



Easter Cycles of Time Quiz



We all live within the cycle of the seasons and most religions anchor their festivals at fixed points on this turning calendar. For Christians, the events of Easter – the death and resurrection of Jesus one week two thousand years ago - are central to an understanding of the world both within time and beyond it. But different faiths and cultures have different concepts of time. What do we mean by time – or eternity? Does time circle endlessly? Or is it more like a line, with a beginning, middle and end? Answer the quiz to discover more.

1. Why do Islamic festivals happen at different dates/seasons each year?

- a. Because the Islamic calendar is lunar
- b. Because variety is the spice of life
- c. Because the Islamic year has more days than the Christian calendar

2. The circle of Stonehenge is aligned to point towards what?

- a. The rising sun on the Winter Solstice (the year's darkest day)
- b. The rising sun on the Summer Solstice (mid-summer's day)
- c. The rising sun on the vernal equinox (first day of spring)

3. According to the Law laid down in Leviticus chapter 25, what should happen every seven years?

- a. Everyone had to go to the Jerusalem to worship
- b. Everyone had to free their slaves
- c. No one was allowed to grow or harvest crops

4. The song '*Will the Circle be Unbroken*', sung by many American musicians from the Carter Family to the Staples Singers, was popular in the American Civil Rights movement. Where was it written?

- a. New York
- b. Birmingham, Alabama
- c. London

5. Which monastic order built circular churches?

- a. The Dominicans
- b. The Franciscans
- c. The Knights Templar



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6. What is celebrated on the 21st March?
- The burning to death of Thomas Cranmer
 - The Vernal equinox
 - Johann Sebastian Bach's birthday
7. Janus was the Roman God of what?
- Eggs
 - Doors
 - Clocks
8. Some statues of the Buddha show him with the thumb and forefinger of one hand held in a circular shape. What does this gesture symbolize?
- He is feeling OK
 - The Wheel of Law
 - OM
9. Already in 1,000 BC, Hinduism had developed the idea that the universe went through limitless cycles. How many years is the smallest cycle, the Maha Yuga, said to last?
- 4,320,000 years
 - 2,500,000 years
 - 12,000 years

10. *'I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm, as it was bright;
And round beneath it, Time in hours,
days, years,
Driv'n by the spheres
Like a vast shadow mov'd; in which the world
And all her train were hurl'd.'*

Whose vision of eternity was this?

- Henry Vaughan
- Rowan Williams
- Dylan Thomas



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11. According to the Bible, when is the only occasion on which the sun stood still?
 - a. On the morning of Christ's resurrection
 - b. When Joshua was fighting the Amorites
 - c. On the fourth day of creation

12. In modern Christian theology much is often made of the contrast between *kairos* and *chronos*. *Chronos* is the Greek word for ordinary clock time, but *kairos* means what?
 - a. Absence of Time
 - b. Chaos
 - c. Moment of Decision

13. According to a widespread old wives' tale, what impossible this is possible only on the day of the vernal equinox?
 - a. The moon turns blue
 - b. The one day of the year that eggs can be balanced on their end
 - c. The sun dances at dawn

14. According to Norse mythology, what is the name of the serpent that lives in the depths of the sea, circling Middle Earth, with its tail in its mouth?
 - a. Orobouros
 - b. Aoxomoxoa
 - c. Midgardsormr

15. In the cycle of the Christian year, if Epiphany is green, and Lent is purple, then Holy week is what?
 - a. Gold
 - b. White
 - c. Red



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16. Archbishop James Usher, writing in the 17th century, suggested the world was created when?
- 1984 BC
 - 10,000 BC
 - 4004 BC
17. According to modern astronomical ideas, the universe will end with either a Big Crunch or ?
- Tsunami
 - Big Chill
 - Big Bill
18. Which Hollywood film is about a character trapped in the same day over and over again?
- Back to the Future
 - The Third Policeman
 - Groundhog Day
19. Who was the 'Eternity Man'?
- Arthur Dent
 - Arthur Stace
 - Arthur Pendragon
20. The Uroboros (or Orobouros) is what?
- A dragon with the head of a lion
 - A moon of Uranus
 - A snake curled in a circle, biting its own tail
21. Whose motto was 'In the End is my Beginning'?
- Mary, Queen of Scots
 - T.S. Eliot
 - Mahatma Ghandi



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22. In Buddhism the Wheel of Life image is a symbolic depiction of the structure of existence. At its centre are always three animals that drive the endless cycle of existence. What are they?

