

Why I Believe In Easter – Acts 2:22-41

Welcome (introduce myself); Visitors – glad you’ve chosen to worship with us
Are you familiar with that traditional Easter greeting – He is risen/He is risen indeed?
I want to try it . . .
That’s exactly what I want to look at this weekend, so why don’t you open up your
Bibles to Acts 2:22-41 (**Intro**)

I trust you’ll be both encouraged *and* challenged as we look at this passage
It’s what we do every single week – we open up to a passage, and apply it to our lives
And do so, b/c nothing else carries the weight and authority of God
The Bible has proven itself over and over, as God’s revelation or message to us,
describing not only our problems in life, but the solutions
Including our *biggest* problem, which is sin, and the only solution for it, which is
salvation

- That’s the focus of this entire book
That every single one of us is born with a sin nature – you don’t have to teach a two
year old how to throw a temper tantrum, they come by it naturally
And, every single one of us *continues* to sin – either by doing wrong things, or not
doing the right ones

For which, there is a penalty, a punishment, called death
Which includes eternal suffering and separation from God, in hell, forever – a place
from which there’s no escape
That’s why sin is our biggest problem – b/c it leads to eternal punishment

- The good news, also in the Bible, is that there’s a solution called salvation
A gift from God that included sending his Son, Jesus, to take the penalty for our sins on
himself, and die in our place
In our place, so we wouldn’t have to – so we wouldn’t have to face hell when we die,
but can go to heaven instead
In our place, so we could be forgiven and redeemed and restored and reconciled to God,
forever and ever – that’s salvation

- But it all hinges on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead
The door of salvation hinges on Easter

If he didn’t *overcome* the penalty of death, then it wasn’t sufficient for our salvation
If Jesus is still in the grave, then death has won and we’re still at risk – we’re still
condemned and facing punishment
If *he* didn’t rise, then neither will *we* like the Bible says

The solution to our biggest problem in life is salvation, and the key to our salvation – is
Easter; it all hinges on Easter
So I want to spend the next few minutes telling u why I believe in it, and why u can too
That’s where Acts 2 comes in, so follow along with me as I read v22-32

The first reason I believe in Easter, is that . . .

1. It was predicted by prophets (v27)

In v27, Peter quotes King David from Ps 16:10, saying – *You will not abandon my soul to*

Hades [the grave, the abode of the dead], *or let your Holy One see corruption.*
And the amazing thing is that Peter applies it to Jesus

IOW, he’s saying that David’s words in the Psalm were actually spoken on behalf of
Jesus, a thousand years before he was ever born

And he comes to that conclusion not only b/c David was a prophet (30) . . .
And not only b/c God promised he would set one of his descendants on the throne . . .
But b/c David died; And he was still dead – his tomb being proof (29)

IOW David *saw* corruption – his body decayed
Which was contrary to what he wrote in v27, so he couldn’t have been speaking of
himself Peter said
Rather, he was speaking about Jesus – the promised one, the one for whom he longed

- That’s the first reason I believe in the resurrection of Jesus
Instead of being some random occurrence where things were made up about it at the
time . . .
It was predicted by God’s prophets hundreds of years before, and came true just like
they said
From Moses and Samuel, to Isaiah and Daniel – his life, death, and resurrection were
predicted long before he ever showed up

2. It was seen by many (v32)

In v32 Peter says – *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.*
Which refers to the 12 apostles in this context (14), but also includes hundreds of others
Like the 500 who the Apostle Paul says saw him at one time (1 Cor 15:6)

And it wasn’t a fleeting appearance either – a one-time deal
Acts 1:3 says that he *presented himself alive* over the course of *40 days*, while *speaking
about the kingdom of God*
40 days; Alive; And speaking

Easter was no backroom private showing, to a privileged few
It was a public event, seen by many, and intentionally so – he *presented* himself alive
Reason #2 that I believe in it

3. It was verified by skeptics (Jn 20:25)

The most infamous of whom was one of Jesus’ own disciples – Thomas
Who, after being told that Jesus was alive, said in **John 20:25** – *Unless I see in his
hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place
my hand into his side, I will never believe.*
I need proof!

And 8 days later Jesus showed up and told him go ahead, see for yourself
To which Thomas responded – *My Lord and my God!* (Jn 20:28); *****
He believed in the resurrection

And it’s the 3rd reason I do too – b/c it was verified by skeptics like Thomas, who was
adamant about proof

4. It was **proclaimed** by martyrs (v23-24, 32)

Referring especially to the apostles – people who were *eyewitnesses*

Like Peter himself, who said in v24 – *God raised him up* . . .

