service

Christmas in the Western church

- 'Christingle' is Scandinavian for 'the light of Christ'.
- Think-pair-share: What does each part of the Christingle symbolise?



- Orange
- Four cocktail sticks
- Sweets/fruit
- Candle
- Red ribbon

Advent in the Eastern church

- Read the first two paragraphs of p110. Answer the following questions:

1. What is Advent called in the Eastern church?

The Nativity Fast

2. How long does it last?

40 days

3. What foods are not eaten during this time?

Red meat, poultry, egg and dairy products, fish, oil, wine

4. What is '*Paramony*'?

The Eve of the Nativity during which no solid food can be eaten until the first star appears in the sky. *Paramony* = preparation.

Advent in the Eastern church

- Read the next two paragraphs of p110. Answer the following questions:
 1. State two ways in which the Nativity Fast differs from Advent in the West.

It doesn't begin the church year. There is no emphasis on the Parousia.

2. What is the liturgical colour of the Nativity Fast

Red (Sometimes gold)

3. Feast days during the Nativity Fast celebrate what prophecy?

The incarnation

4. Explain what is commemorated during the 'Sunday of the Forefathers' and the 'Sunday of the Holy Fathers'.

Forefathers = ancestors of the church

Holy Fathers = righteous men and women who pleased God.

Christmas in the Eastern church

- Christmas Day in the Eastern church is celebrated on **7th January**, corresponding with the **Julian calendar**.
- Read the section, 'Christmas in the Eastern church' on page 110. Complete the two tasks below:
 1. Summarise the 5 services that take place on the Eve of the Nativity.
 2. State three things that happen on Christmas Day.

Eastern, Western or both?

- Complete the Advent/Christmas Venn diagram in your work book using the following words/ideas:

- Purple
- Red
- Paramony
- Incarnation
- Nativity Fast
- Gaudete Sunday
- White linen
- Advent = approx 4 weeks
- Advent = 40 days

- Advent wreath
- Parousia
- O Antiphons
- 25th December = Christmas Day
- 7th January = Christmas Day
- Christingle
- Exchanging gifts
- Parallel to Good Friday services
- Feast on Christmas Day

Challenge: Add your own words to the diagram

Learning check ...

By the end of today's lesson you will:

- Know how Advent and Christmas are celebrated in **Western** churches. ✓
- Know how Advent and Christmas are celebrated in **Eastern** churches. ✓
- Have developed your AO1 skills.



A01 Consolidation

- [Kahoot](#)



A01 Question

- Examine the similarities and differences of how Advent and Christmas are celebrated in Western and Eastern churches. [20]

Starter – What is Easter?

- Divide your paper into eight squares.
- Ask 8 different members of the class to tell you one thing they know about **LENT** and **EASTER**. (Consider what is being celebrated/remembered, religious practices, when it takes place)
- Record each answer on a separate square.
- Feedback - make notes.



What is Easter?

- Easter is a Christian festival celebrating the **resurrection** of Jesus.



When is Easter celebrated?

• *Read the section entitled 'Easter' on p111. Answer these questions:*

1. What is the formula for Easter upon which both the Western and Eastern agree?

The first Sunday after the first full moon on/after the vernal equinox.

2. If they're using the same formula, why isn't Easter celebrated on the same date in Western and Eastern churches?

Eastern – Set date according to the *actual* astronomical full moon and the *actual* equinox.

Western – Use a *fixed date* for the vernal equinox (21st March). Full moon = ecclesiastical moon.

3. In which church does Easter always fall *after* the Jewish Passover?

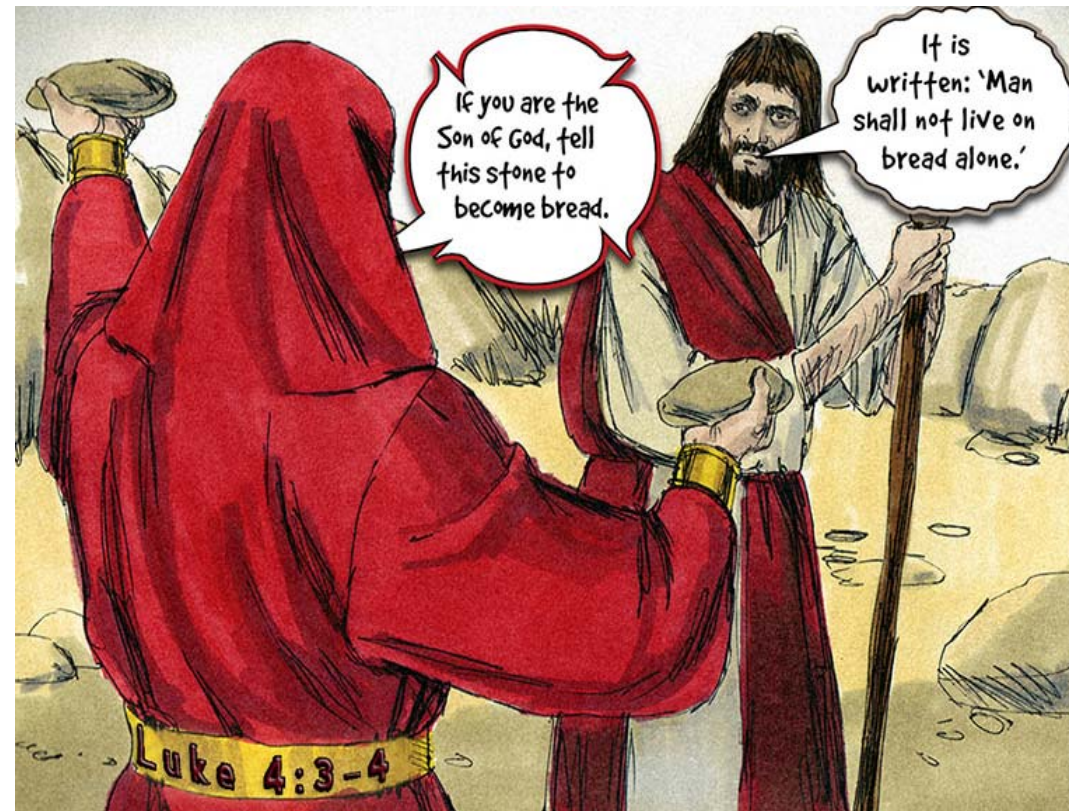
Eastern

Lent in the Western church

- Lent is the period of **40 days** (excluding Sundays) preparation for Easter.
- During Lent, many Christians will **fast** or give up certain luxuries.