- a. A cockerel, a snake and a pig
- b. A hare, a pig and a cockerel
- c. A snake, a hare and an elephant



Easter Cycles of Time Quiz ANSWERS



The circle made by the fingers represents the wheel of law (karma). In Buddhism, the 'Law of Karma' refers to 'cause and effect'. The word Karma literally means 'action'. Buddhists believe that the sum of their previous actions created their present state and that the actions they perform now will create their future. Therefore, they try to stop performing 'negative actions' and perform 'positive actions' instead.

8. B - The Wheel of Law

Janus was the Roman god of doors, ('Janua' in Latin), and because of this he was god of beginnings and endings. He is represented with a double-faced head, each looking in opposite directions. He was worshipped at the beginning of the harvest time, planting, marriage, birth, and other types of beginnings, especially the beginnings of important events in a person's life. January, the first month of the year, is named after him.

7. B - Doors

The 21st March is generally thought of as the first day of Spring, because the vernal equinox occurs around that date. The recent disclosure that the Meteorological Office 'starts' Spring on the 1st March caused consternation in some quarters of the House of Commons. Bach was born on the 21st March 1685 and Crummer was martyred on that date in 1556.

6. A, B & C - All three!

This order often created churches modelled on the circular Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The most famous example in England in the Temple church in London, which was consecrated in 185 by the patriarch of Jerusalem. However, not all round churches were built by this order. The round church of Orphir on Orkney was built in the late 11th or early 12th century, probably by Earl Hakon. This was during the crusader period and its design was also inspired by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

5. C - The Knights Templar

*There are loved ones in the glory,
Whose dear forms you often miss;
When you close your earthly story,
Will you join them in their bliss?
Retrain: Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, by and by?
In a better home awaiting
In the sky, in the sky?*

The Americans did improve the tune though! The song is basically a sentimental Victorian parlour ballad. Miss Habershon's version begins like this:
She met Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey when they visited London in 1884. She then visited America, but her home was in London.

4. C - London – by Ada Ruth Habershon, in 1907

This was known as the Sabbatical year: 'But in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath or rest, a Sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards.' (Leviticus 25:4). Every fiftieth year was meant to be a Year of Jubilee. In this year everything that had been borrowed had to be returned to its owner and slaves freed.

3. C - No one was allowed to grow or harvest crops

Viewed from the centre the sun rises almost above the heel stone, placed outside the circle. Originally the Heel stone had a partner, and when this was still standing, the midsummer sun would have been framed by this pair of standing stones as the first rays of dawn shone through a stone corridor into the heart of Stonehenge.

2. B - The rising sun on the Summer Solstice (mid-summer's day)

It includes only lunar months – months based on the time it take for the moon to turn from a silver of crescent moon, to a full moon and then back again. There are 354 days in an Islamic year.

1. A - Because the Islamic calendar is lunar



Easter Cycles of Time Quiz ANSWERS



The 'day' is named after the Puxatawney Phil event in Pennsylvania in which a groundhog comes out of its burrow. If it sees its shadow, it's six more weeks of winter. If it doesn't, it's spring. 'The Third Policeman' is a novel by the Irish novelist Flann O'Brien, which plays with the same sort of idea. Is life without time – movement forward – heaven or hell?

