

## What's so important about Easter?

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

**Two thousand years ago, in the Middle East, an event occurred that permanently changed the world.** Because of that event, history was split. Every time you write a date, you are using the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the focal point.

**What's so important about Easter?** It's important because it proved that *Jesus was who he claimed to be*. He was God in the flesh, and he came to earth to save us.

**Three events occurred in a dramatic succession on that Easter weekend: the trial of Jesus, then the death of Jesus, and finally the resurrection of Jesus.** Let's look at each of those events and their implications.

**Look first at His trial.** Jesus actually went through six trials. In that one night, he was brought before Annas, Caiphas (the high priest), the Sanhedrin (the religious Supreme Court), Pilate (the governor of Jerusalem), Herod (the governor of Galilee), and then back to Pilate. **At the end of those six trials, what did they find to accuse him of? Nothing.** He had done nothing wrong. **They brought in people to make up phony charges, but those didn't stick.** Finally they convicted him on one count: claiming to be a king – treason against the Roman government. That's the sole reason Jesus went to the cross.

**The truth of the matter is that everyone is this building today will have to make some decision about who Jesus really is.** You either believe he is a *liar*, or you believe he is a *lunatic*, or you believe he is the *Lord*. It can't just be: “I believe he was a good teacher.” He

couldn't be just a good teacher, because a good teacher would not say, "I am God, and I am the only way to heaven." A good person would not say that unless it was the truth.

**Jesus claimed to be the Savior of the world.** In John 12:47, he is recorded as saying: "I didn't come to judge the world. I came to save it." He allowed himself to be put on trial so there would be no doubt about Who he was. **He could have stopped the trial at any moment.** He knew he would be proven guilty and put on the cross, but he allowed it to happen. It was all part of the plan.

**Look next at His death.** After a night of beatings and mocking, after being crowned with painful thorns, Jesus was crucified. Crucifixion is probably the most brutal and torturous death penalty ever devised by men. **His hands were stretched out wide against the cross and nailed through the two bones in each wrist.** As the nails went through this part of the flesh, they would strike the nerve that travels up the arm and cause excruciating pain.

**If you hung this way for any period of time, the muscles around your chest cavity began to be paralyzed.** You would be able to breathe in but you couldn't breathe out. **Death on a cross would have been a simple matter of suffocation, except the Romans didn't want to make it that easy.** **They would take a person's knees and bend them a little bit and nail the feet to the cross.** So a man would hang there in absolute agony until the pain in his chest was about to explode, and then he would lift himself up on his nailed feet to grab a breath. When the pain in his feet grew unbearable, he would let himself back down again, until the pain in his lungs became unbearable. **It was an incredibly torturous event.** Eventually, the soldiers would break the legs of the criminal to hasten death by *suffocation*.

**In the case of Jesus, they didn't have to break his legs, because he had already died.** But just to make sure, they stuck a spear in his side. **Water and blood** came out of the chest cavity, which, doctors say,

only happens if the heart rips. You can call it what you want, but Jesus died of a broken heart.

**Why did Jesus have to die?** Because he alone was able to pay for your sins. Redemption is the primary purpose of the cross. The first thing a lost person needs is a pardon that will heal his wounded heart, renew his withered soul and build up his broken spirit. It doesn't matter if you are an alcoholic, a drug addict, doctor or lawyer, when you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, 1 John 1:7 tells us "the blood of Jesus Christ, (God's) Son, cleanses us from all sin." **The Bible teaches us God has a divine plan, a divine purpose, and a divine place in life for every individual.** The truth of the matter is that Christianity is not a religion; it is a way of life.

Listen to what we are told in John 3:17, "For God did not send His only Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Paul gives us this insight in Romans 8:1, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus..."

