

# What Difference Does Easter Make?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Let's turn with me to Luke chapter 24. Luke chapter 24. You see behind me, today's Easter. Resurrection Sunday. Big deal. What difference does it make?

We're going to talk about this this morning. What difference does Easter make? And we're going to look at five questions that people ask in life. And we're going to see how the resurrection makes a difference in the way we answer those questions.

Luke with me chapter 24, beginning at verse 1. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the supplicer, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

And they found the stone rolled away from the supplicer. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

And as they were afraid, they bowed down their faces to the earth. They said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen. Remember how he spake unto you when you were yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

[ 1 : 2 8 ] And they remembered his words, and returned from the supplicer, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran into the supplicer, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which had come to pass.

I come today as a defender of Easter, of the resurrection. You know, we have two religious holidays that we celebrate.

Christmas and Easter. We make a big deal about Christmas. You know, we celebrate, we laugh, we exchange presents, we get together with family and friends. Christmas is the climax of the year.

Comes in December, it's a big deal. Easter, on the other hand, sometimes we think of it as an excuse for a long weekend.

[ 2 : 4 4 ] Sometimes we think of it as a nice break between Christmas and summer vacation. Sometimes, even we as Christians, kind of think of it as a second-rate holiday.

Christmas is the... Easter... Without Easter, you don't celebrate Christmas. If Jesus was born, but did not die, go in the grave, and rise again, Christmas means absolutely nothing.

There's nothing special about it. It's just another story, sweet-sounding little fable about a little baby that was born, 2,000 years ago, you know, in some out-of-the-way town.

And that's all that happens. If there is no Easter, it doesn't make any difference. Reminds me, a grandfather was asking, had been teaching his granddaughter, four-year-old granddaughter, named Julie, and he's teaching her about what Easter meant.

And one day, just before Easter, she's out playing with some friends in the backyard. And so he goes out and he says, anybody know why we celebrate Easter every year? Oh, one of Julie's friends jumped right up.

[ 4 : 03 ] Oh, yeah. He said, we celebrate Easter because we get to go to the mall and sit on the big bunny's lap and tell him what we want in our Easter baskets. Okay.

One of the other friends, no, no, no, that's not right. We celebrate Easter because we get a big tree in our house and we put Easter eggs all over it and stuff and then we have presents underneath it when we get up on that Sunday morning and we open the presents, we open the Easter eggs and we get all kinds of stuff.

Grandfather looks at Julie. Julie, why do we celebrate Easter? Julie says, it's when Jesus was crucified. He died. His disciples put his body in the grave.

They rolled a big stone in front of the opening and the guards went to sleep. On the third day, there was a big earthquake and the stone rolled away. Oh, Grandpa's so happy. She's understanding what it's all about.

Until, she adds at the end, when the earthquake happened, the entire town came out to the grave and if Jesus came out and saw his shadow, there was going to be six more weeks of winter. And you know, there's a lot of people, including Christians, who think, yeah, it's just not all that big a deal what happened there.

[ 5 : 20 ] The whole world, in a lot of ways, is messed up thinking about what Easter's all about. And when we come down to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is the most profound, the deepest, the most important thing we will ever be confronted with, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And, as I mentioned earlier, what we do with the resurrection of Jesus Christ makes all the difference in the world. What difference does it make?

I'm going to give you five questions this morning. The resurrection of Jesus Christ makes all the difference. Let's have a word prayer. Father, Father, I just pray that you'd be with us this morning as we look into your word.

Lord, as we look at these questions, as we try to answer them based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lord, I pray that we would understand these most important questions people will ever ask can be honestly answered by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Lord, help us this morning to understand what you have for us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Question number one, question of doubt.

[ 6 : 31 ] Question of doubt. Mankind, for a long time, including today, the age we live in, has a great question that they're really sincere about.

Which religion is the right one? How do I know which one? I read a statistic the other day. There are basically religions and variations of those religions.

Forty five hundred different belief systems out there. I can't even begin to fathom that many. Forty five hundred, they say, are out there.

Which one is the right one? Good question. How do I know? It's like a, like you go into a supermarket and there's just these aisles after aisles after aisles of things there that you can choose from.

How do I know which one to pick? And not only that, picking the right one, but all the others have been poisoned. How do I get the one, right one, that's safe for me?

[ 7 : 33 ] The one that's pure? The crucial question to ask, how do I know which one is the right one? You know, we look at all these different belief systems and we say, is there really any difference?

That's what people say, I don't think. Is there really any difference in them? No. They all have great leaders. So do we. They all have some form of written scriptures that they use.

So do we. They all have miracle stories. So do we. They all have high ethical standards. So do we. They all have rich history.