Think-pair-share:

- *Why does Lent last for 40 days?*
- *Why do Christians fast or give something up?*
- *Use the picture clue to help.*



Lent in the Western church

- In the Western church, Lent begins on **Ash Wednesday**.
- Watch the following video and answer the questions below:
 - *What happens on Ash Wednesday?*
 - *State two things that the ashes symbolise.*
- [Ash Wednesday](#)



Lent in the Western church

- During Lent, many churches remove flowers from their altars and cover religious symbols.
- Services of the Stations of the Cross are observed.
- The liturgical colour is purple.



Why do these practises take place?

Lent in the Western church

- The **fourth Sunday** of Lent is called **Laetare Sunday**.
- Laetare is Latin for 'rejoice'.
- On this day priests wear **rose** coloured vestments instead of purple. *Why? (Think about Gaudete Sunday during Advent)*
- Rose = colour of joy. Laetare Sunday is the half-way point between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. It acts as a time of encouragement for those who have been fasting or in penance – they've made it half way through! Soon there will be a time a great joy – celebrating Jesus' resurrection.
- The fourth Sunday is also Mothering Sunday.

Lent in the Western church

- The **fifth Sunday** of Lent is called **Passion Sunday** and marks the beginning of **Passiontide**.
- The **Passion** (from the Latin: passionem "suffering, enduring") is the final period in the life of Jesus.

Lent in the Western church

- The last week of Lent is called **Holy Week**.
- Task: Complete this table of significant days in Holy Week using information from the textbook *and* http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/holydays/holyweek_1.shtml

Day	Link to Jesus' life / biblical story	Church customs/practices
Palm Sunday		
Maundy Thursday		
Good Friday		
Holy Saturday		

Lent in the Western church

- On Good Friday in the Philippines, some Roman Catholic Christians will carry out a very literal re-enactment of the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus.
- Warning – the following video is gruesome!
- [Crucifixion in the Philippines](#)

Easter in the Western church

- Easter Sunday is a time of joy, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus.
- The liturgical colours for the day are white and gold.
- Churches are decorated with white and yellow flowers.
- Joyful hymns are sung.



Lent in the Eastern church

- In the Eastern Orthodox church Easter is preceded by the most important fasting season of the year, **Great Lent** or the **Great Fast**.
- Great Lent starts on '**Clean Monday**', the beginning of Clean Week. This refers to the spiritual cleansing of those doing the fast.
- The second week remembers **St Gregory Palamas**, one of the great saints of the Orthodox church.
- On the Sunday of the third week, the **Veneration of the Cross** is celebrated—the cross is brought out into the centre of the church and meditated upon all night. The fourth week is an extension of this.
- Saturday of the fifth week is dedicated to **Mary** the mother of Jesus.
- Great Lent ends with a Vespers service on the Friday of the sixth week and is followed by **Lazarus Saturday** which celebrates the resurrection of Lazarus as a foretaste of the resurrection of Jesus.

Lent in the Eastern church

- Holy Week services begin on the night of **Palm Sunday**.
- During Holy Week, each day has its own theme:
- Holy and Great Monday – Joseph as a type of Christ, the cursing of the fig tree
- Holy and Great Tuesday – the Parable of the Ten Virgins
- Holy and Great Wednesday – the anointing of Jesus at Bethany
- Holy and Great Thursday – the Mystical Supper, the start of the Eucharist
- Holy and Great Friday – Jesus's passion. A strict fast day. The *epitaphios* representing Jesus' burial sheet is put on a bier representing Jesus' tomb.
- Holy and Great Saturday – Jesus' burial and his descent into hell.

Easter in the Eastern church

• *Read the section entitled 'Easter in the Eastern church' on p113. Answer these questions:*

1. What happens at the end of the Midnight Office service?

Lights/candles are extinguished. Wait in silence, in the dark until midnight when Jesus' resurrection is proclaimed.

2. What does the priest and congregation do at midnight?

Light candles and process around the church.

3. What do the dyed red hard boiled eggs symbolise?

Red = Jesus blood. Cracked egg = opening of Jesus' tomb.

Eastern, Western or both?

- Complete the Easter Venn diagram in your work book using the following words/ideas:

- Easter always happens after Passover
- Ash Wednesday
- Laetare Sunday
- Paschal candle
- Great Fast
- Dyed red hard boiled eggs
- Holy Saturday
- Palm Sunday
- Epitaphios

- Purple
- White
- Midnight Office
- Good Friday
- Great Friday
- Lazarus Saturday
- Feet washing
- Fasting
- Jesus' resurrection is celebrated

Challenge: Add your own words to the diagram

AO2 – Is Easter a different celebration in Eastern and Western churches?

- Read p115
- Do the AO2 activity.
- Feedback your response to the class.

A02 – Christmas v Easter

- “Christmas is more important than Easter for Christians.”
Evaluate this view. [30 marks]
- Use your notes from class as well as p116 to help.