

The feast of Pascha was established and was already celebrated in the apostolic Church. It began from the very time of the resurrection of Christ by the celebration of the apostles, who even entrusted all believers to celebrate it (see 1 Cor. 5:8). But during the first centuries of Christianity they did not everywhere and at the same time celebrate Pascha. In the east, in Asia Minor the churches celebrated it on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the vernal month, on whatever day of the week this date fell. And Western Christians, considering it indecent to celebrate Pascha together with the Jews, fulfilled it on the first Sunday after the vernal full moon. The two various customs existed up to the First Ecumenical Council (325), at which the decision was made to celebrate Pascha everywhere on the first Sunday of the Paschal full moon, in order that Christian Pascha would always be celebrated after the Jews. At the very beginning the celebration of Holy Pascha during the first centuries of Christianity was not done in all the Churches at the same time. One of the Christians, the Roman, stopped the fast and began celebrating at the very midnight of the coming of Pascha; some Eastern Christians began the feast in the middle hours of the night before Pascha, not before, however, the first hour after midnight, and others from the fourth watch, i. e. at 4 o'clock according to our time, at dawn. The disagreement on this question continued up to the Sixth Ecumenical Council, at which it decided to stop the fast and to begin celebrating Pascha in the middle hours of the night after Great Saturday (Canon 89). Since this time it became the usual practice accepted everywhere to begin the celebration of the feast of Pascha immediately after midnight. "At midnight", says Philaret, the First Hierarch of Moscow in one of his sermons, "the Church hurried to gather us for the beginning of the celebration. Why is that? Because it was desirable, as much as possible, to put together the beginning of the time of the celebration to the time of the feast, that is, the resurrection of Christ. This time is not completely open for us. When the myrrh bearer women at the rising of the sun came to the tomb of the Lord: it was already open and the angels announced that the resurrection of Christ was already accomplished. Much earlier the ground shook about the tomb of the Lord, the angel rolled the stone away from the tomb, and the light of his appearance resulted in horror and the flight of the guards in order to open an easy approach to the tomb for the myrrh bearing women and the apostles. Still earlier the resurrection was accomplished, for it was accomplished before the sealed tomb, as the Holy Church, the keeper of the mysteries of Christ, witnesses; but not only before midnight, because it, according to the previous talk of the Lord, must be in three days 1) and consequently happens in the first hour of the day after midnight after the Sabbath. During these hidden hours, we wished to catch the incomparably high and wonderful minute of the resurrection at the beginning of our celebration, so that the

feast, whenever possible, be made one with the celebration by the event, so that even the celebration is called to be one with the Creator of the feast".

Notes:

1) Anyway, the Synaxarion for Holy Pascha says, the resurrection of the Lord occurs in three days, which understands it this way: Thursday evening and the day of Friday (for that is how the Hebrews measure a day) is one day; then the night and all day of the Sabbath is the second day; the Sabbath night and Sunday (the part begun is accepted for the whole) is still also a day: and it is the third day. Or even so: on the third hour of Friday Christ was crucified; then from the sixth hour up to the ninth there was darkness, this is considered as night and from the third hour until the ninth one day (a night day); then, after the darkness, again a day and night Friday which is two days; the day of the Sabbath and its night, here is the third day. If on the third day, as the Savior promised and loaded us with benefits, then He with the shortest image fulfilled His benefaction. (Vladimirskiiia Eparkh. Ved. (Vladimir Diocesan News) 1890, 7).

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) p. 0565  
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