So do we. So which one is the right one? And I'm going to surprise you about what I say. To know which one is the right one, go to the cemetery.

What? Go to the cemetery? Yeah. Picture all the world's cemeteries right here in front of us. I walk into the cemetery and I call out Mohammed here.

[ 8 : 45 ] Moses here. Confucius here. In the back there. Buddha here. Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ. He is not there because he is risen from the dead. Christianity is the one true way to God because it's only the only one with an empty tomb.

Which one's the right religion? Which one's the sure religion? Go to the founder's grave. And the one that's not there, the one who is risen, that's the one we need to trust in.

Which bottle at the supermarket or which can at the supermarket is the right one? Find the one that says pure living water. That's who Jesus is. He's a pure living water.

When the questions of doubt come to your mind, a risen savior should help you with all those doubts. Question number two. Question of guilt.

[ 9 : 51 ] A question of guilt. Probably the easiest doctrine in the Bible to prove is the depravity of man.

We believe in sin. We believe that people are born sinners. We believe that people sin throughout all the ages. Can we prove that man is a sinner? We don't use him much anymore but pick up a newspaper.

Turn on the TV news. Watch people around you. Listen. Better yet? You want to prove that there's a sinner in the world?

Look in the mirror. Look in the mirror. Can anybody look in the mirror and say honestly I have done nothing wrong in my entire life?

No. We can't do that. The Bible says in Romans 3.23 For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All.

[ 10 : 53 ] I did this a few weeks ago but let me just reiterate. For all have sinned. Steve Hersey has sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Bonnie Hersey has sinned and come short of the glory of God. I'll stop there today. I won't keep going but we have all sinned. Matter of fact earlier in that chapter Romans 3.10 As it is written there is none righteous.

No not one. He said there are none who are righteous. The only person who's ever lived a righteous life was Jesus Christ himself.

So how do I get rid of the guilt? How do I get rid of the sin that's in my life? How can I live a life that should be what God wants?

Because I can't do it on my own. I can't go out and I can't live a perfect life. Sin's with me everywhere I go. The question should be not am I a sinner?

[ 12 : 01 ] Because the answer is going to be yes. The question should be how do I get rid of the guilt and the sin that is in my life? How do I stop?

And mankind has come up with three ways to do that. Mankind has come up with three ways. Number one people try to do good. People try to do good.

We go out and we say I know I'm a sinner. I know I'm trying to balance the scales and it just doesn't seem to be able to work and the things that I do. How do I balance the scales? And I'm going to be the best mom.

I'm going to be a model mother. I'm going to be an exceptional father. I'm going to do things that just nobody else has done. I'm going to be perfect at it. Anybody reach that yet? No.

I'm going to as a parent I'm going to work with the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts and the Cub Scouts and all those things. I'm going to give to the community chest. I'm going to give to the United Way. My neighbors are getting older.

[ 13 : 04 ] I'm going to go mow their lawn for them. I'm going to do my job the very best I can possibly do so that people see that I'm good at my job and stuff.

You know what? None of that's going to do it. All those things make you find upstanding citizens and all those things are great but when it comes to freedom and forgiveness of sin they don't cut it.

Second thing people try to do is okay I'm feeling guilty and I know I have this in life how do I get rid of that feeling of guilt? We're going to go out and I'm going to live life to the fullest I'm going to enjoy life I'm going to pursue after pleasure and everything that goes along with that.

I'm going to pursue happiness I'm going to pursue light I'm going to pursue music I'm going to pursue laughter and talking with people and moving and just all kinds of things but what happens when the music stops?

What happens when the laughter stops? What happens when there's all the noise dies down and I'm faced with the hard facts of life?

[ 14 : 17 ] Well I got another idea I'll go to drugs and alcohol and sex and all kinds of things that I can do to bring me pleasure and fulfillment if you're really paying attention you know how well that works it doesn't it might mask things but it doesn't take care of the problem third thing people do is act opposite I'm going to become very religious I'm going to go to church I'm going to get baptized I'm going to take communion I'm going to read the Bible I'm going to go to mass every week I'm going to do all these different things and they find out religion doesn't make them feel any better either you cannot be good enough to erase the guilt and the sin that is in your life all of those type of answers are going to fail we feel guilty because we know there is a holy

God and we don't know how to stand in front of him you can't get around the issue no one can there's no good enough way to erase that guilt that's in your life only Easter the resurrection answers the problem of guilt but I thought it was the death of Christ that gives forgiveness of sins and you're absolutely right it does 1st Corinthians 15 3 for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures but Christ dying for our sins would not accomplish anything if he had not risen for our sins showing us he had the power to take care of our sins he had the power to conquer death he had the power to conquer the grave he had the power to do all those things and we'll talk about that some more in a minute if Jesus is still in the tomb then we are still in our sins and those

