

Easter - A Resurrection Celebration

Grace Fellowship Church / Easter – April 5, 2015, Pastor Brad Bigney

To understand the importance of Easter you have to take a couple steps back and look at the days leading up to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Garden of Gethsemane – It was here that Christ agonized and prayed 3x for ‘this cup’ to be taken away from Him. The ‘cup’ He was talking about was the cup of God’s wrath He was going to drink for each one of us when He hung on the cross in our place suffering for our sins.

Jesus was already entering into the gut-wrenching mental and spiritual agony of contemplating what it means to suffer in our place, and to have the wrath of God for our sins poured out on Him! The physical suffering and shame of Christ’s death on the cross wasn’t the worst of it. It was in the moment when God put our sins on His Son and turned His back on Him for the very first time ever. That’s why Jesus cried out from the cross, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?’

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were no accident. This was the very purpose for which He’d come into this world – to take care of our sin problem and to finish the mission of setting free from our sins and free from our fear of death that haunts every one of us from birth.

The Gospel writers describe Christ’s final moments on the cross:

- **Luke 23:44-49, John 19:28-30, Matthew 27:46, 50-51**

- What difference does it really make whether Jesus rose from the dead or not?

Look at **Luke 24:36-43**.

When you look at the way the disciples responded to the resurrection of Jesus, ‘comfortable’ would never be one of the best word choices. The verses say they were terrified, frightened, troubled, and then they were filled with joy and marveled.

Most people today have become comfortable with Easter and have sentimentalized it and turned it into something inspiring regardless of whether or not it’s true.

The message of Easter, according to the Bible and what we believe as Christians, is that Jesus really lived. He really died. He really rose again and He’s really coming back!

If you understand the resurrection the way the disciples understood it you’ll either be moved to absolute terror or absolute joy, but you won’t just be comfortable with it.

I. **If Jesus Really Rose from the Dead it Means Jesus is Lord!**

That’s the terrifying part! He’s not a myth, a legend, or some inspirational fairytale. If He’s risen from the dead, then He’s Lord.

The apostle Paul understood this well when he went up onto Mars Hill and began to lecture and talk to the council of philosophers that were gathered there. At first they loved it because they had no greater joy than debating and listening to new ideas. But then we read what Paul says to them when there’s a definitive turning point:

Acts 17:30-31 “... these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising Him from the dead.”

Paul was telling them the search for God was over, He’s here, and it’s time for a decision. They didn’t need to debate or philosophize to piece it all together anymore. God came as Jesus Christ, so it was time to repent!

The philosophers on Mars Hill knew that the resurrection of Jesus Christ meant that Christianity was claiming about its founder something far different than any other religion.

Jesus, by rising from the dead, was showing us that He’s not like the founder of any other religion. He’s the firstborn from the dead, the Son of God and He’s crushed our greatest fear, death, and solved our biggest problem which is the sin that separates us from a holy God.

- What does that mean for you and me today?

It means the search is over and the day of repentance is here because every other philosopher and every other religion was always pointing and saying, 'This is the way to life' but Jesus shows up and says, "I AM the truth and I AM the life to which all the other clues have been pointing all along."

The resurrection is not just some inspirational 'Hallmark' moment- it's a call to repent. It was never meant to be something that you just settle comfortably with. Jesus and the resurrection should rock your world!

Luke gives us a lot of details about Jesus. Luke was giving us historical facts- a claim. Check out **Luke 24:42**. He wanted to drive home to us that Jesus was real! His life is not a legend- it's real. His resurrection is real.

The apostle John is doing them same in his letter when he writes,

I John 1:1-3 "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—² the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we declare to you..."

Both Luke and John reported what they saw, heard, and touched.

II. If Jesus Really Rose from the Dead then You Can Have Him in Your Life

Jesus didn't die, rise again, and ascend to the Father so he could live on in a spiritual never-never land. He did this so that anyone who believes can have access to Him, wherever you are, by faith.

You can have a personal relationship with the living Jesus Christ because He's no longer in the tomb!

Christians lost the tomb of Jesus. This strongly indicates that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus really happened! At the time Jesus died it was customary when sages, holy men or prophets died for their followers to make their tomb a shrine to turn it into a place of veneration and pilgrimage.

There were at least 50 tombs like that already in Palestine when Jesus died. Yet we know that just 50 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, basically nobody was sure where the tomb was, because the early Christians simply ignored the tomb because Jesus wasn't there!

- Why didn't the early Christians go to the tomb and turn it into a shrine?

One simple reason! Jesus was alive and they had Him as their very own- living in a personal relationship with Him now that He was resurrected and ascended into heaven.

They had Jesus in their lives and so can you, but you'll have to be willing to bow and make Him your Lord. You'll have to see yourself as sinful, self-absorbed, and in desperate need of a Savior and salvation.

Because He lives you, can be changed!

Next Steps

If you would like to learn more about the Resurrection of Jesus and how we know this event really happened, please visit one of these websites:

www.answersingenesis.org/jesus-christ/resurrection/introduction — A series of articles addressing the importance of and objections to the Resurrection (also available as a book, *In Defense of Easter*).

<http://www.gotquestions.org/empty-tomb.html> — A short article describing the importance of the empty tomb of Jesus with links to more answers.

If you would like to learn more about what it means to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, please visit one of these websites:

www.NeedGod.com — A short test to see if you are good enough to get to Heaven.

www.matthiasmedia.com.au/2wtl — A simple exploration of which king you are serving.