

What is Easter About?

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2:24, niv

It's easy to celebrate Easter and miss its core meaning. Bunnies, candy, egg-hunts, pretty dresses, new hats and lily's have their way of diverting our attention. So, here's what it's really about!

God is holy. That is, He is all “good.” There is nothing deceitful or shady or hurtful about Him. He has no character flaws. He is never selfish or greedy or spiteful.

This holy God loves us with a perfect love, meaning that everything He says to us, and all of His actions toward us, are for our good. And *this* God wants us to be His friends!

On the Contrary - -

No thinking person could deny that there is evil in our world - - something that is the opposite of good. All societies recognize a tension between good and evil, and at least most personify them in some way.

Very simply, God is good and Satan is evil. They are direct opposites. Each loves what the other hates and hates what the other loves.

We recognize the presence of “choice” within ourselves. Choices about which road to take to work, but also those with moral consequences. We know when we've done well and when we haven't because there's something of the voice of God within us called “conscience.”

Further, we are all painfully aware of our struggle to *do* good. “Something” just keeps pulling us toward selfishness or jealousy or greed or impatience or unrighteous anger or sexual impurity or gluttony - - and similar stuff.

The Problem is - -

The problem is that we are born with an appetite for sin. We can't help ourselves! We're “stuck”

there and it separates us from the good life that God wants us to experience through relationship with Himself.

You see, if God is holy and we are sinful, we are incompatible. It's not possible for sin to come into the Presence of a Holy God. God and us are like two magnets which, when turned one way will push apart from each other, but when one is turned around they are drawn together. (Remember the little black and white dog magnets that we used to play with in church?)

So, as long as our hearts are turned toward evil we are pushed away from God, but when we turn around (repent), we are drawn toward Him!

It is true, that God longs for relationship with us. In fact, that's why He created us! I revel in [Isaiah 57:15](#) which declares both His holiness, and His kindness toward us. And there is something innate within us that longs for fellowship with Him! That too is part of creation design.

I just loove that but there's still a problem. Because He is a God of justice He couldn't overlook our sins. In spite of His mercy He couldn't simply say, “Oh well, let's just forget about that stuff and you can come close to me anyway.” There is a penalty for sin, and justice required that it be paid.

Someone, somehow, had to do that. And that's why Jesus came, and that's what Easter is about!

Easter is - -

“Easter” is when Christians celebrate what Jesus did for us on the cross and what the Father did for us in the resurrection. It is two-fold.

To start with, the penalty for sin is separation from God. In His death Jesus took our sins upon Himself and paid that penalty. The only way we

could have paid it was by eternal separation from God, so God actually, literally, "made him who had no sin to be sin for us." [II Cor. 5:21](#)

We know that under the Law God accepted the blood of animals that had been killed, as a sacrifice to cover the sins of His people. We also know that something more was needed for sins to actually be forgiven. As we read in [Hebrews 9](#), Jesus became the sacrifice of the New Covenant. Somehow, He suffered enough to pay the incalculable penalty for the sins of all people in all times.

I don't think we fully grasp what that implied for Him, and now for us, but the more we believe it the more likely we are to accept it and to receive its benefit. He really *did* set us free from the penalty of our sins and declare us acceptable to the Father!!

There is much that I appreciate in Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," but I feel that its focus on the physical brutality that Jesus suffered detracts from a crucial truth. It was not *that* pain, or even the humiliation and pain of dying on a cross, that ransomed us from the penalty of our sins. Much more was required. Further, many good men before Him had suffered and died that way with no eternal benefit to others.

I know the challenges to the thought that Jesus had to have been separated from the Father in some way in order to redeem us. I would only say that nothing less than such agony could have justly satisfied the wrath of God against the sins of all men. To accept that, is parallel to much else that we must believe about our incomprehensible God.

Our shallow understanding of the seriousness of our sins; of the immense penalty that Jesus paid; and of the totality and comprehensiveness of our forgiveness that he won with His blood, helps keep Christians defeated, superficial and earth-loving.

If we truly understood, we would find ourselves irresistibly drawn to Him in praise, worship and surrender as we received His forgiveness and cleansing in the depths of our being. We would cheerfully love God with a sacrificial love that felt like no sacrifice at all - - loving and forgiving others as He has loved and forgiven us - - and unable to resist passing the Good News on to others.

Secondly, on the third day the Father raised Jesus from the dead. Because of the resurrection we are not only forgiven for our past sins, we may also be released from bondage to sinfulness. Satan's death-grip is broken for all who receive God's gift of eternal Life through Jesus. When we are born again we receive a new nature which is turned toward God, and "all things are new" for us.

That part of the Easter message is not given due attention. A tragic result is that many Christians want their sins forgiven so they don't go to hell when they die, but they don't experience the resurrection Life that Jesus purchased with His own blood. They have no idea what they're missing!

God's Word Speaks for Itself

Read from left to right

[Romans 3:23-25](#)

[John 3:16](#)

[1 Timothy 2:5](#)

[Psalm 103:11-12](#)

[Romans 5:6-11](#)

[Colossians 2:13-15](#)

[Isaiah 53:5](#)

[Luke 24:46-47](#)

[Romans 4:25](#)

[1 Peter 1:3](#)

[1 Corinthians 15:21-22](#)

[John 11:25-26](#)

[Romans 6:4](#)

[Romans 8:11](#)

[Romans 10:9](#)

[Romans 8:3-4](#)

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Jesus, John 5:24 niv

Easter really *is* a time to celebrate new life. It is increasingly so as we truly receive God's forgiveness; more fully identify with Christ's suffering ([Luke 9:23-25](#)); appropriate the power of His resurrection; and thus enter more deeply into the Life that He is waiting for us to receive. What holds us back?

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