

**HAPPY
EASTER!**



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‘Happy Easter!’
by
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HAPPY EASTER!

Ask children what Easter makes them think of, and most of them will probably say “Easter eggs”. But Easter is actually a celebration of an amazingly wonderful and powerful day in history, when Jesus, having been killed on a cross, came back to life. Customs involving chocolate, eggs, bunnies, bonnets and hot cross buns abound through the world, but they are incidental to the real meaning of Easter.

What Happened?

When Jesus’s body had been taken down from the Cross a man called Joseph took it and buried it in his own empty tomb in a

garden. Jesus's enemies were pleased that they had got rid of Him at last. But the Jewish religious leaders started to worry in case any of Jesus's followers should steal the body and pretend He had come back to life. So they went to the Roman governor, Pilate, and asked him to make the tomb secure. He gave them permission to do so and also provided soldiers to guard it. They sealed a huge stone in front of the tomb and left the soldiers on guard. The next day was the Sabbath when no Jews worked, so Jesus's followers did not go to the tomb until the following day.

There is an account of what happened on that morning, which we now call Easter Day, in all four of the Gospels in the Bible. You'll find it in Matthew 28:1-15, Mark 16:1-11, Luke 24:1-12 and John 20:1-18. To get all the details it's good to read all four.

First there was a huge earthquake and the stone rolled away from the door of the tomb. The soldiers were so afraid they fell to the ground as though they were dead. The first people to visit the tomb were some of the women who had been Jesus's followers. They had gone to put spices on the body as was the custom and were surprised to find the tomb open. They went in and found Jesus's body had gone. An angel was there who told them He had risen from the dead. But one of the women was distraught that the body had gone and stood crying in the garden. A man, who she presumed was the gardener, asked her why she was crying and who she was looking for. She explained and He said her name, "Mary." She then realised it was Jesus Himself. The women went to tell the rest of Jesus's followers. Some of them rushed to the tomb and found what the

women said was true. Jesus's coming back to life from the dead is called the resurrection.

He appeared to His followers over the next days and weeks many times, helping them to understand what had happened and reassuring them.

Did It Really Happen?

Jesus did exist. Writings from the time, other than the Bible, tell of Him, and historically record His death by crucifixion. It is also undeniably true that the tomb was empty and the body was never found.

John was one of Jesus's original twelve followers or disciples. He wrote the gospel of John and his account of Jesus's life, work, death and resurrection is first hand. In John

20:31 he says – *‘these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.’* John, along with Jesus’s other close followers, was completely shaken and in despair after Jesus’s death. But he went on to write his gospel, declaring that Jesus was indeed God and that He had risen from the dead. He could only have done that if he was absolutely convinced. He was, because he had seen Jesus alive again with his own eyes.

No-one could produce the body to ‘prove’ that Jesus hadn’t come back to life. So sceptics say that it was stolen. The Jewish religious leaders at the time bribed the Roman soldiers to say Jesus’s followers had stolen the body. This is the most common theory put forward today. But probably the most compelling reason for believing in the

resurrection is the change in Jesus's followers. After the crucifixion they were in despair and frightened, but having met with Jesus after He came back to life, were completely transformed. Matthew 28:19-20 says that one of the last things He said to them before He went back to heaven was – *'Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'* And this is what they did. They went on to put themselves in great danger preaching and spreading the truth of Jesus and there is historical evidence that many of them were killed for their belief. Would someone who knew the resurrection was a sham be willing to suffer torture and death for it? No! And if

Jesus never came back to life, what is the historical explanation for the spread of Christianity? What would have made orthodox Jews change the religious ways of centuries and risk everything to tell others about Him? Also many ordinary believers were and still are willing to take great risks in order to meet together to learn about Jesus and worship Him.

Some people accept the resurrection, but say Jesus's body didn't come back to life, just His spirit. After His resurrection, Jesus ate fish with His followers. Matthew tells how people grabbed at His feet. His actual body had been brought back to life and transformed by God into an eternal one.

It has been suggested that those who saw Jesus were hallucinating, but so many people met with Jesus after His resurrection

and their accounts all agree. This could never happen even if every person who saw Him was hallucinating at the same time. A hallucination is completely individual to the person experiencing it. The gospels record fifteen different appearances of Jesus to lots of different people - there were five hundred people at one time and just one or two at others. And after Jesus went back to heaven a few weeks later, there were no more accounts of appearances. Had all those people stopped hallucinating as quickly as they had started?!

Another theory is that Jesus wasn't actually dead when He was put in the tomb and got out Himself. But during His trial, Jesus had been scourged. This Roman method of torture consisted of Jesus being hit by a minimum of six men using brass knuckledusters, followed by His back being

whipped with a whip made up of many leather thongs into which bits of bone and metal had been fastened. This sliced through skin, muscle, blood vessels including arteries and into body organs. It was only stopped when the victim was nearly dead. Jesus also had a crown of thorns rammed onto His head and had a further beating with a rod. The soldiers tried to get Him to carry His own cross to the place of execution, but He was physically incapable and someone else had to do it for Him. He was nailed to the Cross through His hands and feet and left to hang and die. How could someone who had endured all this survive? After He had died a soldier drove a spear into His side and blood and water came out – this showed that He was indeed dead and the experienced Roman soldiers confirmed this. He was then laid in the

tomb. Such a severely damaged man could not have survived for long lying on a cold stone slab. And even if He had survived all that, would He have had the strength to push the huge sealed stone away from the doorway and fight off the Roman soldiers?

