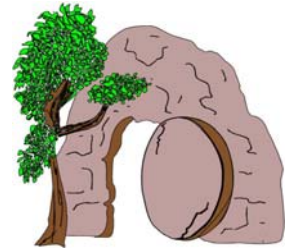


# Jesus Defeats Death HE IS RISEN!!!



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**H**oly Week is now complete and we once again have the opportunity to reflect on the significant events of the week. From Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday (Last Supper) and its preparations to the Crucifixion and sealing of Jesus Christ in the tomb to end the week, we have had an incredible chance to learn so much about our Lord and Savior and how He desires us to live our lives. Now, as Christians, we come to what should be the most important event; the Cross is Vacant, the Tomb is Empty and Jesus is Alive once again.



**J**esus is raised from the dead.



We receive the gift of Eternal Life through the Risen Christ



This fulfills the prophecies from hundreds of years before Christ Birth



It sets an important requirement for our salvation



**J**esus walks the earth again as man for forty days



Allows opportunities for those who doubt to believe



Jesus reinforces the duties of the disciples



**J**esus Ascends into Heaven



He is seated at the right hand of the Father



Jesus serves as Mediator for each of us



He watches over and guides us



He prepares for the day when He will come again



The disciples receive the gift of the Holy Spirit



## **J**esus is Raised for the Dead

The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard. (Matt 27:62-66)

After Jesus was crucified, He was placed in a tomb; then it was sealed and guards were placed around it so that no one could remove the body in an attempt to fulfill Jesus' prophecies. But to fulfill God's Word and complete the reason Jesus was sent to be sacrificed, His resurrection was necessary and important for each one of us. Christ's defeat of death means that we all will have eternal life and never have to fear death again.

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 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." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "**Greetings,**" he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "**Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.**" 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. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." 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. (Matt 28:1-15)

What a sight this must have been for all who were present; the earth shook and an Angel of God rolls the stone from the tomb opening and sat upon it for all to see. This now completes a very important group of prophecies, all meant to bring us closer to God, giving us a chance at salvation, and no longer having to fear death. We can now say the words HE IS RISEN!

This fulfills the many prophecies of Jesus and others, like in Matt 17:22-23 when Jesus said "**The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and on the**

**third day he will be raised to life."** John 2:19 is another reference made by Jesus to the Jews; **"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."** There is also reference in Hos 6:2, **"After two days he will revive us;"**, referring to the time when Christ will come and bring Grace upon the land; **"on the third day he will restore us, that we may live in his presence."** referring to Christ time in the grave then His resurrection from the dead so that all may have eternal life through Him. Throughout the Bible we can also see very significant parallel made to the three day period, from which lives are changed. For example Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days, his grave of sorts, in which he arose completely reborn to the task of God's work for him.

In Roman 10:9-10, we can see the significance put on this event, when God makes our belief in the resurrection a requirement for our salvation; **That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.**



## **J**esus walks the earth as **Man** (once again)

What powerful words; HE IS RISEN, which have more meaning for each of us than we could ever imagine. But, do we truly believe or is our faith sometimes weak and are there occasionally periods of doubt? There are many, who call themselves Christians, but don't believe in the resurrection. Some of these same people try to cast doubts among believers on most, if not all, of Jesus' life and teachings. But we must stand firm in our faith and beliefs, we must look upon the promises and teachings of Jesus to give us strength. No one said it would be easy; there was even doubt among the disciples. In the book of John, the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter (verses 25-29) we hear of the doubt that Thomas had when he was told by the other disciples that they had seen Jesus. **"So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."** I love the point Jesus makes here about those who believe that have not seen Him. This references all Christians today; we are indeed blessed.

