

“The Meaning of Easter”
1 Cor. 15:1-4, 51- 57

1. The Trivia – bunnies and eggs
2. The Traditions – Lent, and many more

A group of four-year-olds gathered in a Sunday school class in Chattanooga. The teacher looked at the class and asked this question: "Does anyone know what today is?" A little four-year-old girl held up her hand and said, "Yes, today is Palm Sunday." The teacher exclaimed, "That's fantastic, that's wonderful. Now does anyone know what next Sunday is?" The same little girl held up her hand and said, "Yes, next Sunday is Easter Sunday." Once again the teacher said, "That's fantastic. Now, does anyone know what makes next Sunday Easter?" The same little girl responded and said, "Yes, next Sunday is Easter because Jesus rose from the grave" and before the teacher could congratulate her, she kept on talking and said, "but if he sees his shadow -- he has to go back in for seven weeks."

It was our family custom to have a sing-along while traveling by car. It helped keep the boys out of trouble and in a good mood. On one trip our eldest, Aaron, asked if we could sing the Gravy Song.

"What's that?" we asked. "Teach it to us."

With all innocence Aaron began singing the Easter hymn, "Up from the gravy, a rose."

What about it? The word "*Easter*" only is found one time in the Bible, in Acts 12:4, and there it is a reference to Passover. So why do we celebrate Easter and what does it truly mean?

3. The True Meaning – Remembering Jesus' Resurrection

Matt. 28:1 Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to see the tomb.

2 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, because an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled aside the stone and sat on it.

5 Then the angel spoke to the women. "Fear not!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

6 He isn't here! He has been raised from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying.

7 And now, go quickly and tell his disciples he has been raised from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember, I have told you."

Some liberal, unbelieving clergypersons have tried to deny the truth of resurrection by saying Jesus just fainted or swooned.

Here is a letter written to a local advice column along with the response:

Dear Eutyclus:

Our preacher said, on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health.

What do you think?

Sincerely,
Bewildered

Dear Bewildered:

Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his heart; embalm him; put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens.

Sincerely,
Eutyclus

The disciples began meeting on Sunday to mark Jesus' Resurrection.

Notice John 20:18-20 & 26

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.

19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

Notice what Paul said his message of the Gospel was:

1 Cor. 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

Everyone has to die – Heb. 9:27a; Rom. 6:23a

In his little book, Countdown, G. B. Hardy has given us some thought-provoking questions about the resurrection. "There are but two essential requirements: 1. Has anyone cheated death and proved it? 2. Is it available to me? Here is the complete record: Confucius' tomb -- occupied. Buddha's tomb -- occupied. Mohammed's tomb -- occupied. Jesus' tomb -- empty! Argue as you will, there is no point in following a loser."

Everyone has to live forever somewhere – Heb. 9:27b

As Vice President, George Bush represented the U.S. at the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. There in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross, and that the same Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband.

John 5:28 "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice
29 and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

One trouble with the churches is that too many people want to have Easter without Calvary.

Everyone needs to know Jesus died on the cross for their sins –1 Cor. 15:3; Isa. 53:6

Isa. 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the sin of us all.

1 Pet. 2:22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";
24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed.

25 For you were like sheep going astray...

Everyone needs to know Jesus rose to give eternal life to all who trust in Him – Rom. 6:23b

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live (again).

26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die (or perish) Do you believe this?"

Jesus didn't conduct funerals at all - only resurrections: at the funeral of Lazarus, He turned it into a resurrection; the same is the true of Jairus's daughter's funeral and the funeral of the widow of Nain's son.

4. The Triumph - Victory in life and in death

1 Corinthians 15:55 "*O Death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?*"

56 The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law.

57 But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:21 "For me, living is Christ, and dying is gain!"

Little Philip, born with Down's syndrome, attended a third-grade Sunday School class with nine other eight-year-old boys and girls. Typical

of that age, the children did not readily accept Philip with his differences, (according to an article in Leadership magazine). But because of a creative teacher, they began to care about Philip and accept him as part of the group, though not fully.

The Sunday after Easter the teacher brought plastic eggs. Each receiving one, the children were told to go outside on that lovely spring day, find some symbol for new life, and put it in the egg-like container. Back in the classroom, they would share their new-life symbols, opening the containers one by one in surprise fashion. After running about the church property in wild confusion, the students returned to the classroom and placed the containers on the table. Surrounded by the children, the teacher began to open them one by one. After each one, whether a flower, butterfly, or leaf, the class would ooh and ahh. Then one was opened, revealing nothing inside. The children exclaimed, "That's stupid. That's not fair. Somebody didn't do their assignment." Philip spoke up, "That's mine."

"Philip, you don't ever do things right!" the student retorted. "There's nothing there!" "I did so do it," Philip insisted. "I did do it. It's empty. The **tomb** was empty!" Silence followed. From then on Philip became a full member of the class. He died not long afterward from an infection most children would have shrugged off. At the funeral this class of nine eight-year-olds marched up to the altar, not with flowers to cover the stark reality of death. With their Sunday school teacher, the nine eight year olds marched right up to that altar, each to lay on it an empty plastic egg!

The great Easter truth is not that we are to live newly after death -- that is not the great thing -- but that we are to live here and now by the power of the resurrection; not so much that we are to live forever as that we are to, and may, live nobly now because we are to live forever.
-- Phillip Brooks

All these questions have the same answer.

What is it that gives a widow courage as she stands beside a fresh grave?
What is the ultimate hope of the cripple, the amputee, the abused, the burn victim?

How can the parents of brain-damaged or physically handicapped children keep from living their entire lives totally and completely depressed?

Why would anyone who is blind or deaf or paralyzed be encouraged when they think of the life beyond?

How can we see past the martyrdom of some helpless hostage or devoted missionary?

Where do the thoughts of a young couple go when they finally recover from the grief of losing their baby?

When a family receives the tragic news that a little daughter was found dead or their dad was killed in a plane crash or a son overdosed on drugs, what single truth becomes their whole focus?

What is the final answer to pain, mourning, senility, insanity, terminal diseases, sudden calamities, and fatal accidents?

By now you've guessed correctly: the hope of bodily resurrection.

On one occasion Michelangelo turned to his fellow artists and said with frustration in his voice, "Why do you keep filling gallery after gallery with endless pictures on the one theme of Christ in weakness, Christ on the cross, and most of all, Christ hanging dead?" he asked. "Why do you concentrate on the passing episode as if it were the last work, as if the curtain dropped down there on disaster and defeat? That dreadful scene lasted only a few hours. But to the unending eternity Christ is alive; Christ rules and reigns and triumphs!"