

Easter Questions

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It's good to be together on this Easter morning and even better to worship the one who's risen. He is risen! Let's turn in our Bibles to Luke 24.

For some people, Easter is full of meaning and significance. But for many it raises a lot of questions. Big questions. And if they're not answered, Easter is just a meaningless ritual. A duty of drudgery, every 12 months, to assuage your conscience or appease your wife.

So I'd like to pose several of those questions, and answer them. To enlighten and hopefully awaken those of you who *don't* know the answers, and encourage those of you who do.

Here's the first:

1. "What's it about?"

What's Easter about? And why do we celebrate it every year? And thousands of churches before us for the past 2000 years. What's going on? It's a legitimate question. And the answer is found in Luke 24:1-9; among many other places in the Bible.

Starting with the last verse of chapter 23, it says – [23:56b] *On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment*. The commandment in the Old Testament to set aside one day a week for worship and rest. They rested. *They*, being some of the women who followed Jesus.

[1] *But on the first day of the week [Sunday], at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared*. [To preserve the body of Jesus.] [2] *And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, [3] but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus*.

[4] *While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel [two angels]. [5] And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? [6] He is not here, but has risen*.

[6b] *Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, [7] that the Son of Man [Jesus] must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."* [8] *And they remembered his words, [9] and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven [the eleven closest disciples of Jesus] and to all the rest.* (ESV) The rest of his followers.

What's Easter about?

• **The resurrection of Jesus**

His resurrection from death to life. Not Easter eggs; it's not about that. Not Easter bunnies. Not even Easter *baskets*. As much as Becky loves to load those things up for the littles. It's like Christmas all over again. And appropriately so.

The core of what Easter's about is the resurrection of Jesus from death to life. Like the angel said in v6 – *He is not here, but has risen*.

Same for the Apostle Peter. After seeing the empty tomb himself. And *Jesus* himself.

Saying in **Acts 2:23–24**, to the very people who *sentenced* Jesus to death – *This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. [24] God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death [the pains and bondage of death], because it was not possible for him to be held by it*. God raised him up.

The angel said it, Peter said it, and every other New Testament author said it. Or at least implied it. That Jesus rose again, and Jesus lives. Eventually ascending back to heaven where he sits at the right hand of God waiting to come again. Waiting to judge those who *don't* believe, and gather those who do. Those who *don't* love him and live for him, versus those who do.

So Easter is all about the resurrection of Jesus, and what it means.

2. Why did Jesus die in the first place?

What's the point? What's the purpose? Especially since he's God in the flesh. The Son of God and second person of the Trinity. Why did he die?

Well, first of all . . .

• **He had to**

Jesus died because he had to. Not "had to" in a forced sense – Jesus wasn't forced to die – he was compelled to die. Of his *own* volition; his *own* will and desire. Which raises the question why? Why did Jesus have to die?

6 reasons. First of all . . .

- **God planned it**

Jesus had to die because God planned it that way. Like we just saw in Acts 2:23. Jesus was *delivered up according to the definite plan* of God. Preordained and prearranged. Predetermined and pre-set. And what God plans, God does. *Jesus* does. And did.

Second, he had to die because . . .

- **The Scriptures foretold it**

Scriptures that can't be broken. Because they're the *word* of God; his promise.

Like Isaiah 53; foretelling the death of Jesus 700 years before. He would be *pierced for our transgressions* it says, and *crushed for our iniquities*. (5) And Daniel 9:26 says that he would be *cut off*. And Zechariah 12:10, that God's people would look on *him whom they have pierced*.

Jesus *had* to die because he was bound by the Scriptures. Bound by what they foretold.

Third . . .

- **He reiterated it**

Jesus had to die because he repeated the Scriptures himself. Like it says in Mark 8:31 – *He began to teach them that the Son of Man [referring to himself] must suffer . . . be killed . . . and rise*. He reiterated what God planned and promised. Which means Jesus didn't stumble into his death, he embraced it. He intentionally died.

Fourth, he had to die because . . .

- **Forgiveness requires it**

This is where the rubber meets the road for *us*. Before a holy God, forgiveness requires a penalty. In order for God to no longer hold our sins against us a price has to be paid. And that price is blood. **Hebrews 9:22b** – *Without the shedding of blood* [without the sacrifice of a life] *there is no forgiveness of sins*. That’s how seriously God takes our sin.

Forgiveness requires death. And not just any death, but a perfect death; the death of someone faultless and flawless. Otherwise it’s just a sinner dying for a sinner.

So Jesus *had* to die because he’s the only one who’s perfect, and forgiveness requires it.

What’s more . . .

- Justification depends on it

Turn with me to one more passage, will you? Romans 3:23.

Justification is a biblical word that simply means “God’s declaration of righteousness.” When we repent and believe, God forgives our sin, cancels our debt – all that we owe him for our sin – and credits us with righteousness; the righteousness of Christ.

That’s justification. And it depends on Christ’s death; his *death* for our sins. Or as Romans 3 says it, his *redemption*. Take a look. Romans 3:23.

