

EASTER 2019

In preparation for today's message, I kept thinking of just some of the things that Easter really says to me. Obviously, it is the most sacred of all Christian holidays, and something with which we are all very familiar. However, all of that is really somewhat insignificant in the bigger picture. This was the most glorious thing that God had ever done or ever would do. It eclipsed and dwarfed everything else that God had done – from Creation to the Red Sea to the walls of Jericho. However, in the mind of most people, this was a notoriously insignificant event – the death of Christ. Here was God doing the most glorious thing He was ever going to do, and to everyone else, it was nothing. To them, Jesus was just one in a long line of criminals and no-goods who got what they deserved when they were nailed naked to a cross and left on the side of the road for even greater humiliation. Most of the time, the Romans just left the individuals there and the ravens would come and eat out the eyeballs of those who had died. I was wondering what it would be like to be Pilate and all of the hypocritical religious leaders on that dreadful day when they are brought up from Hades in what is called the “Second Resurrection” and there stands Jesus the Christ. [Revelation 20:11-15](#) describes this moment,

Rev 20:11 (NKJV) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵ And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

This is an event that happens at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, or the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth. It is the final resurrection that will occur, and it will consist of all of the unbelieving wicked dead who are found guilty of unbelief at the Great White Throne Judgment. Their names will not be found in the Lamb's Book of Life, and from there they will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

So, when I race ahead to the culmination impact of unbelief and the willing rejection of Christ, I am very moved and stirred by the consequences. However, putting some of that into perspective relative to Easter, I think first that what Easter really does for me personally is to remind me in the greatest way possible that **God always plays by His own rules**. No one makes up God's rules. No one makes up how things will end. No one decides what will happen. God has already done all of that, and it simply does not matter what anyone thinks or believes. My personal opinion about life and death and eternity and salvation have absolutely no impact and no significance whatsoever – none, zero, zilch. What any of us believes has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with what God is going to do. What I personally believe about eternal issues that relate to salvation have no bearing on the end results. We hear people say all the time that “*I do not believe in God*”, as if that will have some kind of good bearing on how their eternity will be determined. It will not have any bearing, except to confirm that their unbelief will receive its just reward from a very holy God. There is **an intolerance** about the Christian faith, and it is this intolerance that irritates and frustrates people because they want to play “life” by their rules. The problem, though, is that Christianity simply does not allow for other options and choices. People live for options, for choices, for alternatives. We want to live independent of God and make up all of the

rules as we go. In the big picture of God, His kingdom, life, death, and eternity – we are all just very little fish in an enormous ocean. In the time which comprises eternity, our measly 70-80 years is not even a blip on the screen. We come and go and except for just a few people, no one even remembers or cares. Apart from Christ, we are utterly insignificant, and in the final analysis what we think is insignificant. In the matter of salvation, Scripture simply does not make allowance for options. They do not exist in the Christian faith regarding salvation. Paul expressed it this way in [Galatians 1:8-9](#) when he declared,

Gal 1:8 (NKJV) But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

So, that is the first thing that Easter reminds me of – that God makes up the rules and determines the eternal consequences of violating those rules.

The second thing that Easter reminds me of is that **Jesus Christ is my only hope**. Apart from the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, no one has any hope whatsoever. I refuse to put my hope in the government, in money, in education, or in any of my ideas about God, life, and eternity. Salvation is all of God, and everything that God has done for us was accomplished by Jesus Christ – not me, not you, not the church. To not believe in Christ in the face of all of the overwhelming evidence is the greatest tragedy imaginable. There is nothing in which a lost person can trust that will help them when they eventually come face to face with eternity and with the Living God – nothing, absolutely nothing. [Acts 17:30-31](#) says,

Ac 17:30 (NKJV) Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

This will happen. There is nothing the lost person will be able to say and there is nothing they can do that will satisfy the righteous demands of God the Father. In fact, to spurn His free gift of eternal life as if it is worthless is the greatest insult that one can make.

Here is the critical issue - **Jesus Christ is the only One by whom any of us can be reconciled to God**. There is no other means of salvation. Good works do not work and do not count. A person believing what they want to believe with disregard to God's Word does not work and will only lead that individual into an eternity from which they can never escape. Jesus said Himself in [John 14:6](#),

Jn 14:6 (NKJV) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Christ is exclusive, and the means of salvation is limited exclusively to Him. In [Acts 4:12](#) Peter said,

Ac 4:12 (NKJV) Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

There is no other name, no other means, and no other way to be saved apart from Jesus Christ. It is not how much someone goes to church, or how much money they may give, or how often they may read the

Bible, how good they try to live, or some prayer they prayed at church. Those are good things, but they do not constitute salvation in any sense of the word. In fact, before salvation they can be a great hindrance simply because they give the **illusion** that someone is in proper alignment with God's salvation when they are not. **Jesus Christ holds all things in His hand**. All things are under His sovereign authority. All power in both heaven and earth has been given to Him. [Matthew 28:18](#) says,

Mt 28:18 (NKJV) **And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**

[Ephesians 1:22](#) says,

Eph 1:22 (NKJV) **And He (God the Father) put all things under His feet (Jesus Christ), and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,**

The third thing that Easter reminds me of is that **all of history was moving toward the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ**. In fact, all of history is in the hands of Jesus Christ. Everything that is happening in the world is under His complete and utter control – everything without exception. He is the sovereign Lord of history, and history will be completed just as God's Word declares it will. God has already defined in Revelation and other prophetic books how things will end. It is not a matter of if they will happen, but simply when. God has provided so many prophecies and historical events relative to what He was doing in Christ that it is mind-boggling that anyone would be foolish enough to reject Him. To begin with, **Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all of the Old Testament prophecies and promises that pointed to Him as Saviour**. All of the prophecies come to a conclusion, to a focal point in Christ. They all point to Him. There are more than 350 distinct Messianic prophecies scattered throughout the Old Testament, some nearly 1500 years before Jesus' actual birth. The historical authenticity of these prophecies is unquestioned, and the mathematical ratio of one person fulfilling all of the biblical prophecies is mind boggling. The following is just a very short list of fulfilled prophecies surrounding His life.

