

## Easter programmes on the BBC

On Good Friday, renowned historian Bettany Hughes embarks on a fascinating journey to uncover the meaning of Jesus' death on the Cross, [The Day Jesus Died](#) (Friday 2 April, BBC One, 9am). To explore just why the execution of one man 2,000 years ago is still so important today, Bettany enlists a cast of leading figures from British Christianity, including Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury; John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York; Tom Wright, the Bishop of Durham; and Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster.

On Easter eve, [Easter from Kings](#) (Saturday 3 April, BBC Two, 5.40pm) is a service of music and readings from the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge. The world-famous choir sing seasonal hymns, Easter carols and well-known choral music, including Panis Angelicus, Mozart's Ave Verum Corpus, and extracts from Stainer's Crucifixion and Handel's Messiah.

This is followed on Saturday evening by [Private Life of an Easter Masterpiece](#) (Saturday 3 April, BBC Two, 6.55pm), exploring The Descent from the Cross by Rogier van der Weyden, which has been delighting art lovers for hundreds of years. Susie Nash, Head of the Renaissance Section of the Courtauld Institute Of Art in London, describes it as "the greatest work of northern art of the 15th century and certainly the most influential", but what is the secret history of this world-renowned painting? The programme delves into the turbulent times of this iconic portrayal of Christ, charting its history from its inception and rise to fame to reportedly surviving a shipwreck, and in more recent times becoming one of the first paintings to be featured on Google Earth.

On Easter Sunday on BBC radio, for early risers Bishop Nigel McCulloch, National Chaplain to the Royal British Legion, leads a meditation to mark the dawning of Easter Day from the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, a haven of peace, contemplation and hope for the future, in [Sunrise Service](#) (Sunday 4 April, BBC Radio 4, 6.35am). Then at 8.10am on Radio 4 there is the first of two services from Westminster Cathedral, where Archbishop Vincent Nichols is the celebrant and preacher at this special mass.

On television, the Eucharist for Easter Day comes from Winchester Cathedral (Sunday 4 April, BBC One, 10am). The service is introduced by the Dean of Winchester, the Very Rev James Atwell. The preacher is the Rt Rev Michael Scott-Joynt, Bishop of Winchester. This is followed at 11am on BBC One by [Urbi et Orbi](#), the Pope's traditional Easter Message and Blessing to the city and the world. Denis Nowlan sets the scene in St Peter's Square.

In the afternoon (BBC One, 4.15pm), [Songs of Praise](#) comes from the Holy Land. Aled Jones sets out to discover what life was like for some of those who witnessed the first Easter Day 2,000 years ago. The programme features interviews with Bible experts based in Israel who provide an insight into first-century life, traditions and culture, helping to explain the incredible story. Among the experts, Dr Jerome Murphy O'Connor is a Dominican priest and Professor of New Testament at the École Biblique in Jerusalem; Dr Paul Wright is executive director of Jerusalem University College; and Dr Shimon Gibson is an archaeologist and author.

On Easter evening Nicky Campbell investigates whether Christians are being discriminated against in modern society in [Are Christians Being Persecuted?](#) (BBC One, 10.50pm). Featured in the documentary are some of the country's leading religious and secular voices, including Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of

Westminster; Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi; Michael Nazir-Ali, former Bishop of Rochester; Shami Chakrabati, Director of Liberty, and Polly Toynbee, President of the National Secular Society.

On BBC radio, in Easter Sunday's edition of [Private Passions](#) (BBC Radio 3, 12noon), Michael Berkeley meets the newly appointed Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, Bernard Longley, to discuss his musical choices, which include works by Verdi, Borodin, Poulenc, Messiaen and Elgar. And in the evening, Brian D'Arcy celebrates Easter with a programme of music, prayers and reflections from Manchester Cathedral in [Easter Glory](#) (BBC Radio 2, 8pm). He is joined by the choir of Manchester Cathedral, Manchester Camerata and the BBC Radio 2 Young Choristers of the Year 2009, Laurence Kilsby and Jacquelyne Hill.

For those who missed it, there is still a chance to view Palm Sunday's [Songs of Praise](#), which came from St John the Baptist church in the market town of Knaresborough, North Yorkshire. Aled Jones traces the 800-year-old origins of the annual Royal Maundy service and interviews the Lord High Almoner, currently the Rt Revd Nigel McCulloch, Bishop of Manchester. You can catch the programme on [BBC iPlayer](#) until Easter Sunday.

Those of you with children may be interested in the CBeebies series [Let's Celebrate](#), a vibrant tour of the UK showing how children experience different religious and cultural festivals around the country. The Easter episode is broadcast on Easter Sunday at 5pm.

For fans of [Sacred Music](#) on BBC Four there is a special episode on Good Friday (7pm). Three composers – James MacMillan, Sir John Tavener and John Rutter – provide an insight into the challenges and rewards of writing sacred music for the 21st century and, through a series of in-depth interviews with each composer, Simon Russell Beale explores both the creative process of composition and the intentions behind their music.