

A Guide

THE MEANING OF EASTER

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Easter is the most significant event on the Christian calendar.

In fact, without Easter, the Christian faith would not exist.

This guide provides a brief, but comprehensive outline of what Easter is and why it matters today. We pray that your interest in this topic will lead to finding answers that bring a new dimension to life.

*Dedicated to all those who investigate the big questions of life
with honesty.*

LENT: THE LEAD UP TO EASTER



“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.”

Matthew 4:1-2 (New International Version)

Lent involves 40 days of fasting leading up to Easter, when Christians prepare themselves through prayer and reflection. There are a number of ways to fast during Lent, including giving up from luxuries, coffee or even social media, though traditionally, Christians have fasted from meat and alcohol. The fast is usually broken on Sundays, which actually makes the time of Lent 46 days (including the 6 Sundays). The 40 days of Lent mirror the time Jesus spent fasting in the desert before He started his ministry. To find out more about how you can participate in Lent, you can visit this page: <https://www.haventogether.com/what-is-lent>

GOOD FRIDAY



“With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”

Mark 15:37-38 (New International Version)

The day we know as Good Friday was in fact a sad and awful day. On this day Jesus was brought to trial before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Although Pilate found no fault in Jesus, the Jewish people, especially the chief priests and elders, and teachers of the law wanted blood. So, Pilate released Him to them to be crucified.

When Jesus died, the hopes of His followers died within them. They had hoped for a deliverer from the cruelty of the Roman regime. They had thought that Jesus would lead them into freedom, liberation from the bondage of corruption.

He was gaining a reputation as someone wonderful, an amazing teacher and leader of men. One who knew God. One who could heal the sick and raise the dead and inspire people to lofty ideals in life.

They had seen Him deliver people from demons. He had stopped a terrifying storm. He had walked on waves that would have drowned most people.

But as He hung there on the cross, His reputation was worth nothing. It lay in tatters at His feet, while they spat on Him and gambled for His garment.

Had it all been for nothing? Was it for this, that they had given up everything? To follow One who spoke of high and holy things, yet died a shameful death, despised as a criminal?

But there was something they had not understood. A Roman soldier saw it, as he stood watching the agony of Jesus' final breaths. He heard the heart-wrenching cry of Jesus: 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing'. He heard Him cry: 'It is finished'.

And suddenly, in a moment of revelation, he knew the truth. 'Truly', he said, 'this was the Son of God'.

Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.
1 Peter 3:18 (New Living Translation)

Now we call this day Good Friday, because on this day Jesus died to pay for the sins of mankind and secured salvation for all those who put their trust in Him.

EASTER SUNDAY



“Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.”

John 20:19-20 (New International Version)

Easter Sunday is the most significant day of the year for Christians. While Good Friday remembers Jesus’s sacrifice, Easter Sunday celebrates Jesus returning to life. This gives Christians a sure hope that they too will experience life after death as they unite themselves with Jesus.

As well as being the pinnacle of the Christian calendar, it could be argued that the event Easter celebrates, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is the central point in human history.

Though the dating of history is only roughly divided at the time of Jesus, we know that Easter Sunday is celebrated on the exact anniversary of Jesus’s resurrection. This is because it occurred three days after the Jewish Passover feast and the day after the Jewish sabbath, a Saturday.

As the time of Passover was determined by the Jewish lunar calendar, Easter follows the same timing, which is why the actual date on our modern calendar varies.

Jesus's resurrection makes all the difference for Christians. It proves that Jesus was who He said He was and proves that He has the power over death. The Bible says Jesus is the first to be raised and that His coming back to life shows the reality of the hope available that we too will experience new life when we identify ourselves with Jesus.

Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, who was initially in tears when she found Jesus's tomb empty. He then appeared in a locked room to His disciples and proved He wasn't a ghost by eating in front of them. He proved to Thomas that He was the same Jesus by showing the nail marks from His crucifixion.

Jesus then appeared to a number of other witnesses, before returning to heaven. Jesus said that He would return to earth, but in the meantime has given His followers the Holy Spirit to guide them in His ways.

Artwork by Caleb Jones



WHY EASTER MATTERS



“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!”

Luke 24:1 (New International Version)

Only a sinless man could pay the price for human sin. Yet only God could secure our eternity, because only He is eternal.

The Son of God laid aside all the glories of heaven and took upon Himself the form of a man and was born in the flesh as a human being. He lived as a man on the earth and suffered and died at the hands of men.

Our God understands what it is like to be human. He knew what it was to suffer temptation just like any human being, yet He did not sin. He experienced the pain of human emotion, and it stirred in Him compassion for our suffering. He experienced the weariness of humanity, walking long distances with dust in His sandals and sweat in the noonday sun, so He could reach those to whom the Father sent Him.

He experienced the frustration of humanity when people didn't understand or accept His message. He experienced the

pain of rejection when they ridiculed Him and blamed Him unfairly. He was betrayed, not only by Judas, but also by the other disciples, when they deserted Him in His moment of need. No one defended Him when He was cruelly beaten and nailed to a cross.

They laid Him in a tomb and rolled a heavy stone across the entrance. Roman guards were sent to guard the tomb under threat of death, if they let the body be stolen away by Jesus' disciples.

Yet He rose from the dead, by the mighty power of the living God, and He lives forevermore! The Bible says, 'because He lives, we shall live also'. What a day that was! A day of joy and rejoicing, of victory and triumph. A day to celebrate life – new life – eternal life.

Jesus did all this willingly for us so that we could be part of God's family so that we could receive eternal life.

THE CROSS: A POEM



The Cross – despised – an instrument of torture
Lifted – dragged along the cobbled street
Amid sharp spears and flashing swords
Ripping the canvas between heaven and earth – and hell.
Surrounded by an angry mob, and soldiers yelling orders
Bowed down in agony, our Lord
Surrendered to the Father’s Will.
No question in His heart...committed now
To all that lies ahead.
No one can rob Him now – or steal from Him
The pain that leads to Glory.
The end will justify the means
The Father’s Will is always good,
Although we may not understand.
And Jesus sees the end from the beginning...
The countless souls that will be gathered
In the harvest...
Shedding the ragged trappings of humanity
And taking on immortal robes of glory.
Oh, see Him lifted up – the cross so dreaded
Becomes the symbol of a pure Salvation...
A rescue operation so victorious
That none need face the sufferings of hell- Unless by
choice.

- Kerrie Price

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Kerrie Price has been involved in Pastoral care, discipleship and training leaders for over 40 years. Her desire is to help upcoming leaders become the great influencers that God has called them to be to this generation. Kerrie served on the team with Haven online church, providing teaching and pastoral care.

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