Roman and Jewish authorities who put Jesus to death did a good thing they took a man who was well meaning but very misguided and took him out of the way see without Easter Good Friday is not good we look at Good Friday and we're like why do we call it Good Friday because Jesus went to that cross to pay for our sin and then he rose again proving that he could do what he had set out to do but if Jesus is still in the tomb we are still in our sin you want forgiveness you want release from guilt you want release from sin then you look to Jesus Christ and you see him crucified buried risen again and you say I can have freedom from sin because Christ conquered it question number three question of loneliness loneliness men and women all across the world are asking where can I find a friend where can I find someone who cares about me well again look to the cross you know it's hard to believe that we think that we're lonely there's seven almost eight billion people in the world and yet there's even some of you here this morning probably who feel lonely at times you feel like there's nobody there nobody that cares you know our life what does it consist of now

I wake up in the morning I get dressed I go to work I come home I read the newspaper anybody read newspapers anymore maybe not okay I unwind a little bit I eat some supper I watch a little TV I go to bed and I get up in the morning and start it all over again it's a constant cycle we live in a fearful society people are fearful when they go out there what's going to happen today watch the news you never know what's going to happen is there going to be a shooting is there going to be a bridge that's going to fall with people on it is there going to be all kinds of things happen out there we put up fences and security cameras and all kinds of things trying to keep ourselves safe and everything we people all across Maine hundreds thousands of people across Maine every night go to bed with burdens and cares heavy hearts they're frustrated they're worn out they're tired and as does anybody care if I say the word hell to you what's the first thing that comes to your mind fire hot all those kind of things you know it's one of the things we don't think about

T.S. Eliot the poet writer he called hell the great void the land of ugly nothingness totally utterly eternally alone go through hell you cry out nobody answers you cry out for help nobody hears that constant feeling of falling and falling and falling in darkness you are alone then you know the great difference between that and knowing Jesus Christ as Savior when Jesus Christ comes into your life and gives you eternal life in heaven with him he makes some comments about that idea of loneliness in Matthew chapter 28 verses 19 and 20 we call it the great commission we're to go out and we're to share the gospel we're to give people the gospel message and do you notice what he says in verse 20

[ 20 : 44 ] I am with you always I am with you always I am not going to leave you alone I am going to be there and don't forget when did he say this this was after the crucifixion after the burial after the resurrection and he says I'm going to be with you always I am not going to leave you in Hebrews chapter 13 verse 5 it says I will never leave thee nor forsake thee he is going to be with us when we face the problem of loneliness the resurrection of Jesus Christ gave us a friend who sticks closer than a brother the bible tells us gave us someone that we can always go to someone we can always talk to someone who is always going to be there number four problem of weakness problem of weakness most of us struggle and one of the questions that mankind asks a lot is how can I be the kind of person

I really want to be how can I be that person that I really picture myself being you know a lot of us have good intentions we have high ideas but we always seem to come up short from what we really want to do I won't make you raise your hands but in your mind how many of you made new year's resolutions how many of you kept that new year's resolution more than a week sometimes we take resolutions and we try to do things and we just the pages of history all kinds of things that people tried to do and failed to do because they did not have the discipline or the determination to do what they wanted to do I cannot be the kind of person I really want to be is there a way out of that constant cycle of defeat for

Christians the answer is yes think about it for a second how much power did it take to raise Jesus from the dead think about that for a second how much power did it take to raise Jesus from the dead his resurrection was a one of a kind event so special that no one's been able to do it since so special that with all of our scientific knowledge and all the things that we can do we cannot bring people back from the dead yet Jesus rose from the dead and you know what we look at situations in our life and we look at areas where we feel defeated and we look at things where we're just wondering how am I going to be able to do what I want to do have you asked Jesus to come into your life have you asked him to be a part of your life when Jesus comes into life what does he bring with him life power resurrection power you have that power available to you problem is we don't avail ourselves of it very often we have doubts going back to the first one see

Easter is God's answer to human weakness you don't have to rely on yourself you can rely on him question number five question of death question of death four thousand years ago there was a man who lived his name was Job and in Job 14 14 he made a statement there he asked a question basically he asked if a man dies can he live again good question is that even possible if I die am I ever going to live again is that going to you know we've come up with different ways to say oh yeah we can be reincarnated we can do this we can do that we can do the other thing but that's not what Job was asking if I die can I live again death is such a sobering thing such a frightening thing in the

