

☞ He is Risen!

We all know what Easter is about. It's about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which provides for our salvation and eternity in heaven.

☞ Let's start with the facts... **1 Peter 3:15** says, **"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."** I believe Christianity is based on a reasonable faith. There are many valid reasons to believe what the Bible says. When it comes to the death and resurrection of Jesus I want you to know that this is one of history's most verifiable facts. The evidence for the biblical account of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is overwhelming.

Dr. Gary Habermas has studied the subject for decades and asserts that even the most skeptical scholars would agree with these statements:

1. ☞ **Jesus was crucified by Romans.**
2. ☞ **The disciples believed they saw Christ after his death.**
3. ☞ **The disciples were so emboldened by this that they willingly died proclaiming it.**
4. ☞ **The claim of the resurrection was made from the very beginning of Christianity – it was not some later add-on.**
5. ☞ **Saul of Tarsus, the anti-Christian persecutor, claimed to have had an encounter with the risen Christ that radically changed his life.**

Further evidence reinforces these facts:

1. The first eyewitnesses were women. In the culture of that day, a woman's testimony was considered suspect and not admissible in court. If the disciples were trying to perpetrate a hoax, they would not have claimed women as the first witnesses.
2. The first public proclamations about the resurrection began in Jerusalem where Jesus was killed. This would not have succeeded if it could have easily been disproven.
3. Strict observers of the Sabbath began to worship on Sunday instead of Saturday.

Other scholars have offered even more evidence that proves the resurrection of Christ really happened. Anyone who claims it's all a made up story has not really looked into the facts. So, you can believe it. Jesus really died and really rose from the grave. He is living today!

Reading over the account of the Crucifixion and Resurrection for the umpteenth time, I was struck by the contrasts of various elements in the record...

☞ **Contrasting the thief and Jesus.** Mark 15:25-32 and Luke 23:32-34. Jesus was crucified between two thieves. Mark's gospel tells us that people watching the crucifixion mocked Jesus and that both thieves did the same. But Luke tells us that before it was all over one of the thieves changed and asked for mercy from the Lord.

- ☞ The thief was **guilty** Jesus was **innocent**
- ☞ The thief was a **taker** Jesus was a **giver**

- ☞ The thief was a **mocker** Jesus was **merciful**
- ☞ The thief was **repentant** Jesus was his **redeemer**

Luke 23:43... Today. You. Me. Paradise.

☞ These contrasts remind us that **as long as we are living, it's not too late**. That's good news! Can a person be saved at the very last minute? Yes! The problem is that we don't know when that last minute will be. Can a person with a sinful past be saved? Yes! It's not too late. Turn to Jesus for mercy and be saved.

☞ **Contrasting Friday and Sunday**. Excerpts from "It's Friday but Sunday's coming!"

- ☞ It's Friday. Jesus is **arrested** in the garden where He was praying.
- ☞ Jesus is **beaten, mocked**, and spit upon.
- ☞ Those Roman soldiers are **flogging** our Lord with a leather scourge that has bits of bones and glass and metal, tearing at his flesh.
- ☞ It's Friday. The Son of man stands firm as they press the **crown of thorns** down into his brow. But Sunday's coming.

- ☞ It's Friday. Roman soldiers are driving **nails** into the feet and hands of my Lord.
- ☞ Jesus is hanging **crucified**, bloody and dying. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. The sky grows dark, the earth begins to tremble, and He who knew no sin became sin for us. Holy God who will not abide with sin pours out the wrath of his **justice** on that perfect sacrificial lamb who cries out, "My God, My God. Why have forsaken me?" What a horrible cry. But Sunday's coming.

And on that horrible day 2000 years ago, Jesus the Christ, the Lord of glory, the only **begotten** Son of God, the only perfect man **died** on the cross of Calvary. Satan thought that he had won the victory. Surely he had destroyed the Son of God. But that was Friday.

Now it's Sunday. And just about dawn on that first day of the week, there was a great **earthquake**. But that wasn't the only thing that was shaking because now it's Sunday. **And the angel of the Lord** is coming down out of heaven. **He's rolling the stone away** from the door of the tomb. Yes, it's Sunday, and the angel of the Lord is sitting on that stone and the guards posted at the tomb to keep the body from disappearing were shaking in their boots because it's Sunday, and the lamb that was silent before the slaughter is now the resurrected lion from the tribe of Judah, for **He is not here**, the angel says. He is risen indeed.

- ☞ It's Sunday, and the crucified/resurrected Christ has **defeated death** and hell.
- ☞ It's Sunday and Christ has **defeated sin** and the grave.
- ☞ And now everything has changed. It's the age of grace, God's **grace** poured out on all who would look to that crucified lamb of Calvary. Grace freely given to all who would

believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary, was buried and rose again. He is **☞ alive**. All because it's Sunday.