Peter also seemed to show some doubt later. He was not out spreading the gospel and appeared to be unaware of what he should do. So he reverted back to his previous occupation, that of a fisherman. We don't know for sure if his intent was permanent or not, but he did choose to head in that direction; which brought an immediate response from Jesus. **Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told**

them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, **"Friends, haven't you any fish?"** "No," they answered. He said, **"Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."** When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, **"It is the Lord!"** As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, **"It is the Lord,"** he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, **"Bring some of the fish you have just caught."** Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, **"Come and have breakfast."** None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, **"Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"** "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, **"Feed my lambs."** Again Jesus said, **"Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"** He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, **"Take care of my sheep."** The third time he said to him, **"Simon son of John, do you love me?"** Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, **"Do you love me?"** He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, **"Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."** Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, **"Follow me!"** (John 21:1-19)

Jesus desired that there be no doubt among His disciples for they were to be the new teachers. Jesus also showed us some of what He expects of each of us; to Love and to Follow Him. I think that is the first and most important question to ask ourselves, do I truly love Jesus. I am not referring to the love we have for a friend, we are talking about a love which shows that Jesus is FIRST in our lives. He is our Lord and Savior and we must put Him above all. This kind of love will be a love that burns in us to follow His teachings, to spread the gospel, and gives us the desire to share this love with others!

This is what Jesus wants of us, **"Follow Me"**. When you look up the definition of the word Christian it states: A Christian is a believer in and a follower of Jesus Christ and His teachings. This name is more widely employed than any other designation of those who believe in salvation. In modern times the name Christian has been somewhat emptied of its true meaning as a follower of Christ. To some today, Christian means little more than a European or American who is not Jewish, while others have sought to make its proper use the name of a particular denomination. However, its original meaning is a noble one, of which any follower of Christ can rightly be proud. It was the name given to the disciples because of their dedication in following Christ.

The Key words here: Believer in and Follower of Jesus. Do we do one, both or possibly neither?

As we look further in the scriptures, we can also see where Jesus, on preparing to leave to be with the Father in heaven, reinforces what the disciples are to do. **Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** (Matt 28:16-20) **Also in Mark 16:15-18, Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."** **And Luke 24:45-49, Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."** Here we see the promise of the Holy Spirit who will come to anoint their ministry and fill the void of Jesus no longer walking beside them, serving as their guide.

I particularly like John's closing statements on the life and ministry of Jesus while He was on earth, **"This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.** (John 21:24-25)



## **J**esus Ascends into Heaven

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. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you

**into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:3-11)**

Imagine for a moment how the disciples and others present felt, watching Jesus as He was raised into the heavens. Any remaining doubt was put completely to rest. Also to hear, from heavenly spirits, the reinforced word of the second coming of Jesus, how powerful that statement was made. We also have no doubt that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father; **After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God** (Mark 16:19-20), and that He serves as Mediator between us and God the Father, **For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men-the testimony given in its proper time** (1 Tim 2:5-7). So what does it mean that Jesus mediates for us? For me there is no question, one of the many reasons Jesus came and became man was so that He could experience what we go through each day of our lives. From joy to sadness, from encouragement to disappointment, He understands because He has been there and done that. He also experiences first hand one of the most difficult challenges we face each day, the temptations of evil.

**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'" The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.** (Luke 4:1-14) From this we can see the extreme level at which Satan tried to tempt Jesus to change the path set for Him by the Father, yet Jesus would not budge, He held true to His course and purpose. He can now identify with the temptations we all face each day and will strengthen us in our struggles to stay on the path He has set for us.

We also know that Jesus watches over us and sets before us a path that is straight and true to what God desires for each of us. **Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"** (Heb 13:4-6) Whether we serve as a missionary or a pastor, whether we feed the hungry and homeless in His name or teach our children the teachings of Jesus, He has a path for each of us to follow and will be with us each step of the way; the only question is will we obey. As Jesus guides us, we must never forget that He is the one who gives us the strength and ability to do all

