

Easter – What is it?

I invited a lady to church and her response was “Are you going to have an Easter egg hunt?” Is that what Easter is? Or is it a fluffy white bunny rabbit? Maybe it’s a chocolate bunny with half of its ear removed with teeth marks remaining? The word Easter only mentioned one time in scripture and that in the K.J.V.

- **Acts 12:4 (KJV)**

⁴ And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Easter may all of the above – hunting eggs, chocolate bunnies, white fluffy rabbits...and Sunday dinner with your family. But we are not here today to celebrate Easter. We are here to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The bible says, “He is not here, He is risen!

- **Matthew 28:5-7 (NIV)**

⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

Everything you have seen and heard this morning and all you will hear and see until the conclusion of this service is for one purpose – and that is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why do we celebrate it?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is either the greatest miracle or the greatest illusion that history records. It cannot be both.

- If he has not risen, we are still in our sins.

- If he has not risen, all hope is gone.
- If he has not risen, that makes him a liar.
- If he has not risen, that makes the gospel of none effect.
- If he has not risen, we need to dismiss now and go live life the way we want to.
- If he has not risen, we will never see our loved ones again that are dead.
- If he has not risen, we of all people are most miserable.

But I have good news for you, He has risen!

In **Psalm 22**, it is quoted at least **13 times in the New Testament**, **9 times in the passion of Christ**. **There are 33 prophecies in Psalms 22**. If you were to close your eyes and I was to read the words in PS 22: you would think I was reading from the four gospels in the N.T.

Theory 1: Jesus didn't die.

Theory 2: The disciples stole the body.

Matthew 28:11-15 (NIV)

¹¹ While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.

¹² When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money,

¹³ telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.'

¹⁴ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."

¹⁵ So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Theory 3: The Jews stole the body.

Theory 4: The Romans stole the body.

Theory 5: The body just disappeared.

Theory 6: Mass hallucination

1 Corinthians 15:5-7 (NIV)

⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles,

At least 552 people on 13 different occasions saw Jesus after the resurrection.

Theory 7: Early church made up the story.

Now 22 brief reasons why I believe Jesus rose from the dead.

1. He predicted he would rise from the dead.

John 2:19-22 (NIV)

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

²⁰ The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

²¹ But the temple he had spoken of was his body.

²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

John 10:17-18 (NIV)

¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again.

¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Matthew 16:21 (NIV)

²¹ From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

2. Jesus really died.
3. His body was embalmed and then buried.
4. His body was embalmed and then buried.
5. The women saw him first.
6. No one believed it at first.
7. The Jews tried to cover it up.
8. The stone was rolled away.

Acts 10:40 (NIV)

⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.

1 Corinthians 6:14 (NIV)

¹⁴ By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

1 Peter 1:21 (NIV)

²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

9. The angels testified to the resurrection.
10. The grave clothes were still in place.
11. The tomb was empty.
12. No one ever found his body.

13. He appeared too many people.

14. He showed his wounds to Doubting Thomas.

15. He ate with the disciples.

Luke 24:42-43 (NIV)

⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish,
⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

16. He stayed with them for 40 days.

Acts 1:1-3 (NIV)

¹ In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach

² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

³ After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

17. The disciples were utterly transformed.

18. The early Christians all believed he had been raised.

19. The resurrection was the centerpiece of their preaching.

20. They died testifying to the reality of the resurrection.

21. For 2,000 years no one has produced a convincing answer to the question, "If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, what happened to his body?"

22. Today over one billion Christians unite to proclaim that Jesus Christ is alive!

- **What does a 1st century Christ have to say to a 21st century people?**
- **What does a man who wore a pair of sandals and a seamless robe have to say to a generation of women who wear designer dresses, men who wear \$1,000 suits and the royal family who is spending approx. \$29 million on a wedding for a couple who have lived together for approx. one year before the wedding ?**
- **What does a man who walked through open fields and picked grain with his bare hands have to say to a generation who eats at drive-thrus and high-end restaurants and spent approximately \$69 billion last year on diet foods?**
- **What does a man who was born in a barn surrounded by animals have to say to a generation who in 2010 spent and \$48.35 billion on their pets and \$13.01 billion of that was healthcare?**

Is Jesus Christ relevant today? YES why? He is risen!