1. Jesus would be born of a virgin.
2. His actual bloodline was given - through the line of Shem, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah.
3. He would be born in Bethlehem.
4. As a child He would flee to Egypt.
5. There was an exact day on which He would enter into Jerusalem riding on a colt.
6. He would be betrayed by a close friend.
7. He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.
8. He would be spit on, and struck in the face during His trial.
9. Soldiers would gamble for His clothing.
10. His hands and feet would be pierced. What is so remarkable about this one prophecy is that crucifixion had not even been invented when these prophecies were made.
11. He would be crucified with criminals.

12. None of His bones would be broken.
13. His side would be pierced
14. He would be forsaken by God.
15. He would be buried with the rich.

The following are the prophecies surrounding just one of those listed above.

1. He was to be betrayed.
2. He would be betrayed by His own people.
3. The price of the betrayal would be 30 pieces of silver.
4. Silver, not gold, would be the medium of exchange.
5. The money would be thrown down in the house of the Lord.
6. The money would be used to buy a potter's field.

Each of these 6 prophecies were written 700 years before Christ was even born. Only God knows the future and can write it in advance. It is obvious that Jesus had no way of “manipulating” these events. Then to add further validation to the prophecies, they were accomplished by His enemies and those who hated Him, betrayed Him, and plotted to kill Him, and then followed through with their diabolical plan. Then to make it even more credible, many were fulfilled in the last hours of His life while He was a prisoner, blindfolded, beaten, and dragging a cross on which He would be hung. In His submission to His Father's will, He was utterly helpless to make anything happen – yet the prophecies were fulfilled. Now, I know from years of personal experience in talking with lost people that these prophecies mean nothing to them. To them they are just a kind of biblical “hoax” that has been creatively engineered on people by well-intentioned Christians. However, the facts speak for themselves.

Without any question, the truths concerning Jesus Christ are the most important and significant facts in history – and what happened at the tomb are foundational to everything else that matters in the Christian faith. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were the most unique events in all of history. In the Scriptures, everything points to Jesus Christ – the covenants, the types, the shadows, the prophecies – they all point to Jesus Christ. Even our calendar (which is accepted by every nation on the planet) is divided into BC and AD. We have said it in many Easter messages, but there have been more schools and universities built in His name, more books written about Him, more songs written about Him, more buildings built in His name than anyone who has ever lived, and for all practical purposes, He only ministered publically for three years. He simply is not someone who can be ignored without really grave consequences. Everything that we believe on this Easter morning is dependent on the person of Christ, and everything that is critical to a person's destiny is dependent on what they actually **believe** about Christ.

Please appreciate that the truth regarding Jesus Christ is the most well defined truth in the universe simply because God has declared it. It is clear, definitive, and certain with regards to what someone is to believe about Christ. The New Testament word for “**believe**” (*pisteuo*) always carries with it the idea of the individual “entrusting” their life to what they say they believe. It is not just an intellectual belief

that matters, but a volitional belief that makes certain choices. There are a lot of people who believe in airplanes, but will never get on one. Genuine faith by its very nature produces genuine, verifiable, and biblical results that can be confirmed in a person's life. This is always the case. Christianity always makes demands on a person's life, on how they live, on their thought life, and that to which they give their attention. That cannot be escaped.

So, once again, the real question is **what does someone actually believe about Christ**, and has it impacted and changed their life? Do they believe that He is God, and that He is Lord over their life? Do they believe that they can only have forgiveness of sins through Him and that they are to fully yield and submit their life to Him? What do they really believe about Christ? The spiritual tragedy that exists is that many evangelical churches are filled with individuals who are not genuinely committed to what they say that they actually believe. People can say anything they want to say, but it never really impact their life at all. Unless Christ is impacting a person's life in more than just a cursory way, in all likelihood that person has never been saved. They are still at that spiritual crossroad where everyone must stand.

So, on this Easter and before we take the Lord's Supper, I want to reiterate the crucial points of the outworkings related to the doctrine of Christ and salvation. Everything ultimately points to these three truths.

1. The death of Christ on the cross paid the full penalty for our sins and purchased salvation for everyone who believes. Because of Christ's atoning death on the cross, God is able to justify any sinner without compromising His own righteousness. That is incredible news.
2. The resurrection of Christ from the dead declares His complete and sovereign victory over sin and death. What the devil thought was his greatest victory and accomplishment, was in fact his greatest nightmare.
3. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone – plus and minus nothing. Eternal life is a free gift. No matter what someone may believe about salvation, what they believe has no merit if it disregards God's Word and the truth surrounding the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

So, no wonder Easter is so meaningful, for without the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, no one could be saved. I rejoice in the amazing truth of Scripture that Christ died in our place and has provided everything we will ever need for salvation. This is the good news of the gospel and the amazing message of Easter!