

## THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF EASTER

When we think of Easter, a lot of memories come to our minds. I vaguely remember what it was to go on an Easter egg hunt, and I remember peeling off the colored shell on the egg and eating the egg. I remember that if you kept the eggs around long enough in the days and weeks to come, the eggs began to taste smell differently. They even begin taking on a different color. That's when they don't taste so good any more. But the eggs can still be used-you just have to know what to do with them. When the eggs smell and taste bad, you can still throw them at things. A bunch of guys throwing rotten eggs at one another is a cultural experience no child should miss.

And then there was church. When I was growing up, it was the thing to do to buy new clothes for Easter Sunday, and the agony of going shopping and trying on all of those new clothes was only surpassed by the even greater agony of wearing them to church. If the question arises as to why people go to church on Easter, I can tell you very quickly why I went as a young boy. I had to go. There was no other reason than that. Why else would I put on a hot black suit with a white starched shirt, shoes that hurt my feet and a skinny red tie that choked me?

As I look back on all of that, I really don't think that is what it is all about. Easter is all about Jesus Christ, His crucifixion and resurrection. What is the resurrection all about? Why is it so important? There are at least 5 basic things you need to know to understand the significance of the resurrection.

### 1. WE ARE SINNERS

As you look around at our world today, you see problems everywhere. Why do people injure and kill other innocent people they don't even know? Why do people lie, steal and cheat? Why are people unfaithful to their spouse? The answer to those questions is sin. Sin is the ultimate reason for all that is wrong in this world.

There is a tree known as the Judas tree. Long before its leaves appear, beautiful blossoms fill the branches. The beauty of those flowers attract thousands of tiny insects. But every insect-bee or butterfly-that chooses to rest upon the edge of its blossom is overcome by a fatal poison and drops dead upon the ground beneath! When you walk around Judas-trees, you see the grass speckled with dead and dying insects! Sin is a lot like the Judas tree. Sin may look bright, pleasant and attractive to our eyes; it may appear harmless. But lurking behind "the pleasures of sin" is a fatal poison. The Bible says "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 3:23).

## 2. WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD FOR OUR SIN

One of the things that makes death so scary to many is the thought of what comes after death. There looms before us the thought of answering to God. When Daniel Webster was asked “what is the greatest thought that can occupy someone’s mind,” he responded, “His accountability to God.”

Is there a God to whom we must give an account? Is there an ultimate Judge that we will answer to? The Bible says yes.

*Romans 3:19, “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.”*

Contrary to popular thinking, God is very concerned about how we live our lives, and one day, we will all have to give an account to Him.

*Romans 2:5-6, “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to every man according to his deeds:”*

We all know what it is to store things up so they begin to accumulate. Just look in your closet or your garage. No matter how many times we clean it out, our garage seems to stay full. It’s magic! In the same way, every sinful thing you do is accumulating more judgment for you in eternity.

## 3. WE CANNOT REMOVE OUR OWN SIN

There is something within all of us that tells us we need to be right with God and knowing that, we respond in different ways.

### **a) Some people seek an answer for their sin by developing their own opinion**

People try to figure it all out for themselves, or they listen to the opinion of others who don’t know any more than they know. Someone said, “Our present generation is so smart it can form an opinion without consulting any of the facts.”

Do you really want to rest your eternal destiny on the changing opinions of other people? Wouldn’t you rather base your faith on something that has stood the test of time? People who base their beliefs on the Holy Scriptures depend on something that has been proven over thousands of years.

## **b) Some seek an answer for their sin by developing their own religion**

I found a site on the internet that led you through a series of questions in order to choose your own god and religion. After working through pages and pages of questions, it shows you how you fit into a certain religion. You basically build your own belief system. The prevailing opinion about those religious groups is that one is as good as any other. A comedian once said that different religions are guilt with different holidays. That's not true.

When there are multiple choices that contradict one another, all of them cannot be right.

## **c) Some people seek an answer for their sin by making deals with God**

The idea is that you tell God that if He will forgive you, you will do "a" "b" or "c." Maybe you promise God that you will never do that thing again. That gets pretty discouraging when you continue breaking your promise.

## **d) Some seek an answer for their sin by denying it**

We have gotten very good at denying our sin by renaming it. It's not a sin-it's only a mistake. It's not a sin-it's only a weakness. It's only a psychological maladjustment or a glandular malfunction. We've gone through the medicine cabinet and put new labels on the old bottles of poison, but changing the label doesn't change the results of our actions.

# **4. GOD HAS PAID THE PRICE FOR OUR SIN**

The resurrection is part of what the Bible calls the "Gospel."