18. C - Groundhog Day

If there is enough matter in the Universe, eventually gravitational forces will stop its expansion. When this happens gravity will cause the universe to reverse its direction and begin to collapse under its own weight. This phase of the Universe's life is known as the Big Crunch. If there is not enough matter then matter will spread thinner and thinner. Galaxies will exhaust their gas supply for forming new stars, and old stars will eventually burn out, leaving only dust and dead stars. The universe will become quite dark and, as the temperature of the universe approaches absolute zero, quite cold. The universe will not end, exactly, just peter out in a Big Chill...perhaps.

17. B - Big Chill

On 6pm Saturday 22nd October 4004 BC to be precise. This is not as daft as it sounds. Archbishop Usher carefully worked his way back through the Bible and other records to arrive at this date. The date was printed in Bibles well into the nineteenth century.

16. C - 4004 BC

White robes are worn for the major Christian festivals – Easter, Christmas and Ascension Day. They are also worn on some saints' days. Purple is worn in the fasting seasons of Advent and Lent. Red robes are worn during Holy Week and Whitsun (Pentecost) and also on martyrs' and saints' days. Green robes are worn at other times in the church year.

15. B - White

At Ragnarok, the end of the world, the rising up of this serpent will be part of the destruction which obliterates Men, Gods and Giants...for a while. Then the green earth will rise out of the waters and the cycle begin again. Aoxomoxoa was the name of an album by the Grateful Dead. Orobouros appears elsewhere in this quiz!

14. C - Midgardsormr, or the World Serpent

Eggs can be balanced on their end. The Chinese are thought to have originated the practice of standing eggs on end during the equinox. The equinox symbolically restores balance to the world by signalling its rebirth after a season of darkness. It literally balances the day by dividing it into equal portions of darkness and light. If the symbol of fertility – eggs – could be balanced on end during a day equally divided between day and night, this was a sign that all nature was in harmony. Of course, a simple experiment proves that the balancing of eggs can be achieved on any day of the year – or does it? Why not try it at home?

13. B - The one day of the year that eggs can be balanced on their end

In the New Testament *kairos* means 'the appointed time in the purpose of God', the time when God acts (e.g. Mark 1.15: 'the Kairos is fulfilled'). In ancient Greek generally, it meant the 'right or opportune moment'. The theologian Paul Tillich popularised the term in the 20th century.

12. C - Moment of Decision

See Joshua 10.13-14: 'The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since...' This verse was used by opponents of Galileo to prove that his theory that the earth circled around the sun must be wrong.

11. B - When Joshua was fighting the Amorites

10. A - Henry Vaughan (1621-1695) – from his poem 'The World'

1,000 manuyugas makes up a unit called a kalpa. A kalpa is thus equal to 4.32 billion human years. A kalpa is a single daytime period in the life of Brahma, the creator god. Two kalpas are a day and a night of Brahma.

9. A - 4,320,000 years



Easter Cycles of Time Quiz ANSWERS



19. B - Arthur Stace (1884-1967)
 At least 50 times a day for 30 years he wrote the word 'Eternity' in chalk on the streets of Sydney. His one word sermon is now cast in bronze around the city. Arthur Dent is the hero of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (and is also the name of the author of the 17th century best-seller The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven). Arthur Pendragon lives in a caravan at Glastonbury and claims to be a reincarnation of King Arthur, though it seems more likely that he's a reincarnation of Arthur Stace.

20. C - A snake curled in a circle, biting its own tail
 It is often used as a symbol of eternity. The symbol has pre-Christian origins, but is often used in medieval Christian texts, or on later tombstones, as a symbol of eternity.

21. A - Mary, Queen of Scots
 Eliot borrowed it for the 'East Coker' section of his great poem The Four Quartets. East Coker begins with 'In my beginning is my end' and ends with 'In my end is my beginning'.

22. A - A cockerel, a snake and a pig
 The cockerel represents craving or greed. The snake signifies hatred and aggression. The pig is a symbol of ignorance.