How much simpler to just believe!

What was the Significance of the Cross?

No-one is perfect. Everyone does, says and thinks wrong things. You may feel you live a good life, but in your heart you know you still get some things wrong. You may be very aware that your life is far from good. Wrong actions, words and thoughts are called sin in the Bible. God hates sin and He could never let it go unpunished.

But God loves you so much. He longs for you to know Him personally in a close Father and child relationship. It is not His desire to punish people. So He sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment for everyone, for all sins and for all time. Jesus died on a cross as the 'once for all' sacrifice. Instead of punishing you for the things you do wrong, God put that punishment on Jesus. He died instead of you!

When Jesus suffered torture and died, He took all sins, sickness and poverty on Himself and carried it all in your place. He won the victory over it all. As He died on the Cross, He won your forgiveness for all your sins, past, present and future. And this means that you are now free to become God's child. Jesus paid the greatest price possible for you. You are so valuable to Him. He loves you so much – beyond your

imagination. Whatever you've done, you are worth dying for. God's love is totally unconditional.

Why Was the Resurrection Essential?

The resurrection finally proved once and for all that Jesus was the Son of God. Romans 1:4 says Jesus – *'was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.'* Jesus's resurrection is the ultimate proof that He had won the victory over death. It just wasn't possible for death to keep hold of Him. Acts 2:24 says - *'God raised (Jesus) up, having freed him from the agony of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it.'*

The resurrection also proved that sin had finally been dealt with and forgiveness won for all by Jesus on the Cross. Romans 4:25 says Jesus – *‘was delivered up for our trespasses (sins), and was raised for our justification.’* This means you can be justified before God if you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. You can receive total forgiveness and come into God’s presence.

The resurrection means that it is possible, even in this life, to start to live in the victory that Jesus won for you. Romans 6:4 says – *‘just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.’*

Ephesians 2:6 says something amazing. It says that God - *‘raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.’* When you become

born-again, that is you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, you are actually spiritually raised with Jesus in heaven. This isn't easy to understand, but it is so wonderful!

(To read about being born-again, go to the end of this booklet.)

When Jesus eventually went back to heaven, He sent His Holy Spirit to live in everyone who is born-again. The amazing truth is that the power that raised Jesus from the dead can live in you. Romans 8:11 says – *‘if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.’* Yes, that power can live in you. It isn't a physical power, but a spiritual one which can work through you and in you in every aspect of your life. Ephesians 1:19-20

calls it – ‘the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he worked in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places.’

When He came back to life Jesus’s body had been transformed into a new resurrection body and in 1 Corinthians 15:20 the Bible says that the same will happen to everyone’s body one day - *‘Christ has been raised from the dead. He became the first fruits of those who are asleep.’* In other words, what happened to Jesus will happen to you. Your body will be raised too.

The resurrection confirms everything which Jesus won on the Cross. It validates it. Without it there would be no Christianity. It is essential to believe in the resurrection to

be born-again and have eternal life with God. God won so much for you through Jesus's death and resurrection, but its blessings and power will only start to operate in your life when you are born-again.

Happy Easter!

'Happy' hardly seems an adequate word to describe such a wonderful, powerful day. So next time someone says "Happy Easter" to you, remember just exactly why it is so happy – Jesus, the Son of God rose from the grave and made it possible for you to live with Him in joy and peace forevermore!

Being Born-Again

When you acknowledge Jesus as God and decide to follow Him, you make Him your Lord. When you accept His sacrifice on the Cross for yourself personally, you make Him your Saviour. You are then born-again and have a new perfect spirit. God becomes your Father and you His child, and you can start to enjoy your personal love relationship with Him.

Romans 10:9 says – *‘If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.’* Tell God you are sorry for the wrong things you do, say and think. Choose to believe that Jesus is Lord, that He died for you and is now alive. Accept Him as your Lord and Saviour. Say it with your voice and believe it in your heart.

If you've done that sincerely, you are now born-again and Jesus has come to live in you. Everything you've ever done wrong or ever will do wrong is forgiven, and after this life is over, you'll live in peace and joy with your loving Father God for ever.

As a child of God, you now have a whole new family of brothers and sisters. Tell a trusted Christian that you are now born-again so they can help you in your new life in Jesus. And you have the Bible to help you understand and experience more of God's love for you and all Jesus has done and won for you. It will help you to live your life in the best possible way – His way.

Life in Jesus

To read more about Jesus
and all He has done and won for us
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People celebrate Easter each year,
but do you know what makes it truly happy?

This booklet tells the story of
how Jesus rose from the dead
and explains how you can be sure
that it really happened.

That first Easter day
was about victory and power and new life,
and it's all available for you.



Katherine Hilditch has been teaching in local churches for many years. In 2013 she wrote her first booklet and since then has written many more. She created her website to make all the

booklets freely available to everyone. They can be read online or printed out. Katherine's threefold purpose is to help people understand more about Jesus and all He has done and won for them, to encourage them to go deeper in their relationship with God and to provide material to help them share their faith with others. To read her story and find all the booklets go to –

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