



EASTER 2021
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The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

Easter is here and we are celebrating the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus. The journey is over, He has been obedient and His purpose has been fulfilled. Jesus' resurrection is proof that our faith is in a forgiving God, full of mercy and grace, and our lives have been bought by Jesus, our Savior, the Righteous, Holy, Son of God.

QUESTION: What are you doing to celebrate Easter this year? How is it different from last year?

SCRIPTURE¹

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ *died* for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ that he was *buried*, that he was *raised* on the third day according to the Scriptures,⁵ and that he *appeared* to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:17-19 And if Christ has not been raised, your *faith is futile*; you are *still in your sins*. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are *lost*. If only for *this life* we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be *pitied*.

1 Corinthians 15:32b If the dead are not raised, let us *eat and drink*, for tomorrow we *die*.

1 Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has *indeed* been raised from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:26 The last enemy to be destroyed is *death*.

Philippians 2:6-7 Who, being in *very nature God*, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he *made himself nothing* by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in *human likeness*.

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made *alive in the Spirit*.

Ephesians 1:18-20 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the *same as the mighty strength*²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms...

Romans 8:11 And *if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you*, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Acts 2:38-39 Peter replied, "*Repent and be baptized*, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the *forgiveness* of your sins. And you will *receive* the gift of the *Holy Spirit*. The promise is for you and your children and for *all* who are *far off*—for *all* whom the Lord our God will call."

OBSERVATION

There are three questions to ask about Easter: The What, the Why, and the How. We all know the **What**: Jesus died on the Cross; three days later He rose from the dead; He appeared to many people. No other

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

religion can say that about their god(s). This weekend we join two billion people around the world in celebrating the resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle Paul writes that there are three reasons to believe in Jesus: **1) The tomb was empty:** Jesus died, was buried, was raised, and He appeared. If Jesus never rose from the dead there would be a shrine around His tomb; no one was expecting Him to rise from the dead. Mary Magdalen was the first to arrive there and thought His body had been stolen; Peter and John were astonished at the empty tomb; the religious leaders would have rejoiced if Jesus were still in the tomb. **2) Eyewitnesses to the appearances of Jesus:** He appeared at least twelve times to hundreds of people and He even appeared to over five hundred at the same time. **3) Radical changes in Jesus' followers:** After meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul went from persecuting Christians to writing half of the New Testament; the Apostles went from hiding out of fear for their lives to openly preaching as they changed the world; ten of them were tortured and killed – martyred -- and did not recant their faith in order to save their lives. Nobody dies for a lie – they will only die for something they fervently believe in.

QUESTION: The Cross: Why did Jesus say, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Why weren’t Jesus’ legs broken? Why was the Temple curtain torn?

QUESTION: Considering all of the reports of people seeing Jesus after the resurrection, why do you think people still don’t believe in Him? If you believe that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is true, what is keeping you from giving yourself fully, passionately, fervently and “all in” to Christ?

QUESTION: There were twelve Apostles. What happened to the two who weren’t martyred?

QUESTION: We have been learning about Christians who have suffered persecution and even been martyred² because of their faith. How do these stories affect your faith?

QUESTION: What radical changes did you experience when you gave your life to Jesus?

APPLICATION

The Why of Easter: Why did Jesus have to go to the Cross? If He didn’t, our Christianity is a waste of time. Everything we believe and do means nothing – it is all useless. We couldn’t get right with God because there was no forgiveness and we would still be in our sins. We may as well keep on sinning. But, because of His resurrection, sin has been destroyed. We can be forgiven and death overcome. Our faith is not useless. We have hope for life beyond this world.

The How of Easter: When Jesus left heaven, He had the nature of God: All powerful, all knowing, in all places at all times, and not limited by time and space. He was the very nature of God. He was there in the beginning. He was the Word, He was with God and He was God Himself.³ And yet He agreed to come to earth in human likeness and became fully human. 100% God and 100% human. A mathematical conundrum.

QUESTION: How do you explain to others how Jesus was 100% human and 100% God?

Jesus emptied Himself of all rights and privileges of being God. So how did He raise Himself from the dead? Well, He didn’t. The Holy Spirit did it. What does that have to do with us? Life is hard, but we who believe in Jesus have the same power that raised Him from the dead – He is within us. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to live righteous lives; He convicts us of sin; He comforts us; He counsels us; and He transforms us. He guides us in making right decisions, in forgiving others, in walking away from temptation, in overcoming addictions, in loving our enemies, in breaking the cycle of dysfunction, in loving unconditionally and so much more. He is not the third wheel of the Trinity – He is co-equal with God and Jesus and therefore a full partner in the Godhead.

QUESTION: How do you explain the Trinity to people who ask you about it?

² John Fox, Book of Martyrs.

³ John 1:1-3

So, how do we receive the Holy Spirit? We surrender our lives to Jesus. When we do this, we have forgiveness of our sins and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament he “came upon” various people to give them the power to act in certain situations. But Jesus changed that and told us that He needed to leave so that the Holy Spirit could come and live within us. Then, as St. Paul says, we need to be baptized. It is an outward demonstration of dying to ourselves, our burial with Christ, and our resurrection to a new life in Him.

QUESTION: What is your experience with the Holy Spirit? How does He guide you?

QUESTION: If you have not been baptized as an adult, what is holding you back?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that You have provided a way to be reconciled to You through Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross. Your grace and mercy are overwhelming to us as we recognize the magnitude of that event. Now we rejoice, worship and praise You for loving us so much that You gave Your Son to die so that we could have eternal life. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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QUESTION: Considering all of the reports of people seeing Jesus after the resurrection, why do you think people still don’t believe in Him?

QUESTION: If you believe that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is true, what is keeping you from giving yourself fully, passionately, fervently and “all in” to Christ?

QUESTION: There were twelve Apostles. What happened to the two who weren’t martyred?

QUESTION: We have been learning about Christians who have suffered persecution and even been martyred because of their faith. How do these stories affect your faith?

QUESTION: What radical changes did you experience when you gave your life to Jesus?

QUESTION: How do you explain to others how Jesus was 100% human and 100% God?

QUESTION: How do you explain the Trinity to people who ask you about it?

QUESTION: What is your experience with the Holy Spirit? How does He guide you?

QUESTION: If you are a Christian and have not been baptized as an adult, what is holding you back?

ROOTED begins next week on Sunday the 11th or Tuesday the 13th. A good next step on your journey.

⁴ Matthew 27:46

⁵ Exodus 12:46

⁶ Matthew 27:51