*1 Corinthians 15:1-2, "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup>By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. <sup>3</sup>For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance<sup>s</sup>: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."*

Paul says, "I'm declaring to you the gospel." The word "gospel" is a word that simply means good news. God has some good news for you and me.

## **a) THERE IS POWER IN THE CROSS**

*1 Corinthians 1:18, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*

There was nothing special about a cross. It was an instrument of torture. The Romans considered it such a brutal way to die that no citizen of Rome could be executed in that manner. The Romans had three ways of executing condemned prisoners. The most honorable way was by the sword, or decapitation. A second way criminals were executed was by burning them alive. As horrible as that is to imagine, the Romans believed it was more humane than death on a cross. If you were one condemned to die -- like Jesus -- your final day of life on earth began with a brutal beating. After you were beaten, you were mocked. After you were mocked, you were stripped and humiliated. And finally, you were nailed to a cross to die an agonizing death. The cross had no power within itself. It was the Christ who hung on it that gave it power. For example, a basketball in my hand is worth about \$19. Put that same in a star basketball player, and it could be worth \$19 million a year. Put a bat and ball in my hands and it might be worth \$13. Put that ball and bat in the same hands of a great baseball player, and it is worth millions a year. Give me a hammer and nail and I can tack down a shingle. Put a nail in the hands of Jesus and he can bring salvation to all of mankind.

## **b) THERE IS VICTORY IN THE RESURRECTION**

The fact that Jesus rose literally from the grave is a fact that astounded the ancient world and was the foundation of the messages of the early preachers. Everywhere they went, they spoke of His resurrection. When Peter spoke his first sermon after the resurrection, he said these words in Acts:

*Acts 2:24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

Without the resurrection, the name of Jesus Christ would be about as recognizable as the name Theudas. Who, you may ask, is Theudas? Theudas lived in Israel several years before Christ and was a popular prophet and teacher. He attracted hundreds of followers, but when he offended the wrong people, he was put to death. Sound familiar? The reason we haven't ever heard of him is because after his death his followers scattered and went on to other things, and the world soon forgot about Theudas.

When Jesus died, it appeared the same thing would happen--even before he died most of his followers deserted him. The Apostle Peter was one of Jesus' key disciples. Jesus once called him "a rock," but Peter the rock crumbled like sand when Jesus faced death. He deserted him. He denied having anything to do with him, and he disappeared. When Jesus died, it appeared that his "cause" would die with him and that he would become as obscure as Theudas.

But it didn't happen that way. The followers of Jesus didn't fade into oblivion. In fact, they came back bolder and braver than ever before. What happened? What made the difference? Easter Sunday made the difference. Seeing his resurrection changed his followers' perspective on life and death and everything in between.

Many since that time have gone over the resurrection carefully. Simon Greenleaf was one a professor of law at Harvard and the one who caused the law school to rise to World Prominence. At one time Greenleaf was called the greatest legal mind for weighing evidence in the world. Greenleaf turned his legal expertise to the resurrection of Christ and focused on it all the laws of evidence available to his brilliant mind. He concluded: The Resurrection of Christ is a historical reality. A historical event and anyone who honestly examines the evidence will reach the same conclusion.

The old, well-known hymn, "He arose," says: Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Savior! He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord! And up from the grave He arose, With a mighty triumph o'er His foes. He arose a victor from the dark domain, And He lives forever with His saints to reign, He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

## **5. GOD INVITES ALL TO RECEIVE HIS GIFT OF SALVATION**

Max Lucado, tells the story of a poor young Brazilian girl named Christina who wanted to leave her poor Brazilian neighborhood and see the world. One morning she slipped away, breaking her mother's heart. Knowing what life on the streets would be like for her young, attractive daughter, Christina's mother went to find her. On her way to the bus stop she entered a drugstore and sat in a photograph booth, closed the curtain, and spent all she could on pictures of herself. Then she boarded the next bus.

The mother searched bars, hotels, nightclubs, and at each place she left her picture--taped on a bathroom mirror, tacked to a hotel bulletin board, fastened to a corner phone booth. And on the back of each photo she wrote a note.

It was a few weeks later, young Christina descended the hotel stairs. Her young face was tired. Her brown eyes no longer danced with youth but spoke of pain and fear. Her laughter was broken. Her dream had become a nightmare. As she reached the bottom of the stairs, she saw a small picture of her mother on the lobby mirror. Christina's eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small

**Fellowship Bible Church**

Pastor: Don Griffin

photo. Written on the back was this compelling invitation. "Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it doesn't matter. Please come home." She did.

That mother is a good illustration of God's grace. While other religions tell you to work your way into the presence of a deity, God, through Jesus Christ, simply says "come home." The price for your sins has already been paid. All you need to do is receive it. And when you do, He will begin a new work in your life. He will begin doing in you and through you what you could never do yourself.