that we accomplish and that all the praise belongs to Him; **“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.”** (1 Peter 4:10-11) This is one mistake often made by Christians; they go out and serve the Lord but soon believe they are the ones who are in control and begin to lose sight of their need of Jesus. They accept the thanks and praises rather than directing them to the one who sent them. When I became a Pastor, I wanted to do anything in the service of Christ except to preach because; public speaking is my greatest fear and there was no way I wanted to entertain that aspect of ministry. Then Jesus put on my heart to preach and I obeyed. Each time before a service I would pray that He might take away my fear and give me the strength to accomplish this task, and each time Jesus was true to His word and I preached each sermon at total peace. After the first year I began to wonder why He did not permanently remove my fear; it was then I realized, if He lifted this fear it would then become too easy to forget that He is in control and I may become weak and begin to feel I was in control. But because Jesus does know what is best, He allows me to carry this fear, and I remember to turn to Him in prayer each time I am to preach a sermon; to draw my strength and guidance from Him.

After Jesus ascended into the heavens He fulfilled a promise that showed He would continue to be with us and watch over us; He sent the gift of the Holy Spirit. **When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they (the disciples) were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4)** Now the disciples, like all who spread the gospel, are equipped with a guide who will show them all they need to faithfully accomplish the task given them by Jesus. (Thus we have Pentecost as we know it today, when we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit)

Christian's must also remain focused on the fact that Jesus is coming again and live each day in anticipation of the moment He arrives. Just as those who had heard the prophecies that Jesus was coming to redeem them and wait with great anticipation of that day, passing their knowledge and excitement to their children, we too must have that excitement and continue to pass the knowledge and anticipation on to our children. We do not know the day that Jesus will come again, it could be tomorrow, next year, or another 400 years, nor does Jesus know. Only God the Father knows the day so we should take each day and prepare ourselves as if it is tomorrow. **"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back-whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"** (Mark 13:32-37)

I remember a phrase that I first heard in a movie; “Show me the Money”, which rapidly caught on. Then came the one “Where’s the Beef”, that received worldwide attention. Both were very popular phrases with one important thing in common, our desire to see not just to be told. Jesus realized this when He came among man. He could have merely sat and told his parables and gave His prophecies and done nothing. But words without actions seem meaningless to us. So instead Jesus let His actions speak for Him. He didn’t just talk about healing the sick, He did it. He didn’t sit in a nicely decorated home and send others out to spread the Word, He did it. He didn’t simply talk about the Love of our Heavenly Father; He went out and spread it. He didn’t find someone else to be sacrificed for our sins, He bore that burden alone. He could have decided to go to Heaven and have it all for Himself, but He chose to be sacrifice for all, so that each of us can be with Him.

When I look at all Jesus has done for me, and continues to do each day, I have to ask myself these questions:

Do I merely hear God’s word or do I live and spread it?

Do I call myself a Christian or do I show others what a Christian is?

Do I follow others or Christ?

Are Jesus’ teachings mere stories or do they become a way of life?

Do I love others as Christ loves me?

Do I turn to Christ in my hours of need, or do I turn away?

Do I hold fast to what Christ would have me do or do I give in to the desires of the world?

Am I strong in my faith standing up for what is right or do I falter under the pressure of the evil one and the world?

These are just a few of the questions I have asked myself. They have caused me to look even deeper at my relationship with the Father and the Son and where that relationship is going.

Jesus wants us to love Him as He loves us. He asks of us so little compared to what He gives to each of us. He finds the greatest joy when we give all of ourselves to Him. Have you done this yet? Have you given your whole heart to Jesus? Not just a corner of it that you use once a week, but all of it. If you haven’t I encourage you to do it TODAY. Ask Jesus into your whole heart. Do it quietly to your self or proclaim it with your brothers and sisters in Christ, but do it when you are truly ready.

Once there was a very wealthy young man. He lived in a great, elaborate house with dozens of rooms. Each room was more comfortable and more beautiful than the one before it. There were paintings and sculptures, crystal chandeliers, golden ornate railings on the stairs. More beauty than most has ever seen.



One day he decided to invite the Lord to come and stay with him. When the Lord arrived, this young man offered him the very best room in the house. The room was upstairs and at the end of the hall. "This room is yours, Jesus! Stay as long as you like and you can do whatever you want to in this room. Remember, Jesus, it's all yours."