[23] *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* [his perfect standard of holiness], [24] *and are justified* [declared righteous in his sight] *by his grace as a gift* [something we receive for free; justification is free], *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. Through the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. His death, to buy our freedom. Freedom from the bondage and *consequences* of sin. That’s redemption.

So we are justified by God’s gracious act to declare us righteous, because of the death of Jesus on our behalf. No death, no justification.

And last, the 6th reason he had to die, is because our . . .

-Propitiation hangs on it

Pun intended. Propitiation is another biblical word that means “the appeasement of God’s wrath.” His wrath for our sin. His righteous anger for our disobedience. The appeasement of which hangs on the death of Jesus. Depends on the death of Jesus.

Look at Romans 3:24 again. [We] *are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation* [an appeasement of his wrath] *by his blood* [his death; on our behalf], *to be received by faith*. Belief. Trust.

Jesus *had* to die in order to appease God’s wrath for our sin. But it only applies, that propitiation only applies, if we believe. If we put our *faith* in his death. If we trust that it was sufficient, and sufficient for us.

6 reasons Jesus had to die. Had to.

But lest you think it was only a duty, he also died because . . .

• He loves us

He had to, and he loves us. We talked about this on Good Friday.

1 John 3:16a – *By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us*. For us. And Paul says in Galatians 2:20 – He *loved me and gave himself for me*.

Jesus died for us, because he loves us. Loves *you*. Died for *you*. For *your* sins. Your righteousness. Your forgiveness.

The question is, where’s your faith? Because that love, and forgiveness, and justification is only received by faith. (Romans 3:25) It’s only received by believing and trusting in who Jesus is and what he did, and turning to him in humble repentance.

And I’m going to give you an opportunity to do that before we’re done. To pray with me and call on Jesus yourself. Pray with me and confess your faith.

But first, there’s another Easter question.

3. Why the resurrection?

We’ve already established that’s what Easter’s all about it, but why? Why is *that* a necessary part of it? Why don’t we commemorate Good Friday and leave it there? Aren’t we forgiven based on Christ’s *death*? (Hebrews 9:22) Isn’t that what we just saw? Are we not justified on the basis of his *redemption*? (Romans 3:24) We are.

But God also makes those things dependent on his resurrection. Both-and. He had to *rise* for almost all the same reasons he had to die: God planned it (Acts 2:22-32), the Scriptures foretold it (Isaiah 53:10-12; Hosea 6:2), and Jesus reiterated it (Matthew 12:40).

Plus, forgiveness and justification require it as well. **1 Corinthians 15:17** – *If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins*. Still unforgiven. Because the resurrection proves that his death was sufficient. A *sufficient* payment for our sins. And a perfect payment. Because an imperfect payment, a sinful person, would still be dead. So our forgiveness depends on his resurrection just as much as his death.

And the same is true of our justification. **Romans 4:25** – [Jesus] *was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification*. Raised, so we could be credited with his righteousness. Justified. Because if Jesus didn’t overcome the penalty of death, there’s no righteousness to credit. He’s just as sinful as you and me. (Romans 6:9)

But praise God he did rise, because our justification and forgiveness depends on it.

Plus . . .

• Without it there’s no life and no hope

Without the resurrection of Jesus there’s no life to the *full*, no life eternal, and no hope of glory. None. If we’re still in our *sins* without a resurrection, we’re still dead without a resurrection. We haven’t been raised spiritually (Ephesians 2:4-7), and we won’t be raised physically.

It’s only by his resurrection that we are raised. Only by his resurrection that we have life. **(Romans 6:5)** *For if we have been united with him in a death like his* [united by faith; so that his death was our death, his penalty our penalty; if that’s true], *we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his*. A spiritual resurrection now, and a physical resurrection later. No resurrection, no life. No resurrection, no hope.

But that often raises another question:

4. Is it really true?

Is it really true that Jesus rose from the dead? Is it really true that death was arrested; death was stopped. Is it really true he walked right out of that grave?

In a word . . .

- **Yes!**

Resoundingly yes! It *is* true. Because the evidence is overwhelming. From the Apostles who saw him and recorded it, to more than 500 others who saw him and corroborated it. (1 Cor 15:3-8)

And lest you think they were deluded, and that the Apostles just made it up to establish their power and perpetuate their religion, think again. Because they died for it. The Apostles *died* for bearing witness to the resurrection. They died for preaching it.

And while religious fanatics the world over have died for things they *thought* were true, nobody dies for something they know to be false. And since the Apostles were in a position to determine that, as eyewitnesses, what they wrote and said must be true.

So yes, the resurrection of Jesus really is true. And that doesn't even touch the evidence of changed lives. Unexplainable peace. Unspeakable joy. Unexpected strength. Blessed assurance. It really is true.

And finally, an Easter question that *ought* to be asked, is . . .

5. What does it mean for me?

What does it mean for you? Personally. What does it mean for us? Take a look at this **video**. <https://www.instagram.com/tv/B-zbTpyBpOs/>

What does Easter mean for you and me?

- **Everything**

And if you want it – if you want to be forgiven of your sin and granted new life; if you want to rise again someday and have Jesus in your life this day; if you're ready to love him and live for him every day – pray with me right now.

You Are Loved