And then again in v32 he says – *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.*

Which, as I said before, refers to himself and the other apostles standing with him

All of whom went on to proclaim and preach the bodily resurrection of Jesus fr the dead

Which is the foundation and recurring theme of the entire NT that they wrote

And not only that he rose again, but that he continues to live in heaven, physically, and in our hearts, spiritually – at least the hearts of those who believe in him

It's like that old hymn that says – He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today

He walks with me, and talks with me, along life's narrow way

He lives, he lives, salvation to impart (that's *why* he lives)

You ask me how I know he lives? He lives, within my heart

That's what the apostles spent their life preaching – that he rose again, and lives

- And most of them were killed for it – martyred for preaching the resurrection
Which no one would do if they *knew* it was false

Nobody voluntarily dies for what they *know* to be false

Many are willing to die for something they *believe* to be true – just look at the number of suicide bombers who do it in the name of religion

But nobody is willing to die for something they know to be *false* – something they *know* didn't happen

And because of the apostle's proximity to Jerusalem, and their presence at that point in time – they were in a position to *know* whether or not Jesus really did rise again

And if he didn't, if they made all this up, they never would've been willing to die for it – it's totally contrary to the survival instincts of human nature

But because they were, b/c they *were* willing to die for it, and did – it's a pretty compelling argument for the truth of Easter

That's reason #4

5. It was **embraced** by thousands (v37-41)

Look at v37-41

38 – he says *repent and be baptized* not to imply that baptism is required for the forgiveness of sins or the gift of the HS within you . . .

But to say that it is so closely related to a person's conversion as a step of obedience and allegiance to Jesus, that he lumps the two together

39 – what *promise*?

The promise of salvation, spoken of by the prophet Joel, and reiterated by Peter in v21

It shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

That's the promise to which Peter is referring in v39

3000 people *believed* in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and embraced him as their risen Lord and Savior

3000 people were convicted of their sin and sinfulness, and repented – i.e. they asked for forgiveness and made a commitment to turn from their sin

And 3000 people called on the name of the Lord that day, to be saved – to receive the promise of salvation

That's the 5th reason I believe in Easter – it was embraced by thousands of people who were in a position to know better if it wasn't true . . .

And were *cut to the heart* because it was; And cut to the heart b/c of their sin

And cut to the heart b/c it meant their salvation

6. It's **life-changing** for those who believe

You can't ignore the life-changing impact of Easter in those who believe, in those who are saved, in those who receive God's gift of salvation

Like those in the early church who went from a scattered group of frightened cowards, meeting behind closed doors . . .

To a close-knit, sacrificial community, who sent out the greatest missionary force in the history of the world; That's v42-47 and the rest of Acts

Easter was *life-changing* for them; And it still *is*

There's no other way to explain the transformation in those who believe – in those who surrender themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ

They go fr self-centered, self-absorbed people – to other-oriented conduits of blessing
People who no longer live for themselves, but for him, no matter what the cost

That's our church; You're sitting in a room full of people for whom that's true

People whose lives have been changed by their belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and what it means for them

That's why I believe in Easter – b/c it's life-changing for those who believe

Including you, if *you* believe

- If you believe that you have a sin problem like the Bible says, and your life shows
If you believe that you're facing death and hell b/c of it
If you believe in a solution called salvation, and *receive* it
If you believe that Jesus died in *your* place, for *your* sins, so *you* wouldn't have to
And if you believe that he rose again to new life, so you could too

So you too could be forgiven, and cleansed, and relieved of your guilt

Never more to live for yourself, but for him who lives

God will change your life if you believe, and repent, and receive

It's a free gift he offered then, and still offers now – but you have to want it

- Which I think is illustrated so powerfully, by a modern day **Easter Parable** I ran into a few years back; And I want to read to you

Easter Parable

It tells of a certain Professor of Religion named Dr. Christianson, who taught a required course in Christianity, which every student had to take. And although Dr. Christianson tried hard to communicate the essence of the gospel, most of his students didn't get it, or didn't care.

Until one year, when Dr. C had a special student named Steve who was studying with the intent of going into ministry. He both got it, *and* took it seriously. Not only that, he was popular, well liked, and quite the muscular athlete.

So one day, Dr. Christianson had an idea, and asked Steve how many push-ups he could do. "Well, I do about 200 every other day as part of my workout," Steve said. Dr. C thought for a minute, and then said, "Do you think you could do *300* if you really pushed it?"

"I don't know," Steve said. "I've never tried."
"Well could you? I have an idea for class, and I need you to do 300 push-ups in sets of 10 for this to work. And I need you to do it this Friday. Can you do it?"
"Alright," Steve said. "I'll try."

When Friday's class rolled around, Dr. C pulled out 3 boxes of the biggest, fanciest donuts you've ever seen, and announced that everybody could have one, even though they weren't really applying themselves in class, or being honest with their homework. Which created quite a stir, but a donut is a donut, deserved or not.

So going to the first girl in the first row he asked, "Cynthia, do you want a donut?"
"Sure," she said.
So Dr. Christianson turned to Steve and said, "Steve, would you do ten push-ups so that Cynthia can have a donut?"
"Okay." And he jumped down from his desk, snapped off 10, and then returned to his chair. At which point Dr. C put a donut on Cynthia's desk, much to her puzzlement.

