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Friday the 13th has history of fear

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Today, the superstitious won't want to leave home, and the clumsy will have an excuse for any accident.

It's Friday the 13th, a day synonymous with horrible luck.

How the day got a bad rap isn't certain, but the most popular theory has to do with Jesus' death. Not only did he die on a Friday, but there were 13 people at the Last Supper the night before. One of them was Judas, a traitor.

"For many centuries into the Middle Ages, the church regarded the killing of Christ as the most horrible crime of all time," says Phil Stevens, a University at Buffalo anthropology professor in New York who writes about magical beliefs. "Even though theologically it's recognized as the foundation for Christianity, it was a horrible, horrible event."

So how did this translate into a superstition? Somebody connected the dots.

"People tend to believe that things in the universe are potentially interconnected," Stevens says. "In a complicated world, magic gives people a sense of control."

The No. 13 also is avoided in some building floors, theater seats and airplane seats.

Brady Phelps, a professor of psychology at South Dakota State University, knows of people who will stay indoors today out of superstition. Fear of the date is called paraskevidekatriaphobia, and he says up to 10 percent of Americans have it.

"We can see verifications where we want to see them, but obviously it's not real," Phelps says.

Following is a brief story containing 13 common superstitions. Spot them and check the answers below it. Depending on your outlook, this is the story of either a clumsy couple or a doomed couple.

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