Bible in first Corinthians 15 26 notice up there behind me calls it the last enemy death is the last enemy that we have to go over we have to go Hebrews 9 27 as it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment we are all going to face death at one time or another some of us have faced death more often than some who have been here some have faced death at different times in their life you know some of our stories in here things that we have gone through things we faced by the way as an update saw Hollis what they found out when they went in is the valve that he was having trouble with they couldn't see it from the test that they were doing but it had a hole in it and so they had to replace the valve take it out put a new valve in and stuff and when I saw him yesterday and I know from my own experience being in the hospital for heart surgery he had no tubes hooked up to him whatsoever he had the operation on

[ 26 : 36 ] Wednesday I said you're a better man than me Hollis you're doing alright he's 76 years old he's doing great keep praying for him when I face the valley of the shadow of death will I be afraid I've been there once already I trust in Jesus Christ for all eternity and what he's going to do for me some people say oh this idea of trusting in Christ for all eternity it's a shame let me read you there was a letter written by a pastor he was 55 years old when he found out he had cancer and it was the type of cancer they told him it wasn't going to be able to be cured he's getting closer and closer to dying at the age of 58 he's about to die and he's thinking about all these sermons that he has preached on grace and salvation and eternal life and he writes to someone a friend of his and here's a paragraph from his letter all my life as a pastor

I have been preaching the promises of the resurrection of Christ and the power of his atoning death so far I've been distributing faith checks but now I'm starting to cash them for myself to find out if they're really negotiable and find I have come to a very personal conviction is that facing our own dying improves the quality of our own living King David ended his 23rd psalm where he talks about the valley of the shadow of death with the assurance that he would dwell in the house of the Lord forever what that means is that I along with those who have gone before me and just outside the door of the fullness of God's grace in everlasting life for me Easter has already arrived he understood what trusting in Jesus Christ was all about he understood the importance of the resurrection did Easter make a difference it sure did he says

Easter's already arrived for me I'm about to die but I know resurrection is coming I'm about to die but I know I have everlasting life that's coming with me faith that doesn't help you when you are dying won't do you much good when you're living you have to have faith that God has got you in the palm of his hand when Jesus walked out of that tomb we walked out with him we have the power of the resurrection on our life we sang earlier this morning death could not keep its prey Jesus my savior he tore the bars of way Jesus my lord up from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph for his foes he arose a victor from the dark domain he lives forever with his saints to reign he arose he arose hallelujah Christ arose the empty tomb says he's risen the disciples and the women said he is risen the church of Jesus

Christ says he is risen all of creation he is risen Jesus conquered that last enemy death he solved the problem of death forever he entered into the realm of death and took it captive he holds the keys to death hell the grave and the tomb is empty what did the angel say he is not here he is risen if a man dies will he live again yes yes yes here's the answer to the greatest questions ever posed the deepest questions the final questions everybody wants to know the answers to when we face death someday what will happen if you know Jesus

Christ is your savior the power of the resurrection is available to you the power of the light of the world we don't have to fear death we don't have to fear the valley of the shadow of death we don't have to fear anything about it because Jesus Christ rose from the dead what do you say to that do you agree Jesus Christ rose from the dead and your answer to his resurrection do you believe it believe it or not it will be a difference between heaven and hell he rose from the dead one of the pastors Friday night at the good Friday service was talking about the end and he said somewhere along the way the end of time comes we are all going to have to bow before the Lord

[ 32 : 24 ] Jesus Christ will we be forced to bow I don't believe in Jesus I don't believe anything about this it's all stupid and you have to bow you'll have no choice or are you one of those who says I believe Jesus Christ died for me I believe he did it so that I could have salvation I believe that he is prepared a home for me in heaven and I am going to bow before him out of love and respect for who he is and what he has done for me I want you to think about that this morning what's going to cause you to bow if you're here this morning and you've never asked Jesus Christ to be your savior today's the day why are you waiting why are you putting it off he promises eternal life in heaven with him he promises help right now as you continue this life he promises to answer these questions for you through his resurrection he promises to give you a friend so that you're not lonely he promises to give you life for all eternity he gives you so much why are you putting it off what are you afraid of when he says I'm ready to give you everything if you're here this morning and you are saved think about what he has done for you be ready to say you know what lord

I'm ready to bow I'm ready to say thank you I'm ready to worship you I'm ready to give you the worship that is due you because of who you are if you're here this morning and you're not saved you have questions come see me I'd be glad to take the word of God show you how you can know 100% you have eternal life there's others here who can do the same thing Stan can do the same thing my wife can do the same thing Trish can do the same thing there's others here who can show you how to know 100% that you're on your way to heaven are you ready when it comes time to bow be ready to do it willingly be ready to do it because of your love for him we're going to sing bow the knees as we close the service everyone stand please