"Thank you" the Lord replied, and with that the man shut the door and went about his daily business.

That evening, after he had retired for the night, there came a loud knocking at the front door. The young man pulled on his robe and made his way downstairs. When he opened the door he found that the devil had sent three of his demons to attack the man. He quickly tried to close the door, but one of the demons kept sticking his foot in the door.

Sometime later, after a great struggle, he managed to slam the door shut and returned to his room totally exhausted. "Can you believe that?" the man thought. "Jesus is upstairs in my very best room sleeping while I am down here battling demons. Oh well, maybe he just didn't hear." The young man slept fitfully that night.

The next day things went along as normal and, being as tired as he was, the young man retired early that evening. Along about midnight, there came such a terrible ruckus at the front door that the young man was sure that whatever it was would tear the door down. He stumbled down the stairs once again and opened the door to find that there were dozens of demons now trying to get into his beautiful home. For more than 3 hours he fought and struggled against the demons from hell and finally overtook them enough to shut the door against their attack.

All energy seemed to fail him. "I really don't understand this at all. Why won't the Lord come to my rescue? Why does he allow me to fight all by myself? I feel so alone."

Troubled, he found his way to the sofa and fell into a restless sleep. The next morning he decided to inquire of the Lord about the happenings of the last two evenings. Quietly, he made his way to the elegant bedroom where he had left Jesus.

"Jesus," he called as he tapped at the door. "Lord, I don't understand what is happening. For the last two nights I have had to fight the demons away from my door while you laid up here sleeping. Don't you care about me? Did I not give you the very best room in my house?"

He could see the tears building in Jesus' eyes but continued on, "I just don't understand. I really thought that once I invited you in to live with me, you would take care of me and I gave you the best room in my house and everything. What more can I do?"

"My precious child," Jesus spoke softly, "I do love and care for you. I protect all that you have released into my care. But when you invited me to come here and stay, you brought me to this lovely room and you shut the door to the rest of your house. I am lord of this room but I am not master of this house. I have protected this room and no demon may enter here."

"Oh Lord, please forgive me. Take all of my house -- it is yours! I am so sorry that I never offered you all to begin with. I want you to have control of everything!" With this he flung upon the bedroom door and knelt at Jesus' feet. "Please forgive me Lord for being so selfish."

Jesus smiled and told him that He had already forgiven him and that He would take care of things from now on.

Along about midnight the banging on the door was frightening. The young man slipped out of his room in time to see Jesus going down the stairs. He watched in awe as Jesus swung open the door...no need to be afraid.

Satan stood at the door this time demanding to be let in. "What do you want, Satan?" the Lord asked. The devil bowed low in the presence of the Lord. "So sorry, I seem to have gotten the wrong address". And with that, he and the demons all ran away.

There is a moral to this tale. Jesus wants all of you, not just a part. He will take all that you give him, but nothing more. How much of your heart have you given to the Lord? Are you keeping a portion of it away from Him? Perhaps the attacks are coming more and more each day.

**LET THE LORD fight the battles for you! He is always victorious!**

Jesus has given EVERYTHING to you; try giving ALL of yourself back to Him. Let the phrases like WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) be more than something you put on a shirt or bible cover, let it be the question you ask of yourself when faced with any situation. Turn to Jesus always. Let His sacrifices stand for more than a symbol you hang around your neck or something you think about an hour a week, let it be the example you live your life by.

Think about this: What if Jesus gave you one hour a week? What if He picked and choose when He was going to listen to you? What if the hour He gave you was from 1 to 2 AM on Wednesday? This is the only time you can come to Him in prayer or ask for anything. It is also the only period of time you can expect any of His blessings or miracles in your life. Would this be your desire or do you now appreciate the fact that you have a Lord and Savior available for your 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Why not give back to Jesus what you receive so freely from Him? Give your life to Jesus, not just an hour or a few hours, but every second of your life!

All the Praise to the Father and the Son!!!!

Pastor Scott Jones