

What Easter Gives Us

Romans 1:1–4, 4:24–25, 8:11

Slide 1

A story is told of a preacher by the name of William Sangster, who came down with a disease that gradually paralyzed him. Eventually, even his vocal cords were paralyzed.

On Easter Sunday, his last Easter on earth, his daughter came to visit. Using stiffened fingers, he scribbled this message to her: *“How terrible to wake up on Easter and have no voice with which to shout, ‘He is risen!’”*

Then, pausing a moment, he added, *“But it is even worse to have a voice and not want to shout.”*

We should feel like shouting today, because today’s Easter, and Christ has risen from the dead. But, just what does that mean to us here and now, in this twenty-first century?

The answer’s found in the Book of Romans. It’s in this letter we find Paul’s greatest declaration of Christian truth. Three times in Romans, Paul refers to the great results of Easter.

He says that:

1. Easter confirmed Christ’s identity.
2. Easter cancelled sin’s penalty, and, because of Easter...
3. We can celebrate eternal life.

As you can see, Easter has a lot to give the Christian. The resurrection of Jesus is the heart and soul of the Gospel.

In simple terms, the Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. His death is important, yes, but where would we be without the resurrection?

The resurrection was so important to the Early Church that it became their message to the world.

It's a shame that today, that in most of our churches, the resurrection message is relegated only to Easter Sunday. It shouldn't be that way, but it is.

Our message to the world should be the same as the Early Church—Jesus is alive! We don't have to wait until Easter to tell others. For the Christian, Easter should be an exciting time.

That's why today we're going to look at what it is that Easter gives us.

Slide 2

First, Easter gives us confirmation of Christ's identity. It proves Who He is. In fact, Paul begins his letter to the Romans with a significant reference to Easter.

Romans 1:1-4, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord."

This passage answers a couple of very important questions often debated by great preachers and theologians, but the answers are simple according to Paul.

The first question is, *"How do we know Jesus Christ was truly human—that He was a man?"* Paul answered that when he wrote that Jesus was *"a descendant of David."*

We can trace Jesus' lineage back to that great king of Israel. It's right there in the genealogy given in the first chapter of Mathew.

He was the descendent of a historical king, and as such, He was spoken of in Old Testament prophesy, when it said that the Messiah would sit upon the throne of David.

In fact, in the New Testament, Jesus was called the Son of David.

The second question is, *“How do we know He was truly divine—that He was God?”* Paul answers, *“who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead.”*

You see, the Resurrection didn't make Him the Son of God; it simply revealed Who He was.

His resurrection proved that He was accurate when He said in John 8:23b, *“You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”*

Jesus came from heaven to earth. He lived as a man. He came to save mankind through His death on a cross.

Along the way to that cross He walked the dusty roads of Israel, teaching His disciples and doing many wonderful things.

But the days of walking dusty roads are over; He has come back from the dead in mighty power. His resurrection proved He is the Son of God.

If Jesus had lived a wonderful life and died a heroic death, that would have been the end of Him. He might have been listed with the great and heroic, but He would've simply been one among many.

However, His uniqueness was guaranteed forever by His resurrection. The others are dead and gone, leaving behind only a memory.

But Jesus lives on, and His presence is within us. He's still mighty; He still has great power.

Many people have the mistaken view that other founders of the world's religions claimed to be God, but that isn't so.

Abraham and Moses, the founders of Judaism, didn't claim to be God. Mohammed, the founder of Islam, didn't claim to be Allah, and Buddha didn't claim to be God.

Among the leaders of the world's best-known religions, only Jesus claimed to be God, but what proof did He give? Let me answer that question with an illustration.

If a police officer knocked on my door late at night, I'd ask to see his credentials before letting him into my house. Just because people claim to be something doesn't mean they are.

Christ claimed to be God, but what were His credentials? One key credential was that Jesus taught that the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected, and then killed, but after three days He would rise from the grave.

John 2:19, "Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

Matthew 12:40, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Mark 8:31, "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."

Easter fulfilled those promises and proved His claim to be God. We follow a living Savior Who loves us. That's important!

Let me illustrate how important it is that Jesus was raised from the dead.

If you became lost in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, where the undergrowth is so deep and dense that in some areas you might never be found again, what would you do?

Suppose you came upon two park rangers, both of them wearing their traditional green uniforms, but one of them was alive, and the other was dead. Which would you want to follow out of the woods?