Then he went to Joe, the next person, and asked, "Joe do you want a donut?"
"You bet," he said.
So Dr. C asked, "Steve would you do ten push-ups so Joe can have a donut?" Steve did ten push-ups, and Joe got a donut.

And so it went, down the first aisle, with Steve doing ten pushups for every person, before they got their donut. And then the second aisle as well, until he came to Scott.

Scott was a football player and athlete in his own right. So when Dr C asked him if he wanted a donut, he thought for a second, and then asked, "Can I do my own pushups?"
"No." Dr. C said. "Steve has to do them."
"I don't want one then."

So Dr. C then turned to Steve and said, "Steve, would you do ten pushups so Scott can have a donut he doesn't want?"
At which point Scott started to object saying, "Hey! I said I didn't want one!"

But Dr. Christianson looked him and said sadly but firmly, "This is my classroom, my class, my desks, and my donuts. If you don't want it, just leave it on the desk." And he put a donut on Scott's desk.

By this time, Steve had begun to slow down a little, and sat on the floor because it took too much effort to get up and down. You could also start to see a little perspiration coming out around his brow.

When Dr. C started down the third row, the students were beginning to get angry. They didn't like that Steve had to suffer so, for a gift they didn't deserve. And when he asked Jenny if she wanted a donut, she said, "No." But Steve did 10 push-ups anyway, and Jenny got a donut she didn't want.

And so it went, with almost everyone saying "no" by this time, with donut after donut sitting untouched on their desks. For his part, Steve was having to put forth more and more effort to do the push-ups, and it showed as the sweat began to soak through his clothes. In fact, as Dr. C started down the fourth row, he couldn't even look at Steve anymore, so great was his pain.

In the meantime, a few students in the hallway caught wind that something different was going on, and wandered in to watch. When Dr. C realized it, he did a quick count and saw 4 extra students, making 34 total in the room. At which point he started to worry if Steve would be able to make it. But on he went from one student to another.

By the time he reached the end of the 4th row, Steve was really having a rough time. Laboring with each push-up, he needed more and more time to complete each set, and now *laid* on the floor in between them.

About that time, Jason came to the door and was about to come in the room, when all the students yelled, "No! Stay out!"
But Steve picked up his head and said, "That's okay. Let him come."
"Steve, you realize that if Jason comes in, you'll have to do ten pushups for him as well?"
"I know. Let him come in," Steve said.

By the time Dr. C had finished the fifth row, and started on the extras, Steve was laboring so much that his whole body was shaking, and there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

As he reached the last girl in the room, a friend of Steve's, he asked, "Linda, do *you* want a doughnut?"
With tears flowing down her face, she asked, "Dr. C, can I help him?"
And with tears of his own, Dr. C replied, "No, he has to do it alone. Steve, will you do ten pushups so Linda can have a donut?"

As Steve finished his last pushup, the 350th, his arms buckled and he collapsed to the floor. It was over. Finished.

Turning to the class, Dr. C said, "Don't worry. Steve's gonna be okay in a few days. In the meantime, I hope you think about the riches of God's grace and mercy, in sending his Son to pay the price of death, for *your* gift of salvation – a gift you didn't deserve. Wouldn't it be foolish to leave such a gift on the desk?"

- Our biggest problem is sin, and the only solution is salvation (**summary**)

That is, forgiveness of your sins, and eternal life in Christ

And it's yours to receive, if you only believe

If you believe that Jesus died for *your* sins, so *you* wouldn't have to

And rose again that first Easter, so you could too

Never more to live for yourself, but for him who lives

It's a gift, better than any donut – let's pray

If you want that gift, if you're cut to the heart and you want to be saved, pray with me
right now

- Lord Jesus, I *believe* that when you died, you died in my place, for my sins, taking the
punishment I deserve

And I believe in Easter – I believe that you rose again

And that b/c *you* live, I can too (**title slide**)

In light of that – I *repent* of my sin

I'm sorry for it, and I'm done with it; Please forgive me

Please come into my life, and save me forever – I *receive* you as Lord and Savior

And commit right now to follow you, and worship you the rest of my days

- If you prayed that prayer with me, will you just raise your hand and look at me, and
wait for me to acknowledge you?

I would love to know who you are, and want to pray *for* you as we close

(Finish prayer)

God bless you guys, and welcome to the family of God

We have **New Believer Packets** available for you at the door

Please pick one up, work through it, and get the card back to us, will you?

We want to help you, pray for you, and walk with you in your newfound life in Christ

Worship – It's All Because Of Jesus I'm Alive

Close – Don't forget the New Believer Packets

Class for new believers – Velocity (4/18 – 5 weeks)

He is risen/He is risen indeed