**I am convinced that most Christians really don't know the difference between condemnation and conviction.** Conviction is a part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, as seen in John 16:7-11, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." **If there is an area of willful disobedience against the known Word and will of God for your life, true conviction will draw you to repentance and then, they are free.** Condemnation is the accusation of the devil that God has not, and/or will not forgive you of some past sin and is an attack on the meaning of the cross which leads to doubt and guilt.

**When Christ gave His life on the Cross, He died to set us free from the bondage of sin.** Galatians 3:13 tells us that “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law...” Jesus said this in John 8:36, “If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.” I am reminded of the children of Israel; how God set them free from Egyptian slavery. **They were free, but they continued living with a bondage mentality.**

**The same is true with Christians today.** If Christ has indeed *set us free*, why do so many Christians struggle with *living free*? **I believe it is because denominations have taught us to live in mediocrity, but the Bible does not teach that.** In fact, Romans 8:37 says that “...we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” **They have taught us that it is God’s will for us to be sick, but the Bible does not teach us that.** In fact, Isaiah 53:4-5 says, “Surely he has borne our grief (sicknesses), and carried our sorrows (diseases): yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Matthew 8:17 tells us that Jesus’ death on the cross fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.” The Holy Spirit looking back at Calvary, wrote in the past tense through Peter, in 1 Peter 2:24, “Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed.” **They have taught us that we sin because we still have a “sin nature,” but the Bible does not teach us that.** In fact, 2 Peter 1:3-4 says, “According to his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue; by which are given unto us exceedingly great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” **Ladies and gentlemen, the Cross won us the opportunity to walk free from the chains of *sin, sickness, and death.***

**Now look at the resurrection.** After Jesus died, they took down his body and put him in the tomb, and a giant millstone was set in front of the cave. The religious leaders, worried that Jesus' body might be stolen, asked for Roman guards to be posted in front of the tomb. **They did not want him coming out!** But of course, he did.

**You know the story.** But it's important to remember that Easter is not some memorial to a nice, good religious teacher who lived over 2,000 years ago. **It is a celebration of the fact that he is alive today.** I am living proof, and so are the approximately 1 billion Christians who will celebrate Easter this weekend.

Romans 1:4 reads like this, "... by being raised from the dead he was proved to be the mighty Son of God, with the holy nature of God himself." **Easter is the good news about God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who came as a human baby, born into King David's royal family line.** Four historical records say he showed himself to 500 people at one gathering. **Can you imagine witnessing his death and then seeing him walking around Jerusalem three days later?** **What an amazing thing!** When Jesus was hanging on the cross, the skeptics and critics mocked him and said, "If you're the Son of God, why don't you just pull yourself down from that cross? Why don't you just come down and show that you're really God?" **Jesus had something more spectacular planned.** He said, "I'm going to let you bury me for three days, then I'll come back to life to prove that I am what I am."

**What does this mean to us today?** The answer is found in Romans 10:8-10, "But what saith it? The word is near thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach: that if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shall be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." **With those instructions in your mind, go back with me to Malachi 4:2-3,** "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in

the day I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.” If you have received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then the *Sun of Righteousness* has risen for you. Our risen Lord has provided whatever you need to live life and to live it more abundantly, as seen in John 10:10 where Jesus said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

**You might have walked through these doors today thinking that your life is over and fate has sealed your doom.** But I want to tell you that fate has not sealed your doom. That seal has been broken by the power of the resurrected Lord. The dark cloud of hopelessness that may be surrounding you like a shroud *can* and *will* be lifted when you allow the Son of Righteousness to outshine your circumstances.

**Whatever you need - spiritually, physically, emotionally, financially, or socially – was provided for you by Jesus’ death, burial, and Resurrection.** Therefore, on this Easter morning, I encourage you to *stop looking at your problems* and to *start looking at the resurrected Problem Solver!*

Today the choice is yours.

Everyone please stand for prayer.

Father,

Thank you for the truth of Easter and thank for the truth of your Word. But most of all, thank you for providing a whosoever plan of salvation that included me. In Jesus’ name. Amen.