

Time of the Celebration of Pascha

Knowledge of the day of the celebration of Pascha is rather important as all movable feasts and church seasons are centered on the feast of Pascha. And if the day of the celebration of Pascha is easy to calculate, the days of the feasts and the length of the church seasons, prior and subsequent to Pascha is known. The term Paschalia has as its subject the determination of the day of the celebration of Holy Pascha and the movable feasts and church seasons dependent on it. During the first two centuries after the birth of Christ, there was no general agreement concerning the time of the celebration of Pascha. The Asia Minor churches celebrated it at the same time with the Jews, and Pascha fell on various days of the week, and that did not correspond to the Christian idea about the day of the Resurrection of the Savior. In Rome and in other churches, Pascha was not celebrated at the same time with the Jews, but necessarily on the Sunday after the full moon of the March and spring equinox. Such disagreement was the occasion for disputes and quarrels between the eastern and western churches. The Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, which met in the year 325, decided: *to celebrate Pascha, after the Jewish Pascha (Passover) on the first Sunday after the full moon which will be the same day of the spring equinox or directly after it, but not before the spring equinox.*

The Bases of Paschalia

In the designated Paschal tables found in the Ustav (Typicon) and the Liturgical Psalter (Sledovannaia Psaltir), are the following terms: *indiction, indictus, solar cycle, the dominical letter, lunar cycle, the lunar epact, epact, and letter key.*

Indiction is the great paschal cycle of 532 years. Every 532 years all church seasons, months, days, dates of feasts, and phases of the moon follow in the same order as in the previous period. So for example, if in 1890 the first Sunday after the paschal full moon falls on April 1st, the same date will be repeated in 2422, i.e. 532 years later. Up to the Nativity of Christ 10 full indictions have passed and 188 years of the 11th indiction. After the Nativity of Christ in 344, the 11th indiction ended, in 876, the 12th indiction ended, in 1408, the 13th indiction ended, and in 1940, the 14th indiction will end, etc.

Indictus (indiction cycle) has no relation to Paschalia. It is a 15 year period of collecting property taxes in the Roman Empire, divided into 3 terms of 5 years each. In the year 312, Constantine the Great ordered a similar accounting in Byzantium. In memory of this Emperor, who granted full freedom to the Christian faith, the church kept the accounting of time according to the indictus. The indictus has come in Byzantine chronology and into our annals (lietopis).

The common year consists of 52 weeks and one day, and the leap year 52 weeks and 2 days. From here it follows that the days of the week in relation to the

dates of the month changes each year. If all the years were common then every day of the week would be on that same date within 7 years. For example if the first year began on Sunday, the second year would begin on Monday, the third on Tuesday, etc. But as the leap year has an extra day as opposed to the common year, then over 7 common years 7 more leap years should pass so that this extra day could make up a week, or that also, all the weekdays will come around. And so, in order that all the week days have returned to the same dates of the month, it is necessary for 7 common years and 7 leap years to pass. The leap year occurs in the fourth year after 3 years have passed. Therefore it means that 7 common years should pass three times, and 7 leap years, or 28 years. So for example, if August 11, 1890 (day in memory of the Martyr Susanna) falls on Saturday, and August 12 on Sunday, etc. then the recurrence of these dates and days should occur in 1918, 1946, i.e. every 28 years. This 28 year period in the Paschalia is called the *Solar Cycle*. This cycle has no relation to the movement of the Sun.

The Dominical Letters are the 7 initial letters of the Slavonic alphabet: A, V, G D, E, S, Z, designating seven integers from 1 to 7 corresponding to the consecutive days of the week. The letters are laid down so that A corresponds to the first Sunday of the first year of creation and all Sunday (Resurrection) letters of this year coincide with this very same letter. It is possible to satisfy all these requirements as follows: March is considered the month of creation. The count of years is conducted from the creation of Adam on Friday. The present Sunday signifies the third day, or the third of March, and is designated by the letter A which is the Resurrection letter of the first year.

Dates:	1,	2,	3,	4,	5,	6,	7,	March
Days:	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	
Letters:	g,	v,	a,	z,	s,	e,	đ.	

The Dominical is also a letter designating Sunday throughout the year. For example, for the year 1891, the dominical is A, for 1892, it is G. In order for the dominical letters to follow in alphabetical order in various years, the dominical letters are placed in the church menologion in reverse order to the dates of the month.

The Julian year is longer than the lunar year by 10 days, 21 hours, 11 minutes, and 24 seconds. The round number of this difference is necessarily 11 days. Saving this difference each year, this difference, after 19 years, completes the so called lunar cycle. *The lunar cycle* refers to this 19 year period, after which the phases of the moon should have the same dates as occurred 19 years ago. Let us say that in 1893 on March 10 there will be a new moon in 19 years, or in 1912 the March new moon will again fall on March 10. The date designating the order of the given year in the lunar cycle is

called the *Golden Number*. So for example the year 1892 has the Golden Number 12, while the year 1895 has the Golden Number 15.

The Lunar Epact is the age in days of the moon on March 1. For example, the year 1895 has the lunar epact of 15, i.e. on March 1, 1895 the moon will age in 15 days.

The Epact in our Paschalia is that date supplementing the lunar epact up to 21, when the lunar epact is less than this date, or up to 51, when the lunar epact is more than 21. This is done to find out the end of the Old Testament Passover, i.e. to determine the date in March or April, when it will be the 22nd day of the March moon or 22nd day of Nisan on which the Jewish Passover ends. In defining the days of Pascha the epact has no meaning.

The Key Limits, or key letters, are the 35 letters of the Slavonic alphabet, corresponding to the thirty five days which occur between the early and late limits of Pascha, i.e. between March 22 and April 25. The Key Letters indicate the number of days Pascha is removed from March 21 and serve as the determination of Pascha, and all its dependent feasts and fasts. From the day of Pascha of the given year it is easy to determine the number of the key letter in alphabetic order, i.e. key number. If Pascha is in March then it is necessary to only exclude from the date of Pascha March 21. If Pascha is in April then it is necessary to add $(31-21=10)$ 10 days of March to the Paschal date on which Pascha may fall.

*S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp 637-8
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