





190-194 AD Easter Conflict

- 150-155, Smyrna Bishop Polycarp visited Rome Bishop Anicetus. The issue came up, and was not resolved, but Polycarp departed in peace saying this is how he celebrated Easter with the Apostle John.
- 170, the same controversy developed in Laodicea but was dealt with peacefully.
- 190-194, Rome Bishop Victor required the Asian churches to abandon their Easter practices. The new Ephesian Bishop Polycrates appealed with a letter which is still in existence today. Victor wouldn't listen, called them heretics, excommunicated them and would not send them communion elements. Irenaeus interceded by quoting Colossians 2:16:

"The apostles have ordered we should, 'Judge no one in meat or in drink, or in respect to a feast day or a new moon or a Sabbath day.'"

- The time of the Jewish Passover/Easter fast created a violent controversy.
- The issue became complicated and is not yet cleared up.
- The issue was purely ritualistic and involved no doctrine.
- Too much stress was laid on external uniformity.
- **Asia Minor's views:**
 - Followed Jewish chronology
 - Followed the Apostle John and Philip's example
 - They celebrated the Christian form of the Passover on Nisan 14 and at the end of the day they broke their Easter fast with communion and the Love Feast.
- **Roman Church view:**
 - Appealed to early custom of celebrating Jesus death on a Friday
 - Celebrated Easter always on a Sunday after the March full moon
 - Nearly all the churches did it this way.
 - The Roman practice created an entire holy week of fasting to recall Lord's suffering.
- The Problem to the Roman Church: Part of the universal church was celebrating and feasting the Lord's resurrection while another part of the world the church was still fasting his death.
- The Nicean Council of 325 established a law for the whole church by saying:

"Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon succeeding the vernal equinox (March 21). If the full moon occurs on a Sunday, Easter-day is the Sunday after. Easter can be anywhere from March 22 to April 25."

- Nicean Council of 325

- The last trace of the "heretics" from Asia was seen in the 500's