☞ These contrasts remind us that **things aren't always as they seem. God always has a plan**, and his plans for you are good!

D. James Kennedy writes about this. *He says, Job asked the question: "If a man dies, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). The contrasts of Friday and Sunday give a resounding answer – "Yes!" We understand that everyone dies, and most people wonder about what happens after that. Jesus answers the question. Other religions have no counterpart to the resurrection. Other religious leaders did not claim to be God. At the roll call in the grave other philosophers and religious leaders will have to answer... "Buddha?" "Here." "Confucius?" "Here." "Muhammed?" "Here." But when the roll is called for "Jesus?" The answer is "Not here."*

You might feel like you're living in an unending Friday. But things aren't always as they seem. God has a plan and Sunday's coming! So keep looking to Jesus!

☞ **Contrasting Barabbas and Jesus**

☞ Barabbas = son of a father	Jesus = son of THE Father (God)
☞ Thief	Giver
☞ Murderer	Healer
☞ Prisoner in bondage	Deliverer who sets free
☞ Revolutionist	Refused an earthly kingdom
☞ Notorious	Notable
☞ Seditionist	Savior
☞ Set free	Scorned and sacrificed

In the account of the gospels Pilate addresses the crowd hoping to release Jesus, but the crowd chose to have Barabbas released instead. Then Pilate asks what they want him to do with Jesus and the crowd shouts for him to be crucified. Now, imagine Barabbas a distance away, sitting in prison hearing the crowd first shout "Barabbas, Barabbas, Barabbas." And then a moment later, "Crucify, crucify, crucify!" He had to have been expecting the worst. But then when he is brought out to the court, he is released!

☞ These contrasts remind us that **God offers the Great Exchange**. Barabbas represents you and me to whom the Lord offers a trade. We deserve the punishment that he took, but instead, we can have the freedom that he offers. He wants to make a trade with us and unbelievably, it's all slanted in our favor!

Isaiah 53:3-6

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. **4** Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by

God, smitten by him, and afflicted. **5** But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. **6** We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

☞ He was pierced	For our transgressions
☞ He was crushed	For our iniquities
☞ He was punished	So we could have peace
☞ He was wounded	For our healing
☞ He was rejected	So we could be welcomed
☞ He knew sorrow	So we could know joy
☞ He suffered	For our salvation
☞ He died	So we could live

He still offers the Great Exchange today!

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

*--John Piper... We need righteousness to be acceptable to God. But we don't have it. What we have is sin. So, God has what we need and don't deserve — righteousness; and we have what God hates and rejects — sin. What is God's answer to this situation? His answer is Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died in our place and bore our condemnation. Whose flesh bore the condemnation? His. Whose sins were being condemned? Ours. This is the great exchange. God lays our sins on Christ and punishes them in him. And in Christ's obedient death, God fulfills and vindicates his righteousness and credits it to us. ☞ **Our sin on Christ; his righteousness on us.** All our forgiveness, all our justification, all our righteousness is in Christ. This is the gospel — the good news that our sins are laid on Christ and his righteousness is laid on us, and that this great exchange becomes ours by faith.*

1 Corinthians 15:20 basically says...

He rose from the grave	So we could have hope
He rose from the dead	So we could have eternal life

There is eternity after you die. But, heaven is not automatic, and you can't earn your way into heaven. You can't be good enough. If you want to make it to heaven you have to go through Jesus Christ. He is the only way. (John 14:6). He took your place on that cross and is offering you a great exchange. Your sins are killing you and paving a road to the fires of hell. But Jesus can save you.

☞ **Romans 10:9**

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.

Now, this morning I’ve provided evidence to help you understand and be convinced that Jesus really rose from the grave. So, the only thing left is to declare that he is Lord. Now, that implies more than just a simple statement.

☞ **“Lord” basically means “boss.”** It means that you will let him be in charge of your life and that you will follow him by being obedient to the Bible. Jesus gave his life for you so that you could be saved. Will you give your life to him? I’ve said many times before, “You’ve been in charge of your life up to now and look at the mess you’ve made of it.” Let Jesus be in charge and just see what he can do.

☞ **It’s not too late. God has a plan for you. He is offering you the great exchange!**
Learn from that thief! **Turn to Jesus!**

If you’re ready to make sure you are going to heaven, then after we dismiss come and meet me here at the front. I will be glad to pray with you and help you give your life over to Jesus.

☞ Let’s close singing **“Death was Arrested.” (Songshow)**

If you’re ready to make sure you are going to heaven meet me here at the front. I want to pray with you to give your life over to Jesus. Everyone else... you’re dismissed; God’s blessings on you and have a great week!