When it comes to eternal matters, who are you willing to follow? The dead leaders of the world's religions or the only founder of a major religion Who claimed to be God and Who proved it by rising from the dead.

We follow Jesus, because He's God and He proved it.

Slide 3

The second result of Easter is that it gives us the cancellation of sin's penalty. Paul talks about the righteousness of Christ in Romans 4.

Romans 4:24-25, "But also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary puts it like this: *"Christ's death as God's sacrificial Lamb was to pay the redemptive price for the sins of all people so that God might be free to forgive those who respond by faith to that provision."*

Christ's resurrection was the proof of God's acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice. Thus because He lives, God can credit His provided righteousness to the account of every person who responds by faith to that offer."

Now, that's a little hard to follow, so let me see if I can make it a little easier to understand.

At Calvary, our sins were put on Christ's account; or another way to explain it is that we ran-up a debt of sin, but Jesus paid our bill.

2 Corinthians 5:21, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus was righteous in the eyes of God because He lived a sinless life, even though He was tempted more than any man.

When we place our faith in Him, something happens; God gives us Jesus' righteousness.

There isn't a thing anyone can do to become clothed with God's righteousness except have faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. What can be more wonderful than to know that our sins are forgiven?

Slide 4

The third result of Easter is that it gives us the celebration of life eternal.

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."

What Paul's saying in this verse is that all men die because they're human.

Sin came into the world, and along with sin came death, which is the result of sin. Therefore, all men eventually die; but the man who has Christ, and His Spirit, will rise again.

You see, the Christian is one in Christ. The child of God is on his way to eternal life; death is only a brief interlude that must be passed through on the way.

Now, Christ died and rose again; and the man who's one with Christ is one with death's conqueror and shares in that victory. We're essentially connected to Jesus by His resurrection.

We actually share the life of Christ, somewhat like a limb that's grafted into a tree shares the life of the tree. The life of Christ is our life now.

Those who know and follow Christ have a sure hope of a resurrection of our own, and of eternal life.

John 11:25-26, "Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Satan believed he had defeated Him when Jesus died on the cross, but that only lasted three days, because the resurrection conquered sin and death, and gave Satan a knock-out blow.

When the shepherd boy David knocked out Goliath with a stone from his slingshot, he rushed over to the fallen man and, taking the giant's own sword, cut off his head.

Jesus did that with Satan. Using the devil's own weapon, death, He defeated him.

Hebrews 2:14b–15, “*That by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*”

It was necessary for Christ to die in order to destroy the power and fear of death. That doesn’t mean that death and Satan have been destroyed, however, they’ve just been made ineffective.

Through His resurrection, Christ broke the hold which Satan possessed over man.

These bodies that you and I have will be put into the grave one of these days. However, the Holy Spirit is our assurance that our bodies will be raised from the dead.

We’re given the Holy Spirit as the first installment of the life to come. Through the Holy Spirit we can enjoy a foretaste of what eternal life is going to be like.

I’m looking forward to the day when I’ll be done with this human body, when God gives me a new body, a spiritual body, in which I’ll still be able, even in heavenly places, to love and serve Him.

Because Christ was raised from the dead, we shall be raised from the dead. The Holy Spirit will deliver us from the “*body of this death*”—this old nature.

Slide 5

Conclusion

John Bunyan’s the *Pilgrim’s Progress* tells the remarkable story of a man who set out from the City of Destruction to journey toward the Celestial City.

As he trudged out of town, beginning his journey, he bore a heavy burden on his back. It weighed him down.

It was the burden of sin and guilt. But then the pilgrim met a man named Evangelist who pointed him in the right direction.

Coming to a hill called Calvary, the pilgrim knelt at the Cross. The burden fell from his back, rolled down the hill, and disappeared forever into the empty tomb.

All of us carry a heavy load of sin, until we give it to Jesus. What better time could there be to do that, than at Easter, when He received new physical life.

Because of Easter, we can receive a new spiritual life, too. We can be born again.

Easter gives us everything our hearts and minds need—confirmation of Christ's identity, cancellation of sin's penalty, and celebration of life eternal.

All of it is ours for the believing, for the accepting, and for the taking. People who trust Christ are God's children on their way to glory.

Our Redeemer has defeated death and the devil. He understands how His people feel as they face the temptations and trials of life.

When you come to Him by faith, you come to a sympathetic High Priest who can meet your every need.

John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*